



**STUDENT
HANDBOOK OF
POLICIES &
GUIDELINES**

Ph.D. Program in Medicinal Chemistry

2025-2026

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1 ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This Handbook details the expectations and requirements of graduate students in the Medicinal Chemistry Ph.D. Program. The rules, policies and information contained here are all subject to change, and an updated Handbook will be issued each year reflecting any changes. Students are expected to meet the graduation requirements and expectations codified in the Handbook the year they entered the program. Students are also expected to abide by the University's Student Conduct Code codified in [Washington Administrative Code 478-121](#).

Questions about any of the material covered here may be addressed to the Graduate Program Coordinator or Graduate Program Advisor (contact information listed below).

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2 ABOUT OUR DEPARTMENT

The Department of Medicinal Chemistry is part of the highly collaborative, interdisciplinary School of Pharmacy. Medicinal Chemistry is a discipline with a traditional focus on organic synthetic chemistry with the broad goals of drug discovery and optimization. The Department of Medicinal Chemistry has always departed somewhat from this tradition given the focus of many of its faculty on the research areas of drug metabolism and disposition, drug design, and disease mechanism. Broadly speaking, we seek to understand how drugs and toxins interact with their biological targets and with detoxifying enzymes and transporters, as well as to uncover the chemical and biochemical bases of cardiovascular, degenerative, developmental, and infectious diseases. Our research extends into areas of biochemistry, pharmaceutical chemistry, bioanalytical chemistry, biophysics, and chemical biology.

Our **VISION** is to provide an outstanding learning and research environment by cultivating a collegial, inclusive, and interdisciplinary community. This community shares an intellectual passion for the fundamental molecular sciences that explain disease and therapeutic mechanisms, drug design and drug development. The Medicinal Chemistry departmental mission is focused on training leaders in all aspects of pharmaceutical sciences including clinical practice, basic research, and teaching.

The students, staff and faculty of Medicinal Chemistry share the following **VALUES**:

- A departmental community that is inclusive, equitable, collaborative, and representative of broader society to strengthen our research and teaching missions.
- Discrimination or exclusion based on individual characteristics and circumstances – including race, gender, age, disability, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or other similar distinctions – is unjust, representing a denial of opportunity for self-fulfillment and a waste of talent.
- Patterns of inequity and under-representation in the Department community can and must be challenged through positive action.
- Individuals have the right to hold their own opinions and beliefs, but these cannot be allowed to manifest in ways that are hostile or degrading to others.

3 THE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY PROGRAM

The Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) is the highest degree offered by the University of Washington and prepares the recipient for a career of creative scholarship. The Ph.D. is a research degree and is not conferred simply as a certificate to a prescribed course of study. The Department has the responsibility to ensure that the degree will be granted only to candidates who have demonstrated independent scholarly research and creative thinking. Therefore, in addition to performance in didactic aspects of the graduate program, the final determination of whether graduate trainees meet the requirements for a Ph.D. will include assessment of the originality, significance, and quality of their research.

The University, its Graduate School, and Departments have the responsibility to provide the most favorable environment possible in which graduate students can develop their maximal potential for creative scholarship and independent research. This environment includes elements such as the graduate faculty, instructional offerings, research facilities, library resources, and a stimulating and supportive group of capable graduate student colleagues.

3.1 PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The doctoral degree program in Medicinal Chemistry trains research scholars in the fundamental aspects of drug metabolism and disposition, drug design, and disease mechanism. Broadly speaking, we seek to understand how drugs and toxins interact with their biological targets and with detoxifying enzymes and transporters, as well as to uncover the chemical and biochemical bases of cardiovascular, degenerative, developmental, and infectious diseases. Students in our Ph.D. program will gain technical expertise in varying combinations of bioanalytical chemistry, biophysical methods, computational approaches, and clinical studies.

3.2 PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Graduate students in Medicinal Chemistry must satisfy the general requirements of the Graduate School in addition to the requirements of the Department. A full description of the requirements of the Graduate School can be found on their website: <http://www.grad.washington.edu>. Some of the pertinent requirements of the Graduate School and Department are described below:

3.2.1 Residence

A minimum of three academic years of resident study is required, two of them being at the University of Washington. Residence is defined as **10 credits per quarter (A,W,Sp) or 2 credits during summer quarter**. Only courses numbered 300 and above count toward residence. Thesis research must be conducted at the University of Washington, unless the research is of a collaborative nature requiring off-campus facilities.

3.2.2 Credits and Scholarship

A minimum of **25 credits** of graded course work, exclusive of thesis and non-thesis research, must be satisfied. This includes at least 14 credits of required 'core' courses. An average grade point of 3.0 in all numerically graded 400- and 500-level courses is required to remain in good academic standing with the Graduate School and to take the General Exam. Following [Graduate School Policy 1.1](#), a minimum of 2.7 is required in each graded course that is counted towards graduate degree requirements. Students may be required to retake any course in which they receive a grade below 3.0. Core and elective course requirements are listed in [Didactic Training](#), below.

3.2.3 Teaching Experience

A minimum of **two quarters of teaching assistantship (TA)** experience is required for the Medicinal Chemistry Ph.D. Usually, you will not be asked to assist more than one class per academic quarter (≤ 12 contact hrs/week). Most students will complete this requirement during the first three years in the program. Students rarely perform more than three quarters as a TA.

Students who receive an offer to serve as a TA for another department than Medicinal Chemistry should discuss it with their advisor. Please note that serving as a TA for another department does not substitute for the Medicinal Chemistry requirement.

3.2.4 Examinations and Progress Evaluation

All graduate students must participate in the departmental examination program. A series of preliminary, **cumulative** (written) examinations and a **general** (oral) examination is required for advancement to Ph.D. candidacy; a **final** examination (defense of the thesis) is required for the degree. In addition, the Department of Medicinal Chemistry administers a pre-general round-table discussion with faculty to prepare students for the General Exam. More details on these milestones can be found in [Section 3.3](#), "Progress Towards the Doctoral Degree".

3.2.5 Seminars

The Graduate Program provides multiple opportunities for students to practice and develop their oral presentation skills, whether presenting their own findings or critiquing relevant literature. All graduate students must present **at least 3 seminars** while in the doctoral program (MEDCH 520) as outlined below. In addition, students will typically give a research rotation talk during Spring Quarter of the first year (MEDCH 582). From their 2nd year onwards, students will present papers from current literature (or on other topics as appropriate) at least once a year in MEDCH 582.

Students are required to attend and participate in the **Departmental Seminar** (MEDCH 520), jointly administered with the Department of Pharmaceutics. The program will consist of seminars by graduate students in both programs, as well as occasional guest speakers. This course is graded on a CR/NC basis; students must attend in person and submit peer feedback/participation surveys for every speaker in order to receive credit for this course. Unexcused absences will result in an NC grade, which will delay progression in the program.

Students are required to present three times in MEDCH 520:

- **Year 2 – Literature Review**

Students are encouraged to select their own general seminar topics, with the approval of their Thesis Advisor. Ideally, the seminar will cover a topic about which there has been significant recent research activity, of interest to all members of the audience, and will help the student define the direction of their future thesis research. This will benefit the student by providing experience in investigating, analyzing, and synthesizing the literature, and presenting to a broad audience.

The student should prepare a brief (~1 page) written abstract of their seminar, have it approved by their Thesis Advisor, and submit it to the Graduate Program Advisor for dissemination **at least three days in advance** of their seminar. The abstract should include key references, cited following the *JPET* style or a similar format that includes authors, article title and journal.

This seminar offers faculty an important opportunity to evaluate individual accomplishment in a non-classroom setting. Students are encouraged to practice their talks with peers, senior graduate students, and postdocs. The presentation should last 40–45 minutes, following which ~10 minutes will be devoted to Q&A with the audience.

Students will receive anonymized critiques from their peers in Medicinal Chemistry and Pharmaceutics and are encouraged to solicit feedback from their Advisor and other faculty members.

- **Year 3 – Pre-General Seminar**

The seminar will outline the student's proposed thesis research. The student should prepare an NIH-style research proposal (see [Appendix A](#) for format), have it approved by their Thesis Advisor, and disseminate it to all faculty members **at least one week in advance** of the seminar. The presentation should last 40–45 minutes, following which ~10 minutes will be devoted to Q&A with the audience. The seminar will be followed by a round-table discussion with all available faculty members. (See

[Section 3.3.6](#) for more details on the seminar, the written proposal, and the discussion with faculty.)

- **Year 4 – Research Seminar**

Students are expected to deliver a polished 40–45-minute presentation on their research in progress, updating the audience on new findings and directions that have emerged since the pre-general seminar and General Exam.

All students are required to participate in the **Departmental Journal Club**, “Monday Night Meeting” (MEDCH 582). The format of this course will vary from quarter to quarter. Most often, it will involve an in-depth critique of a selected paper, coordinated by one or two student presenters. Each student is expected to have read the article distributed prior to class and to participate in the discussion. The emphasis is on a free, collegial exchange of ideas, in the form of questions and comments, between students. The main role of the faculty is to facilitate discussion and, when necessary, to correct misconceptions and/or omissions that may arise during the discussion. Monday Night Meeting may also involve grant-writing workshops, or discussions on topics such as peer review, data visualization, literature management, essential statistical concepts etc.

Grading is on a CR/NC basis and is based on active participation and engagement with the material. Unexcused absences will result in an NC grade, which will delay progression in the program. All students are expected to attend (in person unless otherwise directed), *except* in their final quarter in the program *if* their Dissertation Defense has been scheduled.

The objectives of Monday Night Meeting are to:

- Promote discussion of impactful literature relevant to research in the Department;
- Inculcate the skills required to organize and communicate complex ideas to an audience of peers;
- Foster an appreciation of optimal experimental design based on critical reading; and
- Develop the skills needed to rigorously and objectively evaluate scientific literature.

Students should master the subject matter or issues raised in MEDCH 582 in preparation for departmental examinations, including the cumulative examination and the General Examination for Ph.D. candidacy, as well as the final thesis defense.

3.2.6 Master’s Degree

The Department does not offer a terminal master’s degree program, but students that do not satisfy the above requirements for a Ph.D. may request a master’s degree. This request will be considered by the faculty on a case-by-case basis.

3.3 PROGRESS TOWARDS THE DOCTORAL DEGREE

3.3.1 Program Onboarding

Incoming students will receive a letter from the Graduate Program Advisor by early July describing steps for onboarding, including information on how to:

- Set up their NetID
- Set up their Husky Card
- Complete required EHS trainings
- Access the U501 Graduate School Orientation
- Complete mandatory Title IX training
- Verify academic transcripts
- Verify their ability to legally work in the US
- Submit immunization records
- Register for courses (refer to [Section 4](#), “Didactic Training”)

All students and members of the department community are encouraged to attend the Departmental Welcome and Orientation event scheduled at the end of every September.

3.3.2 Research Rotations

Students entering the doctoral program are required to complete 2–3 one-quarter research laboratory rotations, typically starting Autumn quarter of their first year. Students may opt to complete a rotation in the summer quarter before the initiation of classes. Since this option requires early admission to the Department, it must be requested as soon as possible after acceptance of an offer of admission.

Students should contact faculty members as early as possible to discuss potential rotation projects and logistics. Student preferences for specific labs will be followed as far as possible, subject to factors such as laboratory space constraints.

3.3.3 Selection of a Thesis Advisor

Students will choose a Thesis Advisor (a.k.a. Research Supervisor or Principal Investigator) from among the Graduate Faculty in the Department no later than the end of Spring quarter of Year 1, through consultation with Rotation Advisors and the Graduate Program Coordinator. Students must notify the Graduate Program Coordinator of their preferences before the last week of Spring quarter. If a student is unable to match with a Thesis Advisor after three rotations, they may petition the Chair to allow a fourth rotation.

Agreement in the selection of an advisor must be a fully informed, mutual decision, and faculty members are not obligated to take every student that might choose them. The

Department may not be able to accommodate every student's first choice of Advisor, for example because of previous commitments by the faculty to other students in the program, or laboratory space constraints. After selection of an Advisor is made and agreed to, further change is possible only by petition, with approval from the Department Chair.

The Thesis Advisor becomes the primary mentor, and shares responsibility with the student for their progression through towards the Ph.D. The Thesis Advisor serves as chair of the student's Doctoral Supervisory Committee. In collaboration with the Committee, the Advisor is responsible for guiding the student's program of study and research. In some cases, a student may choose to be jointly advised by two faculty members. If both faculty members agree, one of them shall serve as the primary mentor and chair the Doctoral Supervisory Committee.

3.3.4 Development of Research Skills and Identification of a Thesis Topic

By the beginning of Year 2, students are expected to be participating fully and actively in the laboratory of their Thesis Advisor, and to begin discussions with their Advisor on identifying suitable thesis topics. These discussions should be accompanied by a comprehensive search of the literature to obtain a good understanding of the research to be addressed.

3.3.5 Cumulative Exams

Students are required to take and pass a series of cumulative exams (MEDCH 599, 1 cr) in their 2nd year, in order to subsequently schedule the General Exam. The goal for these examinations is to assess and advance students' understanding of advanced concepts in the discipline of medicinal chemistry. Concepts may be drawn from coursework (including seminars delivered in MEDCH 520 or papers discussed in MEDCH 582) or any other aspect of the scientific literature at the examining faculty member's discretion. Students must pass three exams (out of up to six attempted) to become eligible for Ph.D. Candidacy status. In special circumstances, students may appeal to the Department Chair for one-time exceptional consideration; any subsequent decision to alter the cumulative exam requirement would require the approval of the entire faculty.

The format is as follows:

- Up to six exams will be given to students in their second academic year: two each in Autumn, Winter, and Spring quarters. The format of the exam will be determined by the faculty member coordinating the cumulative exam, and communicated to students at the start of the quarter. Exam dates will be chosen and communicated to students by the GPA within 2 weeks of the start of the quarter.
- Faculty will take turns preparing exam questions. A compilation of old exams can be obtained from the Graduate Program Advisor.



- Students must take every exam offered until they have passed three, and a missed exam counts as a failure.
- Exam questions will be graded by the respective faculty author. Pass/fail is decided by a faculty vote after each exam. A score of ≥ 70 constitutes an automatic pass. Borderline scores are evaluated for special consideration.

3.3.6 Pre-General Seminar and Faculty Discussion

In Autumn quarter of Year 3, students shall prepare a written NIH-style research proposal (see [Appendix A](#) for format) and present a departmental seminar as part of MEDCH 520 outlining their proposed thesis research. The written proposal must be sent to the faculty at least one week before the pre-general seminar. The seminar will be followed by a 1-hour round-table discussion with all available faculty members, which the student is welcome to record for their own reference. This mechanism is intended to solicit faculty input on the design of the thesis project and the selection of committee members, identification of potential knowledge gaps, and enable scheduling of the General Exam in a timely fashion.

Note that the pre-general seminar is a Departmental Milestone rather than a Graduate School requirement, and is not an exam. Students should aim to have their supervisory committee established as soon as possible after the pre-general seminar (and no more than two months later), and promptly inform the Graduate Program Advisor.

3.3.7 Appointment of Doctoral Supervisory Committee and Reading Committee

The **Doctoral Supervisory Committee** guides students working toward their graduate degrees at the University of Washington. This committee serves an important evaluative and mentoring function for students throughout their graduate careers. All students are strongly encouraged to view their committee members as a resource, to be consulted about any matter in one-on-one discussions.

The appointment of a Doctoral Supervisory Committee indicates that the faculty finds a student's background and achievement a sufficient basis for admission into a program of doctoral study and research. Formally, students are not admitted directly into a doctoral program upon admission to the UW Graduate School; instead, they become candidates for the doctoral degree upon passing the General Exam, described in detail in [Section 3.3.8](#).

Requirements for Serving on the Supervisory Committee

- a. The committee must have a minimum of four members.
- b. At least three (including the Chair and the Graduate School Representative [GSR]) must be members of the Graduate Faculty with an endorsement to chair doctoral committees.
- c. A majority of the committee must be members of the Graduate Faculty.



- d. The GSR must be a productive scholar in their own research area that may differ from that of the student's dissertation project.
 - i. GSRs cannot hold faculty appointments in Medicinal Chemistry or have a conflict of interest that would prevent them from providing a fully independent evaluation of the student's performance.
 - ii. Generally, faculty members with primary, joint, adjunct, or affiliate appointments in Medicinal Chemistry are not eligible to serve as GSRs.
- e. The remaining members must be productive scholars in Medicinal Chemistry or related disciplines.

Duties of the Supervisory Committee Chair

The Chair of the Supervisory Committee must be able and willing to assume principal responsibility for advising the student. Adequate time must be available for this work, and the Chair must be accessible to the student. Emeritus faculty may serve as Chair if they meet the above conditions. In special circumstances, Co-Chairs may be appointed when two Graduate Faculty members serve with equal importance on the Supervisory Committee and share equal responsibility for the student's progress.

Duties of the Graduate School Representative (GSR)

The GSR represents the broad concerns of the UW Graduate School with respect to high standards of scholarly performance, ensuring that your mastery of the subject matter is broad and comprehensive. The GSR is a voting member of the committee and must attest to the validity of the examination, indicate approval of the process by which the examinations are conducted, ensure that the student is treated in an unbiased manner, and represent the UW Graduate School in ensuring university-wide standards of scholarly performance. In preparation for the general and final examination, the GSR should receive all necessary materials (including copies of the dissertation proposal and dissertation) in a timely manner. Changes in the appointment of the GSR are made only under extenuating circumstances.

Responsibilities of the Voting Members

Responsibilities of the voting members of the doctoral Supervisory Committee include the approval of a course of study that will fulfill the general course requirements of the Medicinal Chemistry graduate program; conducting the General Examination; and, when appropriate, recommending advancement to Candidacy. The Doctoral Supervisory Committee approves the Candidate's dissertation proposal and guides them in carrying out appropriate research for the dissertation. At least four members of the committee (including the Chair, GSR, and one additional Graduate Faculty member) must be present at both the General and Final Examinations.

The **Reading Committee** is a subset of the Doctoral Supervisory Committee, and should be formed at the same time. The Reading Committee must consist of three Supervisory Committee members, including the Thesis Advisor. It is the responsibility of the Reading Committee to ensure that the dissertation is a significant contribution to knowledge and is a piece of scholarly writing. The Reading Committee must approve the written dissertation following Graduate School procedure after all revisions are complete.

3.3.8 General Exam

The General Exam should be scheduled as soon as appropriate after the pre-general seminar, in consultation with the Thesis Advisor and Doctoral Supervisory Committee. (Note: there is no department-mandated minimum time that needs to elapse between the pre-general and the General Exam.) Scheduling requests must be submitted via MyGrad (<http://www.grad.washington.edu/mygrad/student.htm>) at least three weeks before the desired date.

The General Exam includes both a written proposal (see [Appendix A](#)) submitted to the Supervisory Committee **at least two weeks** before the exam date, and an oral examination. If the written proposal is not submitted at least two weeks in advance, the General Exam will be delayed, potentially to a subsequent quarter. The examination typically starts with a brief (~5-minute) closed session of the Supervisory Committee. This is followed by a presentation by the student describing their proposed dissertation research to the Committee Members.

The prepared presentation should be roughly 30 minutes long, uninterrupted. However, it is expected that Committee Members will interrupt to clarify the significance of the experiments, question specific aims, or ask about technical issues. Students must demonstrate a thorough understanding of the field of research and the concepts and logic underlying their proposal. Students are also expected to display a thorough knowledge of topics covered in the Core curriculum and be familiar with current literature in areas related to the thesis research. In general, the research presentation serves as a starting point for questions of a broad-ranging nature. The advisor is Chair of the Supervisory Committee but does not play any active role during the examination, normally providing clarification or comment only if asked by members of the committee.

The open portion of the General Exam typically lasts up to two hours. It is followed by another brief closed session of the Committee, during which they will arrive at a decision. There are three possible outcomes:

- Pass
- Recommendation to re-examine after corrective action (such as additional coursework, directed reading, or other remedial action)
- Termination in the program, with the possibility of a terminal master's degree

Upon passing the General Exam, a student advances to Ph.D. Candidacy. At least four members of the Supervisory Committee, including the Chair, Graduate School Representative (GSR), and one other member of the Graduate Faculty, must be present at the General Exam.

3.3.9 Preparing for the Final Quarter

Before entering their anticipated Final (Defense) Quarter, students should take the following steps:

- Meet with the Graduate Program Advisor to discuss their graduation plans.
- Schedule a Supervisory Committee meeting and ensure that committee members are aware of and approve of the graduation timeline. (Individual meetings with committee members may also be used for this purpose.)
- Set a date for the defense, with the input and assistance of the Graduate Program Advisor.
 - Students should send a complete draft of the Dissertation to the Supervisory Committee and Graduate Program Advisor three weeks in advance of the defense date, or the defense will be delayed.
- Register for 2 credits of MEDCH 800 and submit a Petition for Reduced Enrollment (<https://grad.uw.edu/graduate-student-funding/assistantships/petition-for-reduced-enrollment/>) to the Graduate School.
 - Students are exempt from MEDCH 520 and MEDCH 582 in the Final Quarter and should not register for these courses.

3.3.10 The Doctoral Dissertation and Final Exam (Dissertation Defense)

The dissertation is a substantive, rigorous, academic document describing in detail the student's research findings and contributions to scientific knowledge. The standards for rigor and reproducibility for data included in a dissertation are on par with those for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. Dissertations are expected to consist of an introduction chapter followed by at least three substantive chapters describing independent, original research. Students are permitted to adapt published manuscripts into dissertation chapters as long as this is permitted by the respective journal's copyright agreement. Dissertations must be formatted according to the Graduate School's requirements described here: <https://grad.uw.edu/for-students-and-post-docs/thesisdissertation/etd-formatting-guidelines/>

Students must email complete drafts of all chapters to their Reading Committee and the Graduate Program Advisor **at least 3 weeks** ahead of the scheduled Final Exam (Dissertation Defense) to allow time for rigorous review. If this deadline is missed, the Defense will be postponed, potentially to a subsequent quarter.



The Final Exam may be scheduled if:

- the General Exam has been passed in a previous academic quarter, and
- the members of the Supervisory Committee agree that the student is prepared to take a Final Exam

You'll need to finalize the defense date, time, location and dissertation title before you submit your Final Exam request via [MyGrad](#). When selecting a defense date, consider the following:

- Your committee members' availability for a 2- to 3-hour meeting
- Space is limited for nearby rooms – so book ASAP. [K069](#) or something in the HSEB can be reserved with [Classroom Services](#) as a “MEDCH 800 breakout” for free.
- Poster notifications should be published and disseminated at least 1 month prior to defense date.
- All chapters must be completed and emailed **at least 3 weeks prior to exam date**.
- Following your defense date, you need time to incorporate committee feedback.
- The final version of your dissertation must be [formatted properly](#) and submitted to the [ETD system](#) and approved by your reading committee **by the last day of the quarter**, which can be found on the [UW Academic Calendar](#).

At least four members of the Supervisory Committee including the Chair, Graduate School Representative (GSR), and one other member of the Graduate Faculty, must be present at the exam. The Final Exam consists of a public seminar (40–50 minutes, plus an additional 10 minutes for questions from the audience) followed by a closed session with members of the Supervisory Committee (typically 30–90 minutes). The Supervisory Committee will then confer privately before rendering their decision. If the Final Exam is satisfactory, the Supervisory Committee members will sign the Committee Signature Form and the GPA will submit the Committee's decision to the Graduate School by the last day of the quarter. If the Exam is unsatisfactory, the Committee may recommend to the Dean of the Graduate School that a second exam be administered.

Students must respond to all critiques from the Reading Committee, make any required formatting changes, and submit their dissertation to the Graduate School through the ETD system (<http://www.etsadmin.com/washington>) before the last day of the quarter in which they are defending. If a student cannot meet this deadline, they are required to [request a waiver](#) (with an accompanying fee, currently of \$250) by the last day of the quarter. This waiver would extend the dissertation submission and approval deadline by 14 days, and then the degree conferral will occur at the end of the following quarter. If the dissertation is not submitted by this extended deadline, the student must enroll for the subsequent academic quarter. Students should note that the last few weeks of the quarter are a challenging time to schedule a defense, and leaves little room to respond to unexpected

hurdles. Therefore, students are encouraged to schedule their defense as early as possible in any given quarter. Degrees are typically conferred by the Graduate School 1–2 weeks after the end of the quarter.

3.3.11 Progress and Remediation

If a student misses one of the Departmental Milestones described above or is performing below expectations, a Mentoring Committee (distinct from the Thesis Supervisory Committee) may be established in order to help the student get back on track. In addition, if a student is unable to make satisfactory progress towards their degree for a substantial period of time, they may receive a formal warning, or be subject to Academic Alert, as codified in [Graduate School Policy 3.7](#).

4 DIDACTIC TRAINING

Course work for the doctoral program is divided into five components: (1) prerequisites for entry into the program; (2) a required Core Program; (3) elective courses, which are not required but encouraged when relevant to the student's research; (4) seminars and literature review; (5) research. Students may be excused from some classes in the Core Program based on advanced coursework (e.g., from a master's degree) or extensive experience in the relevant subject, and if the Thesis Advisor allows it. A minimum of 25 graded credits (Core plus electives) are required prior to the General Exam.

4.1 Prerequisites

- Differential Calculus (6 credits)
- Organic Chemistry (6 credits not including lab)
- Physical Chemistry (3 credits including thermodynamics and kinetics is required; quantum mechanics is strongly recommended)
- Biochemistry (3 credits)

Candidates are accepted into the program on the condition that any deficiencies in course requirements are rectified by the end of Year 1.

4.2 Core Program (14 graded credits)

Course	Recommended Timing
MEDCH 529, Advanced Medicinal Chemistry, 4 cr	Year 1/2, Autumn quarter
BIOC 530, Introduction to Structural Biology, 3 cr	Year 1, Autumn quarter
MEDCH 528, Biophysical Enzymology and Biopharmaceuticals, 2 cr	Year 1/2, Winter quarter
MEDCH 527, Drug Metabolism, 2 cr	Year 1/2, Spring quarter
MEDCH 541, Biological Mass Spectrometry, 3 cr	Year 1, Spring quarter

The Core Courses listed above should be completed within the first two years of the program. Students are encouraged to consult the [typical course of study](#). In addition, the following training is required:

- Biomedical Research Integrity Program (<https://depts.washington.edu/bhdept/bri>). Students must attend all five in-person or online trainings offered before completion of Year 2, although attendance at the Discussion sections is not required except for T-32 Training Grant recipients. (Students supported by the T-32 Pharmacological Sciences Training Program are subject to additional requirements and must attend three Discussion sections in addition to the lectures.)



- Training in the following areas through UW Environmental Health & Safety (<https://www.ehs.washington.edu/training>) should be completed by the end of Autumn quarter, Year 1:
 - Managing Laboratory Chemicals
 - Biosafety
 - Fire Extinguisher
 - Shipping Dry Ice
 - Fume Hood
 - COVID-19 Safety Training
 - Asbestos General Awareness Training

In addition, training in topics such as Radiation Safety, Biohazards, or Animal Care may be required based on a student's research activities.

- Training in the prevention of sex- and gender-based misconduct, through the UW Civil Rights Office ([Husky Prevention & Response Student Course](#)), as well as the [Civil Rights Student Course](#)

4.3 Elective Courses (min. 11 graded credits of 400- or 500-level coursework)

The purpose of elective coursework is to enhance the Core training. By its nature, it is highly individualized and should be geared to suit individual interests. Students are encouraged to take elective courses that might benefit their thesis projects and career goals. Relevant courses include, but are not limited to, those listed below. Students should discuss potential electives with their Thesis Advisor or the Graduate Program Coordinator, and review the [UW Time Schedule](#) when planning all course enrollments. Note: Unless otherwise unavoidable, students should not register for electives during Summer Quarter.

- CONJ 531, Signaling Mechanisms in Excitable Cells (Autumn, 1.5 cr)
- PHCOL 502/CONJ 532, Signal Transduction from the Cell Membrane to the Nucleus (Autumn, 2 cr)
- PHCOL 501, Drug Discovery and Emerging Therapeutics (Autumn, 2 cr)
- PHCOL 503, Autonomic/Cardiovascular Pharmacology (Winter, 2 cr)
- PHCOL 504, Neuropharmacology (Winter, 2 cr)
- PHCOL 505, Endocrine Pharmacology (Spring, 2 cr)
- PHCOL 506, Immunopharmacology and Chemotherapeutics (Spring, 2 cr)
- B STR 520 Structure Based Design of Drugs (Winter, even years 3 cr)*
- BIOEN 576 Laboratory Techniques in Protein Engineering (Spring, 4 cr)*
- BIOL 519 Data Science for Biologists (Winter, 4 cr)*

Students the PSTP are required to complete two of these half-quarter courses.



- BIOST 517 Applied Biostatistics I (Autumn, 4 cr)
- BIOST 518 Applied Biostatistics II (Winter, 4 cr)
- CSE 414 Introduction to Database Systems (Autumn, 4 cr)
- CSE 416 Introduction to Machine Learning (Winter/Spring/Summer, 4 cr)
- CSE 512 Data Visualization (Spring, 4 cr)
- CSE 583 Software Development for Data Scientists (Autumn, 4 cr)
- CHEM 460 Spectroscopic Molecular Identification (Autumn, 3 cr)
- CHEM 524 Analytical Mass Spectrometry (Spring, 3 cr)
- CHEM 530, Advanced Physical Organic Chemistry (Autumn, 3 cr)
- CHEM 531 Advanced Organic Chemistry (Winter, 3 cr)
- CHEM 532 Advanced Bio-Organic Chemistry (Spring, 3 cr)
- ENV H 509 Microbiome and Environmental Health (Spring, 3 cr)
- ENV H 515 Organ System Toxicology (Winter, 4 cr)
- ENV H 533 Molecular Toxicology (Spring, odd years 2 cr)
- GENOME 555 Protein Technology (Autumn, 1.5 cr)
- HCDE 511 Information Visualization (Spring, 4 cr)
- MCB 532 Human Pathogenic Viruses (Autumn, odd years 3 cr)*
- PCEUT 502 Drug Disposition Science (Autumn, 2 cr)
- PCEUT 506 Concepts in Pharmacokinetics (Spring, 3 cr)
- PCEUT 513 Basic Concepts in Pharmacogenetics and Toxicogenomics (Spring, 3 cr)
- PCEUT 586 Biotechnology and Biopharmaceutics (Autumn 3 cr)
- BIOG 533 Topics In Biochemistry (*Ethics 101 or F31 Grant Writing*) (Aut/Win, 1 cr)

4.4 Seminars and Literature Review:

Students should enroll in the following classes on a CR/NC basis, every Autumn, Winter and Spring quarter until graduation:

- MEDCH 520, Seminar (1 cr)
- MEDCH 582, Topics in Medicinal Chemistry (a.k.a. "Monday Night Meeting", 1 cr)

See [Section 3.2.5](#) for additional details on these two courses.

In addition, students should enroll in the 550-series course corresponding to their rotation mentor (for 1st year students) or Thesis Advisor (for all other students) for 1 credit on a CR/NC basis, every quarter (including Summer) until graduation:

- MEDCH 552, Computational Peptide Design (Bhardwaj)
- MEDCH 554, Biophysical and Structural Virology (Lee)
- MEDCH 555, Biophysics and Pharmacology of Dynamic Proteins (Nath)
- MEDCH 556, Clinical and Mechanistic Aspects of Drug Metabolism (Totah)
- MEDCH 557, Antibody-Antigen Interactions (Guttman)
- MEDCH 559, Biosynthesis, Metabolism, and Analysis of Lipids (Xu)

Finally, 2nd-year students should enroll in MEDCH 599 for 1 credit on a CR/NC basis, every quarter until they pass the Cumulative Exam (“cumes”) requirements detailed in [Section 3.3.5](#).

4.5 Research

Students should enroll in one of the following variable-credit courses, on a CR/NC basis, every quarter:

- Students who have not yet passed their General Exam should enroll in MEDCH 600.
- Students who have passed their General Exam (i.e., advanced to Ph.D. candidacy) should enroll in MEDCH 800.

The number of credits should be adjusted to ensure that students are enrolled for a total of at least 15 credits (Autumn, Winter, or Spring) or 2 credits (Summer) every quarter. This is required to ensure that students remain in full-time student status with the Graduate School and remain eligible for the graduate tuition waiver associated with your ASE position. If one drops below 10 credits, then the student may be responsible for tuition amounts not covered by graduate tuition waiver.

5 SERVICE, CLIMATE, AND SUPPORT RESOURCES

In addition to the Program Requirements described in [Section 3.2](#), the Department also expects that students will contribute positively to the environment of the Department, the University, and the broader community. This service may take the form of involvement with Department or School committees, participation in recruitment and other Department activities, involvement with academic societies or student organizations, outreach and volunteering activities, or service as a Student Representative as described below.

5.1 Student Representatives

Graduate students are represented in quarterly faculty meetings and other discussions with faculty by a panel comprised of one member from each of the following cohorts, elected or otherwise selected by their peers: 1st-year students; 2nd-year students; 3rd-year students; 4th-year students; students in their 5th or later years; postdoctoral researchers. Students may determine procedures for nomination, selection, and term limits of Representatives. Student Representatives are responsible for communicating the opinions and concerns of their peers to the Department community. Student Representatives will be invited to open faculty meetings at least once per quarter and will have the opportunity to submit agenda items for discussion.

5.2 Reporting Concerns

For emergencies, call 911. For mental health crisis support, call 988.

The Department is committed to providing a supportive, collegial, equitable environment for all members of our community, including mechanisms for students to report any incidents or behavior of concern. At any time, a student may request a confidential meeting with the Graduate Program Advisor, Graduate Program Coordinator, or Chair to discuss an issue relating to Department climate or to interactions with another member of the Department community. No identifying information will be shared with any other party without the advisee's agreement. Similarly, no steps towards resolution will be taken without the advisee's consent.

[Book a meeting time](#) with your GPA [Sarah Lenti](#) or stop by H164C M/Tu/Th/Fri from 10am – 2pm.

Students can also find additional resources on the [SOP Bias and Misconduct Resources Page](#). For confidential support from outside the department, consider contacting the [Office of the Ombud](#). For confidential support related to sexual assault, relationship violence or stalking, you can also contact the [LiveWell Confidential Advocacy program](#).

The [Civil Rights & Title IX Report Form](#) is for NON-EMERGENCY incidents only. If your immediate safety is at risk, or you are witnessing violence or perceiving imminent harm to yourself or others, please immediately dial 911. You can also report criminal activity by calling the UW Police Department at 206-685-8973 for non-emergencies or 206-685-8477 for anonymous tips.

5.3 Support Resources

Other resources available to graduate students include:

- The Health Sciences Liaison & Counselor (currently [Emma Buchanan](#)) provides free and confidential services. Connection with counseling support is available without an appointment through the link above.
- UW Allies program (<http://sites.uw.edu/uwallies>)
- School of Pharmacy Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council - [Resource Page](#)
- The Office of the Ombud (<https://www.washington.edu/ombud/>) provides resources and facilitation for preventing, managing, and resolving conflict at the university.
- The University Complaint Investigation and Resolution Office (UCIRO, <https://www.washington.edu/compliance/uciro/>) formally investigates complaints of discrimination and retaliation.
- The Counseling Center (<https://wellbeing.uw.edu/topic/mental-health/>) and “Let’s Talk” (<https://wellbeing.uw.edu/virtual-lets-talk/>) connect students with mental health care and counseling resources.
- UAW4121 (<https://www.uaw4121.org/>), the Union of Academic Student Employees & Postdocs at the UW provides resources and support independent of the University.
- Short-term loans are available through the UW Office of Student Financial Aid (<https://www.washington.edu/financialaid/types-of-aid/loans/short-term-loans/>) and the School of Pharmacy Emergency Fund (<https://sop.washington.edu/pharmd/handbook/student-affairs/emergency-loans/>).
- The UW Food Pantry (<https://www.washington.edu/anyhungryhusky/the-uw-food-pantry/>) provides shelf-stable food, produce, ready-to-eat items, and hygiene products to students, staff, and faculty at no cost.
- GPSS – [Campus and Community Safety Resources](#)

5.4 Examples of Outreach and Volunteering Opportunities

- Serve as a mentor or coordinator for Student Mentor Program, a student run mentorship program where incoming students are matched with experienced grad students
- Serve as a Student Representative at Quarterly Faculty Meetings
- Serve as a Student Representative to the School of Pharmacy Senior Leadership Committee
- Participate in leadership of the UW student chapter of the American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists (AAPS)
- Serve on the School of Pharmacy Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Council
- Serve as a GPSS Senator representing graduate students in the School of Pharmacy
- Serve as a UAW Local 4121 Union Departmental Representative for Med Chem
- Represent the School of Pharmacy at recruitment conference events like [SACNAS](#), [ABRCMS](#) or UW Graduate School Fair

- Volunteer to be on the Med Chem Admissions Committee, to review blinded applications during recruitment season
- Volunteer for Med Chem Recruitment Days
 - Be part of prospective student visit planning committee
 - Campus Tour Guide
 - Meet & Greet – Department Tour Guide
 - Living in Seattle Q&A
 - Neighborhood/sightseeing tour
 - Organize/participate in Student dinner/Social Event
 - Present a poster at Poster Session
 - Set-up/Clean-up for Poster Session
 - Help with maintaining/updating Recruitment Days website
- Volunteer to create or help maintain your lab's website or social media
- Volunteer to judge projects at science fairs such as Central Sound Regional Science & Engineering Fair (CSRSEF)
- Coordinate student-invited speaker visit
- Volunteer for Med Chem related conferences
- Volunteer at the UW Undergraduate Research Symposium
- Participate in registered student organization such as oSTEM or WiSTEM

6 ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students are expected to demonstrate integrity in their research and didactic training. Examples of prohibited academic misconduct include cheating, falsification, plagiarism, and unauthorized collaboration. It is expected that all course assignments are the student's individual, original work unless the course instructor explicitly specifies another format such as group work. The University's policies on academic misconduct are available here:

<http://www.washington.edu/admin/rules/policies/SGP/SPCH209.html>

Research is inherently a collaborative activity, but plagiarism in papers, proposals, coursework, or any other academic product is completely unacceptable. All sources such as papers, conference abstracts, preprints, and web pages must be appropriately cited, and any material taken verbatim from another source must be clearly marked as such in all work. Students should consult journal copyright and rights agreement regarding the reuse or adaptation of published papers and figures (even their own!) in their dissertation.

Students are permitted to use large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT for assistance in writing department-required documents such as pre-general and general proposals. Many people find such tools useful in creating a starting point or outline for their writing. However, students are strongly cautioned that:

- In practice, the output of LLMs can be inaccurate or incomplete, often in ways that are hard to detect at first glance. LLMs can hallucinate incorrect facts or even non-existent references. Curious students are encouraged to closely examine AI-generated text on a scientific topic they know well.
- Course instructors, journals, and funding agencies may all choose to prohibit the use of LLM-generated text. Students should understand and comply with the specific policies in place for a given piece of work or venue.
- Written communication is an essential component of the scientific toolkit, and improvement in this area is a major goal of our graduate training program. Overuse or overreliance on LLMs and other AI-based tools may hinder the development of students' ability to communicate scientific concepts at a high level.
- Text used as part of the prompts for LLMs may not be private or secure. Students should not include confidential or private information (including patient data), proprietary material, or unpublished data in any prompt to an LLM.

7 FINANCIAL SUPPORT, BENEFITS, AND REIMBURSEMENT

Financial support for students enrolled in the Ph.D. program is available in the form of research assistantships, NIH-supported predoctoral training fellowships, and outside fellowships such as those from the National Science Foundation, private foundations, or scientific societies. Financial support is awarded annually when substantial progress toward the degree is being made, as evaluated as described in Section 8, [Annual Performance Review and Reappointment](#). Students can expect to receive support for a period of at least 5 years if consistent progress is made towards the Ph.D. degree, and the period of support can be extended through petition.

Students are classified as Academic Student Employees, and are governed by the rights and obligations described in the union contract agreed upon by UAW Local 4121 and the University of Washington (available here: <https://hr.uw.edu/labor/uaw-ase/ase-contract>). Among the benefits enumerated in that contract are reasonable accommodations for disability, various types of available leave including Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML), childcare assistance, and access to lactation stations (listed here: <https://hr.uw.edu/benefits/care/parenting/lactation-stations/>). Students have the option of taking extended leaves of absence, for example to participate in paid internships, or for a number of other reasons. Students should consult their Thesis Advisor, Department Chair, or Graduate Program Coordinator to learn more about these options. Students should submit requests for vacation time off to their Thesis Advisor, as far in advance as is reasonably possible. Students also receive 12 days off on [university holidays](#). More leave info can be found on the [Time & Absence](#) page of UW HR.

Attending scientific conferences is an important part of students' academic training and development. Financial support to cover associated costs (including registration, travel, housing, and meals/incidental expenses) is available from a variety of sources, including travel awards from professional societies, the Graduate School, the Graduate and Professional Student Senate, departmental travel awards, and the Thesis Advisor's research grants. Prior approval from the Thesis Advisor or Department Chair must be obtained for all work-related travel. Any international travel should also be registered with the UW Global Travel team.

Students can choose to have registration, travel, and housing paid for by the department, or to pay for these expenses out-of-pocket and then get reimbursed after the fact. Students will typically need to pay for meals and incidentals out of pocket and get reimbursed after the fact. Students should email the school's fiscal team at SOP-Hub@uw.edu, or reach out to department admin staff with any questions about work-related travel.

8 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND REAPPOINTMENT

Students will receive structured feedback on their scholarly and research activities every year, as outlined below. Students are required to prepare an Individual Development Plan (IDP) every year, summarizing their progress in didactic coursework and required trainings; research activities, plans, and obstacles; career goals, and relationship to research progress. Students will receive a template IDP along with a reminder email each Spring, and the IDP must be submitted to the Graduate Program Advisor by the deadline in that email. Students should promptly discuss their IDP with their Thesis Advisor, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement.

The Thesis Advisor will prepare a 1-page evaluation of the student's progress that will be submitted to the Department Chair. The Chair and Advisor (along with Supervisory Committee members, if necessary) will review the student's IDP and Advisor's evaluation and render a decision on reappointment. If significant deficiencies in the progress of a student are identified, a meeting between the student, Thesis Advisor and Department Chair will be scheduled to determine the appropriate course of action. This may include remedial work and more frequent milestones during the next year. Reappointment can be denied because of a failure to maintain good scholastic standing (e.g., GPA below 3.0) or a failure to make substantive research progress towards the degree.

The Advisor's evaluation, reappointment decisions, and details of financial support and benefits for the next year, will be communicated to the student by email, with a copy placed in the student's academic file.

Structured feedback from the student to their Advisor can also be very helpful in developing a successful and productive working relationship. Accordingly, students will have the option to prepare a short (~1 page) report on their Advisor's performance over the previous 12 months, including positive feedback and constructive criticism. This complements the preparation of the IDP and Advisor's evaluation described above. Once the student and Advisor have both prepared their reports, the student will have the option of meeting with their PI or the department Chair to discuss both reports, identify any issues to be addressed, and formulate a plan for the year to follow.



Example rubric for the Individual Development Plan

Individual Development Plan (IDP) Rubric for Medicinal Chemistry 2025-26 Academic Year

Every year, Med Chem students are expected to prepare and update an Individual Development Plan (IDP) describing their scholarly progress over the previous year, and discussing their work in the context of career goals. For the current year, IDPs should describe progress since last May 2025 and your goals for the upcoming academic year and through next May 2027.

Students should prepare a report containing the following sections or an equivalently detailed IDP using a format approved by their PI:

Section 1: (~1 page)

1.1 Courses Completed

Summer	Autumn	Winter	Spring
(e.g. MEDCH 550)			

1.2 Status with respect to cumulative exams; target date for taking the General Exam

1.3 Meetings, Manuscripts, and Fellowships – conferences attended, posters/talks given, manuscripts submitted/published, fellowships obtained, awards received, etc.

1.4 Lab Safety - EHS Safety Training or BRI seminars attended

Section 2: (~2 pages)

2.1 Research Progress on rotations, research projects, or writing of the dissertation

2.2 Research Goals for the coming year

Please be detailed and thoughtful in appraising your performance over the previous year and in setting goals and targets for the coming year.

Section 3: (~1 page)

3.1 Career Goals - describing any changes over the previous year

3.2 Professional Development Activities - Completed or planned research activities, outreach, service, and other professional development activities that advance career goals

3.3 Networking with potential mentors and future colleagues

Please submit a PDF copy to Sarah Lenti (lenti@uw.edu) no later than Fri, May 2, 2026.

Example of Advisor Feedback Form

**UW Medicinal Chemistry – Advisor Feedback Template
2025-26 Academic Year**

This template is an **optional** yearly feedback mechanism designed to be used by graduate students in Medicinal Chemistry labs. Advisors or students may tailor this document to their needs.

If a student chooses to participate, they should be prepared to share their feedback with their Advisor (or with the Department Chair, if they prefer) **between May 1-15, 2026**. There is no obligation or expectation for students to participate if they do not wish to.

The template should be delivered to students no later than one week after they receive their notification to prepare their annual Individual Development Plan (IDP).

Suggested student feedback questions:

- Do you have enough contact time with your Advisor? Are you receiving enough feedback (or too much)? Do you have any suggestions for improvement?
- Are you happy with the direction of your project? If not, what changes do you suggest?
- Can you find help with your experiments when needed, from your Advisor or other colleagues (e.g., fellow grad students, postdocs, research scientists, other faculty)?
- Do you feel you are on track with your graduate school and career goals? How can your Advisor do better to help you accomplish them?
- Do you have access to sufficient mental health support? How can your Advisor help with that?
- Do you have any other suggestions that can improve the mentoring relationship with your Advisor?

APPENDIX A: PROPOSAL FORMAT

Students are required to prepare written proposals ahead of both the pre-general seminar and the General Exam, to gain experience in scientific writing and to succinctly outline the significance and scientific strategy of their proposed dissertation research. Both proposals should resemble an NIH grant application, with a limit of 10 pages (single-spaced, 11 point font) excluding references. It is recommended to structure each proposal as follows:

- **Abstract:** The abstract should be maximum 250 words and describe the background, specific hypotheses and aims, preliminary results and methods used and the experimental plan for the proposed thesis research.
- **Background and Significance:** This part of the proposal should be a 2-3 page, in-depth presentation of the critical background for the research project. It should capture both the broad perspective of the field as well as the detailed evidence available to support the research hypotheses. The background should not include the student's own experimental results that will become part of the thesis.
- **Specific Aims:** The specific aims should be 1 page in length and clearly state the detailed research hypotheses for the dissertation research. The specific aims should be numbered and state the objectives of the experimental research you conducted. A brief description of how each specific aim will be addressed should be included.
- **Preliminary Data:** This section should be 2-3 pages and organized around the specific aims of the project. For each aim, specific experiments that demonstrate applicability of a selected technique or support the original hypothesis should be presented. The purpose of the preliminary data is to demonstrate that the student has accrued the skills and techniques necessary to complete the dissertation, and to convince the committee that the proposed hypotheses are viable and can be tested. Experimental methods should be described briefly to provide the necessary information required to understand the results. The student should be prepared to answer specific questions pertaining to the design and conduct of these experiments.
- **Experimental Plan:** This section should present in 2-3 pages a relatively detailed plan for the experimental conduct of the dissertation research. It is important that the extent of experiments planned is described for each aim, along with potential pitfalls and alternative approaches, to allow the committee to reach a conclusion of the feasibility and likelihood of success of the proposal.
- **References:** References should be included at the end of the proposal and follow the style used by *Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics*.

The pre-general proposal should be modified in response to faculty feedback and updated to prepare the General Exam proposal, which must then be submitted to the Supervisory Committee at least two weeks in advance.