FIU | Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

PhD in Biomedical Science Handbook

Academic Year 2026 – 2027

Effective as of August 24, 2026

Table of Contents

Preamble

This handbook has been compiled as a resource for students enrolled in the PhD in Biomedical Science Program at the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine (HWCOM) at Florida International University (FIU). It provides current information regarding program requirements, policies, procedures, and expectations, and is intended to guide students throughout their doctoral training.

This handbook supplements, but not supersede, the policies and procedures established by the FIU University Graduate School (UGS). In the event of any inconsistency between this handbook and University or UGS policies, the applicable University or UGS policy shall prevail. Students are responsible for understanding and complying with all University, UGS, and program requirements, and for meeting all applicable academic and administrative deadlines.

Additional information regarding UGS policies, procedures, forms, and resources related to graduate research study at FIU are available on the University Graduate School website: https://gradschool.fiu.edu/students/

This handbook and the policies and procedures contained herein are effective for Academic Year 2026-2027 and will remain in effect until superseded by a revised version. HWCOM and the PhD in Biomedical Science Program reserve the right to modify program policies, procedures, curricula, and requirements as necessary, consistent with applicable University policies and procedures.

Students will be notified of significant program changes through their FIU email accounts or other official University communication channels. Students are responsible for regularly reviewing official communications, remaining familiar with the contents of this handbook, and adhering to all applicable policies, procedures, and requirements throughout their enrollment in the program.

Message from the Dean

I warmly welcome you to FIU. This is an exciting time to be a Ph.D. candidate in biomedical science at the FIU Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine! On behalf of the College of Medicine, I congratulate you on choosing to pursue your research education at our R1, the "highest research activity" ranked university. You are joining an esteemed legacy of renowned researchers who have earned FIU the distinction of being ranked among the world's top 50 U.S. patent producers.

As Dean of the College of Medicine, I have the pleasure of experiencing first-hand the remarkable talent of our faculty and students. They create a foundation for rich and unique experiences that inspire novel research and launch the next generation of innovative scientific researchers. Our program is abundant with opportunities for all.

FIU's Ph.D. Program in Biomedical Science redefines excellence in healthcare by applying basic sciences to medicine and translating laboratory discoveries into new treatments and cures. Students may choose from a wide range of training opportunities, including drug discovery, nanomedicine, genetics, glycobiology, cancer biology, microbiology and infectious diseases, chronic and aging-associated diseases, environmental science and toxicology, pulmonary vascular disease, viral infections, neurobiology and therapeutics, as well as the translational medicine. As a Ph.D. candidate in biomedical science, you represent our future. You are the "why" driving what we do each and every day, and most importantly, I know you can and will change the world.

I welcome you to the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine family. And I look forward to celebrating your research contributions as you develop your expertise in the groundbreaking world of biomedical sciences.

Juan C. Cendan, M.D.
Dean and Senior Vice President for Health Affairs FIU Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine

Message from the Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

Dear Students,

Welcome to the Florida International University Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine PhD Program in Biomedical Science. Congratulations on joining a community of scholars dedicated to advancing scientific discovery and improving human health. As a doctoral student, you are embarking on a challenging and rewarding journey that will develop your skills as an independent scientist, critical thinker, and future leader in biomedical research. Our faculty are committed to providing rigorous scientific training, outstanding mentorship, and a collaborative environment that supports your academic and professional growth.

The College of Medicine is proud to foster a culture of innovation, integrity, and excellence. Throughout your training, you will have opportunities to engage in cutting-edge research, collaborate across disciplines, and contribute to discoveries that have a meaningful impact on patients and communities.

This handbook is designed to serve as a resource to help you navigate your program, understand university and program expectations, and access the many opportunities available to you. We are delighted that you have chosen FIU for your doctoral education and look forward to supporting your success throughout your graduate journey.

Rebecca L. Toonkel, M.D.
Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

Message from the Associate Dean for Research

Welcome! I am pleased to welcome incoming and returning graduate students to the Biomedical Science Program at the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine (HWCOM). Above all, we are committed to your success. Your achievements and your experiences energize the culture of our one-of-a-kind program, bridging biomedical research with clinical medicine.

I am exceptionally proud, and you can be as well, of our outstanding faculty and internationally recognized programs. As a Ph.D. candidate, what does this mean to you? In 2023, HWCOM became the fastest-growing college of medicine in NIH funding, highlighting the growing opportunities in our program. This programmatic excellence translates into exciting research and training opportunities in cancer biology, drug discovery, drug delivery, immunology, lung biology, molecular genetics, neuroscience, regenerative medicine, structural biology, translational glycobiology, and viral biology therapeutics. Our research strengths and opportunities extend beyond these areas, and I invite you to explore each department, research institute, and center webpage to learn more.

It is my honor to lead the College's research programs. My mission is to connect you with talented graduate faculty advisors and state-of-the-art resources that will develop your scientific expertise and prepare you to contribute to improving our nation's health. When asked what drives a scientist's life-long pursuit of biomedical research? My answer is simple - it is creativity! The ability to understand complex interactions, unravel what appears to be a mystery, and discover something new, something ground-breaking that can change the quality of life for individuals facing challenging medical conditions.

To this end, it is my pleasure to help you meet your experimental goals and foster the research environment that will maximize your scientific potential as you prepare for future opportunities in academia and industry. I look forward to meeting you in the days and months ahead!

Stephen M. Black, Ph.D.
Associate Dean for Research

Message from the Graduate Program Director

Welcome to the exciting new chapter of your academic and professional journey as a Biomedical Science PhD student at FIU HWCOM! Embarking on a PhD is both a privilege and a profound responsibility. It is a journey that calls for intellectual curiosity, perseverance, creativity, collaboration, and integrity. As you begin this journey, you are joining a vibrant and growing community, faculty, and researchers committed to advancing scientific discovery, improving human health, and understanding the biological complexities that shape life.

The coming years will bring challenges and discoveries that will shape you as both a scientist and a professional. Our program continues to evolve to meet the changing landscape of biomedical research. The recent addition of the Translational Medicine major reflects this commitment by providing students with opportunities to explore the interface between fundamental scientific discovery and the development of innovative approaches to prevent, diagnose and treat human disease.

At the heart of our program is an outstanding community of graduate students and faculty dedicated to supporting your scientific and professional development. Our faculty mentors will work with you to develop a flexible and individualized training plan, with clearly defined milestones designed to help you achieve your research, academic, and career goals in a timely manner. We encourage you to take full advantage of the many opportunities available to collaborate, explore new ideas, develop new skills, and grow beyond the boundaries of your individual research project.

As you navigate your doctoral studies, I also encourage you to balance your pursuit of scientific excellence with your personal well-being. Research is inherently rigorous, and will inevitably include setbacks as well as successes, but the journey should also be intellectually stimulating and deeply fulfilling. Celebrate your milestones— both large and small—and never hesitate to seek guidance or support when you need it.

Our program is committed to providing an inclusive, collaborative, and supportive environment in which every student has the opportunity to grow and achieve excellence. Your perspectives and feedback are essential to the continued development and improvement of our program, and we value your active participation in shaping its future. Ultimately, your growth, accomplishments, and success are among the most meaningful measures of the success of our program.

I wish you a rewarding doctoral journey filled with discovery, growth, meaningful collaborations, and accomplishments. I look forward to seeing all that you will achieve and to celebrating your successes along the way.
Welcome to the Biomedical Science PhD Program at FIU HWCOM!

Hitendra S. Chand, PhD
Graduate Program Director, PhD in Biomedical Science

Introduction

The Ph.D. Program in Biomedical Science (BMS) at the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine (HWCOM) at Florida International University (FIU) provides rigorous and interdisciplinary doctoral training designed to prepare the next generation of biomedical scientists and research leaders. A distinctive feature of this program is its flexible curriculum, which allows students to develop an individualized course of study and research training aligned with their scientific interests, professional goals, and dissertation research.

As part of an academic medical center, PhD students benefit from opportunities to engage with medical students, clinical faculty, and biomedical researchers. Students participate in the HWCOM Annual Research Symposium and other scientific activities that promote interactions across basic, translational, and clinical disciplines. These experiences provide students with a broader appreciation of the relationship between fundamental biomedical discoveries and their potential applications to human health and disease. Participating graduate faculty are primarily drawn from the Department of Cellular and Molecular Medicine at HWCOM, and the Center for Translational Science (CTS) at Port St. Lucie. Collectively, they provide expertise across a broad spectrum of biomedical disciplines, including biochemistry, cancer biology, computational sciences, genetics, neuroscience, immunology, microbiology and infectious diseases, molecular biology, medicinal chemistry, glycobiology, pharmacology, pulmonary biosciences, vascular pathobiology, redox biology and pathology, nanomedicine and nanodevices and other emerging areas of biomedical sciences.

Through rigorous coursework, mentored research, scientific communication, and professional development, the program prepares students to conduct innovative and impactful biomedical research. Students develop the knowledge and skills necessary to investigate fundamental biological mechanisms and translate fundamental scientific discoveries toward improved approaches for the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of human diseases.

Advantages of a PhD degree in Biomedical Science at HWCOM include:

- Opportunities to conduct cutting-edge research across diverse areas of biomedical sciences.
- A flexible curriculum tailored to individual research interests and career goals.
- Interdisciplinary training that integrates basic, translational, and clinically relevant research.
- Access to faculty expertise and research opportunities across HWCOM and CTS.
- An anticipated time to degree of approximately five years, contingent upon satisfactory academic and research progress.
- Comprehensive preparation for careers in academia, biomedical basic and translational research, biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries, government, and other science-related professions.

Administrative Personnel

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Ph.D. Curriculum Overview

The Ph.D. Program in Biomedical Science offers two majors: Biomedical Science and Translational Medicine. Students select one of these majors based on their research interests and career goals.

The Biomedical Science major develops the ability of graduate students to apply research skills to translate fundamental discoveries into new treatments for human diseases. Students can choose a laboratory with a faculty mentor from HWCOM in Miami or the Center for Translational Science in Port St. Lucie.

The Translational Medicine major, in collaboration with Baptist Health, provides specialized training in translational research from the bench to human trials under the guidance of faculty mentors with complementary expertise located at HWCOM and Baptist Health.

The curriculum outlined in this handbook provides a general framework for academic progression through the program. While the overall required coursework is consistent for all students, the timing and number of research and dissertation credits may vary based on each student's academic and research progress, achievement of dissertation milestones, and recommendations from the Primary Advisor (Major Professor) and Dissertation Committee.

Students should work closely with their Primary Advisor(s) and Dissertation Committee to develop an individualized plan of study that aligns with their dissertation research objectives, fulfills all program and university requirements, and supports timely progress toward degree completion.

PhD in Biomedical Science

Course Number	Course Name	Credits
Year 1		
Fall		
GMS 6003c	Introduction to Biomedical Science Research[#]	6
GMS 6864	Principles of Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics[#]	2
GMS 6930	Lectureship seminar[†#]	1
Spring		
GMS 6620	Molecular Genetics and Cellular Biology[#]	6
GMS 6097	Methods in Biomedical Research[#]	2
GMS 6930	Lectureship seminar[†#]	1
Summer		
GMS 6910	Supervised Research[#]	3
GMS 6925	Graduate Student Presentations[‡#]	2
GMS 6962	Formation of Dissertation Committee: Preliminary Proposal[#]	1
Year 2		
Fall		
GMS 6910	Supervised Research	1-10
GMS 6926	Research Symposium Presentations [‡#]	2
GMS6939	Graduate Seminar [‡#]	1
	Elective or GMS6930 Lectureship seminar[†#]	1
Spring		
GMS 6910	Supervised Research	1-10
GMS 6927	Scientific Oral Presentations[#]	2
	Elective or GMS6930 Lectureship seminar[†#]	1
Summer		
GMS 6910	Supervised Research	7
GMS 6925	Student Presentations[‡#]	2
Year 3		
Fall		
GMS 6961	Qualifying Examination[#]	5
GMS 6963	Doctoral Dissertation Proposal[#]	3
GMS 6964	Dissertation Proposal Seminar[#]	1
Spring		
GMS 7980	Dissertation Research Credits	3*
Summer		
GMS 7980	Dissertation Research Credits	3*

Year 4		
Fall		
GMS 7980	Dissertation Research Credits	3*
Spring		
GMS 7980	Dissertation Research Credits	3*
Summer		
GMS 7980	Dissertation Research Credits	3*
Year 5		
Fall		
GMS 7980	Dissertation Research Credits	3*
GMS 7981	Dissertation Defense Seminar	1

† Repeatable course
‡ Recommended to register once per year only
* May enroll for additional credits (additional fee)
# Course takes place at MMC campus

Year 1

Year 1 students will complete the following courses:

Course Number	Course Name	Credits
Fall		
GMS 6003C	Introduction to Biomedical Science Research	6
GMS 6864	Principles of Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics	2
GMS 6930	Lectureship Seminar	1
	Total	9
Spring		
GMS 6220	Molecular Genetics and Cellular Biology	6
GMS 6930	Lectureship Seminar	1
GMS 6097	Methods in Biomedical Research	2
	Total	9
Summer		
GMS 6910	Supervised Research	3
GMS 6925	Graduate Student Presentations	2
GMS 6962	Formation of Dissertation Committee	1
	Total	6

During the first year, students will:

- Complete the required coursework (above), maintaining a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher, with no grade of less than "B" in all mandatory courses.
- Report to their Primary Advisor weekly and participate in all lab-related research activities and meetings.
- Participate in the Graduate Student Presentations at the end of the Summer term.
- Regularly attend Lectureship Seminars and other lectures and seminars offered by the Department of Cellular and Molecular Medicine and CTS.
- Appoint a Dissertation Committee in discussion with Primary Advisor.
- Work with their Primary Advisor and Dissertation Committee to select electives for Year 2 and to develop a personalized developmental plan (including milestones and the list of elective courses and rationale for why they were chosen) for submission to the Curriculum Committee for review and approval.
- Participate in the Responsible Conduct of Research training.
- Begin research and explore dissertation project opportunities.

Year 2

Year 2 Students will complete the following courses:

Course Number	Course Name	Credits
Fall		
GMS 6910	Supervised Research	1-10
GMS 6926	Research Symposium Presentations	2
GMS 6939	Graduate Seminar	1
	Elective or GMS6930 Lectureship seminar	1
	Total	9
Spring		
GMS 6910	Supervised Research	1-10
GMS 6927	Scientific Oral Presentations	2
	Elective or GMS6930 Lectureship seminar	1
	Total	9
Summer		
GMS 6910	Supervised Research	7
GMS 6925	Graduate Student Presentations	2
	Total	9

In addition to the required courses listed above, students may enroll in additional elective courses as recommended by their Primary Advisor and/or Dissertation Committee, subject to approval by the Curriculum Committee.

Examples of approved elective courses are provided below. Additional elective courses described in the FIU Catalog may also be proposed by the Primary Advisor or Dissertation Committee. All proposed additional electives will be reviewed by the Curriculum Committee for approval. Following review, the committee will communicate their decision to the Program Director, who will notify both the student and the Primary Advisor.

Course Number	Course Name	Credits
BME 6545	Biosensors & Nanobioelectronics	3
BSC 5459	Advanced Bioinformatics for Biologists	3
CGS 5166	Introduction to Bioinformatics Tools	2
CHM 5305	Graduate Biological Chemistry	3
CHM 6088	Environmental Chemistry of Trace Elements	3
CHM 6382	Advanced Biological Chemistry	3
GMS 6481	Physiology and Immunology	4
GMS 6904	Introduction to Scientific Writing	3
GMS 6940	Supervised Teaching in Biomedical Science	1

During the second year, students will:

- Complete all required courses and any Program-approved elective courses.
- Report to their Primary Advisor weekly and participate in all lab-related research activities and meetings.
- Participate in the Graduate Student Presentations at the end of the Summer term.
- Participate in the Responsible Conduct of Research training.
- Regularly attend Lectureship Seminars and other lectures and seminars offered by the Department of Cellular and Molecular Medicine and CTS.
- Make progress in their research and define a dissertation project.

Year 3

Year 3 students will complete the following courses:

Course Number	Course Name	Credits
Fall		
GMS 6961	Qualifying Examination	5
GMS 6963	Doctoral Dissertation Proposal	3
GMS 6964	Dissertation Proposal Seminar	1
	Total	9
Spring		
GMS 7980	Dissertation Research Credits	3
	Total	3
Summer		
GMS 7980	Dissertation Research Credits	3
	Total	3

During Year 3, students will submit their Doctoral Dissertation Proposal (GMS 6963) and present a Dissertation Proposal Seminar (GMS 6964). Upon successful completion of the above courses, they will be allowed to register for Dissertation Research Credits (GMS 7980). Students should also register for the Lectureship Seminar Series and participate during the fall and spring terms, if on MMC Campus.

During the third year, students will:

- Successfully complete the Qualifying Examination (GMS 6961) and submit the review manuscript for publication.
- Communicate original research project as a Graduate Student Seminar in the form of a formal scientific presentation to peers and the scientific community of HWCOM, CTS, and FIU.
- Prepare and defend a Doctoral Dissertation Proposal as required for admission to PhD candidacy.
- Regularly attend Lectureship Seminars and other lectures and seminars offered by the Department of Cellular and Molecular Medicine and CTS.
- Attend Lectureship Seminar Series (GMS 6930) as in Years 2 & 3, if on MMC Campus.
- Present results at the Graduate Research Day and at the HWCOM Research Symposium.
- Make substantial progress towards achieving the aims of their dissertation project.
- Present research findings at a national scientific meeting.

Years 4 and 5

During Years 4 and 5, students will engage primarily in dissertation research and work towards the completion of their PhD degree. They may register for the Graduate Seminar and Lectureship Series (GMS 6930) during the fall and spring term each year, with additional fee payments.

During this phase, students are expected to achieve expert knowledge and skills in their specialty area, attain broad knowledge in different aspects of biomedical science research, focus on developing research and communication skills, and present/publish their major research findings.

During Years 4 and 5, students will:

- Present research findings at national conferences/symposia.
- Publish original research, including at least one first or last author manuscript.
- Participate in at least three professional development activities (see: https://gradschool.fiu.edu/professional-development/).
- Complete their dissertation research.
- Write and successfully defend their dissertation.

Translational Medicine Major

Course Number	Course Name	Credits
Year 1		
Fall		
GMS 6003c	Introduction to Biomedical Science Research[#]	6
GMS 6864	Principles of Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics[#]	2
GMS 6930	Lectureship seminar[†#]	1
Spring		
GMS 6620	Molecular Genetics and Cellular Biology[#]	6
GMS 6097	Methods in Biomedical Research[#]	2
GMS 6930	Lectureship seminar[†#]	1
Summer		
GMS 6542	Translational Clinical Pharmacology[#]	3
GMS 6605	Basic Structure of the Human Body[#]	3
GMS 6925	Graduate Student Presentations[#]	2
GMS 6962	Formation of Dissertation Committee: Preliminary Proposal[#]	1
Year 2		
Fall		
GMS 6910	Supervised Research	1-10
GMS6939	Graduate Seminar[‡#]	1
	Elective or GMS6930 Lectureship seminar[†#]	1
Spring		
GMS 6910	Supervised Research	1-10
GMS 6927	Scientific Oral Presentations[#]	2
GMS 6926	Research Symposium Presentation[#]	2
	Elective or GMS6930 Lectureship seminar[†#]	1
Summer		
GMS 6910	Supervised Research	5
GMS 6925	Graduate Student Presentations‡	2
Year 3		
Fall		
GMS 6961	Qualifying Examination[#]	5
GMS 6963	Doctoral Dissertation Proposal[#]	3
GMS 6964	Dissertation Proposal Seminar[#]	1
Spring		
GMS 7980	Dissertation Research Credits	3*
Summer		

GMS 7980	Dissertation Research Credits	3*
Year 4		
Fall		
GMS 7980	Dissertation Research Credits	3*
Spring		
GMS 7980	Dissertation Research Credits	3*
Summer		
GMS 7980	Dissertation Research Credits	3*
Year 5		
Fall		
GMS 7980	Dissertation Research Credits	3*
GMS 7981	Dissertation Defense Seminar	1

† Repeatable course
‡ Recommended to register once per year only
* May enroll for additional credits (additional fee)
# Course takes place at MMC campus

Year 1

Year 1 students will complete the following courses:

Course Number	Course Name	Credits
Fall		
GMS 6003C	Introduction to Biomedical Science Research	6
GMS 6864	Principles of Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics	2
GMS 6930	Lectureship Seminar	1
	Total	9
Spring		
GMS 6220	Molecular Genetics and Cellular Biology	6
GMS 6930	Lectureship Seminar	1
GMS 6097	Methods in Biomedical Research	2
	Total	9
Summer		
GMS 6542	Translational Clinical Pharmacology	3
GMS 6605	Basic Structure of the Human Body	3
GMS 6925	Graduate Student Presentation	2
GMS 6962	Formation of Dissertation Committee: Preliminary Proposal	1

Total	9

During the first year, students will:

- Complete the required coursework (above), maintaining a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher, with no grade of less than "B" in all mandatory courses.
- Report to their Primary Advisor weekly and participate in all lab-related research activities and meetings.
- Participate in the Graduate Student Presentations at the end of the Summer term.
- Regularly attend Lectureship Seminars and other lectures and seminars offered by the Department of Cellular and Molecular Medicine and CTS.
- Confirm Primary Advisors (Major Professors) and appoint a Dissertation Committee.
- Work with their Advisors and Dissertation Committee to select elective courses for Year 2 and to develop a personalized developmental plan (including milestones and the list of elective courses and rationale for why they were chosen) for submission to the Curriculum Committee for review and approval.
- Participate in the Responsible Conduct of Research training.
- Begin research and explore dissertation project opportunities.

Year 2

Year 2 students will complete the following courses:

Course Number	Course Name	Credits
Fall		
GMS 6910	Supervised Research	1-10
GMS 6939	Graduate Seminar	1
GMS 6926	Research Symposium Presentation	2
	Elective or GMS6930 Lectureship seminar	1
	Total	9
Spring		
GMS 6910	Supervised Research	1-10
GMS 6927	Scientific Oral Presentations	2
	Elective or GMS6930 Lectureship seminar	1
	Total	9
Summer		
GMS 6910	Supervised Research	7

GMS 6925	Graduate Student Presentations	2
	Total	9

In addition to the required courses listed above, students may enroll in additional elective courses as recommended by their Primary Advisors and/or Dissertation Committee, subject to approval by the Curriculum Committee and the Student Affairs Committee.

Examples of approved elective courses are provided below. Additional elective courses described in the FIU Catalog may also be proposed by the Primary Advisors or Dissertation Committee. All proposed additional electives will be reviewed by the Curriculum Committee for approval. Following review, the committee will communicate their decision to the Program Director, who will notify both the student and Primary Advisors.

Course No.	Course Name	Credits
BME 6545	Biosensors & Nanobioelectronics	3
BSC 5459	Advanced Bioinformatics for Biologists	3
CGS 5166	Introduction to Bioinformatics Tools	2
CHM 5305	Graduate Biological Chemistry	3
CHM 6088	Environmental Chemistry of Trace Elements	3
CHM 6382	Advanced Biological Chemistry	3
GMS 6481	Physiology and Immunology	4
GMS 6904	Introduction to Scientific Writing	3
GMS 6940	Supervised Teaching in Biomedical Science	1

During the second year, students will:

- Complete all required courses and any Program-approved elective courses.
- Report to their Primary Advisors weekly and participate in all lab-related research activities and meetings.
- Participate in the Graduate Student Presentations at the end of the Summer term.
- Regularly attend Lectureship Seminars and other lectures and seminars offered by the Department of Cellular and Molecular Medicine and CTS.
- Make progress in their research and define a dissertation project.

Year 3

Year 3 students will complete the following courses:

Course Number		Course Name	Credits
Fall			
GMS 6961	Qualifying Examination	5	
GMS 6963	Doctoral Dissertation Proposal	3	
GMS 6964	Dissertation Proposal Seminar	1	
	Total	9	
Spring			
GMS 7980	Dissertation Research Credits	3	
	Total	3	
Summer			
GMS 7980	Dissertation Research Credits	3	
	Total	3	

Students are expected to submit their Doctoral Dissertation Proposal (GMS 6963) and present a Dissertation Proposal Seminar (GMS 6964). Upon successful completion of the above courses, they will be allowed to register for Dissertation Research Credits (GMS 7980). Students should also attend all conferences and lectures included in the Lectureship Seminar Series (GMS6930) during the fall and spring terms, but they should not register.

During the third year, students will:

- Successfully complete the Qualifying Examination (GMS 6961) and submit the review article for publication.
- Communicate original research project as a Graduate Student Seminar in the form of a formal scientific presentation to peers and the scientific community of HWCOM, CTS, and FIU.
- Prepare and defend a Doctoral Dissertation Proposal as required for admission to PhD candidacy.
- Regularly attend Lectureship Seminars and other lectures and seminars offered by the Department of Cellular and Molecular Medicine and CTS.
- Present results at the Graduate Research Day and at the HWCOM Research Symposium.
- Make substantial progress towards achieving the aims of their dissertation project.
- Present their work at a national scientific meeting.

Years 4 and 5

During Years 4 and 5, students will engage primarily in dissertation research and work towards the completion of their PhD degree. They may register for the Graduate Seminar and Lectureship Series (GMS 6930) during the fall and spring term each year, with additional fee payments.

During this phase, students are expected to achieve expert knowledge and skills in their specialty area, attain broad knowledge in different aspects of biomedical science research, focus on developing research and communication skills, and present/publish their major research findings.

Year 4 and 5 students will:

- Present research findings at national conferences/symposia.
- Publish original research, including at least one first or last author manuscript.
- Participate in at least three professional development activities.
- Complete their dissertation research.
- Write and successfully defend their dissertation.

Academic Policies

Course Registration and Credit Load

The Program Manager will assist students with course registration and enrollment throughout the program. Students are required to maintain full-time enrollment, which consists of a minimum of nine (9) credit hours during the Fall and Spring semesters and six (6) credit hours during the Summer semester. Once a student has advanced to candidacy, three (3) dissertation credits is considered full-time enrollment. The maximum number of credit hours which a graduate student may carry in a single term without special permission is 15. A heavier load must be approved by both the Graduate Program Director and the Dean of the University Graduate School (see: https://policies.fiu.edu/files/759.pdf)

Required Immunizations

As a prerequisite to registration, FIU requires all students to comply with the Florida Board of Governors' immunization requirements and provide documentation demonstrating immunity to the following diseases:

- Measles, Mumps, Rubella
- Hepatitis B
- Meningitis

Failure to provide proof of immunization or waivers (where applicable) will result in a registration hold.

The Immunization Documentation Form must be completed and returned to University Health Services via email immune@fiu.edu or via fax 305-348-3336 (see: https://dasa.fiu.edu/student-support/wellness/immunization-insurance/immunization/)

International Students

All F-1 and J-1 visa students must check in using the New Panther Portal within 10 days of arriving in the United States (if arriving from abroad), and no later than 15 days after the first day of the semester (see: https://globalaffairs.fiu.edu/isss/https://isss.fiu.edu/international-students/f-1-j-1-check-in/index.htmlhttps://globalaffairs.fiu.edu/isss/).

Students must also report to the Office of International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS), located in the Student Academic Success Center (SACS-230), upon their arrival on campus.
Additional requirements include:

- Attendance at the mandatory International Student Orientation/New Panther information session.
- Completion of the mandatory ISSS check-in process including upload of all required immigration documents through the ISSS Portal.
- Continuous registration as a full-time student with 9 credits during the Fall and Spring terms and 6 credits during the Summer term.
- Proof of medical insurance (students without proof of medical insurance will not be allowed to register).
- Presentation and maintenance of valid immigration documents, including:
    - Form I-20 (F1) or DS-2019 (J-1)
    - Passport
    - Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Record
- Notification to ISSS of any changes in immigration status, address, or academic program.

Students planning to travel outside the United States should consult ISSS before departure to ensure their immigration documents, including travel signatures on the I-20 or DS-2019, remain valid for reentry.

Required Research Trainings

All students are required to complete the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training course through the online CITI Program. The RCR training covers the following core areas:

- Animal Subjects
- Collaborative Relationships
- Conflicts of Interest and Commitment
- Data Acquisition and Management
- Human Subjects
- Mentoring
- Peer Review
- Research Misconduct
- Responsible Authorship

Prior to gaining laboratory access, students must also complete all safety training courses required by FIU Environmental Health & Safety (EH&S). Training assignments will be issued by EH&S through CampusOptics. All students are required to complete the following core training modules:

- Laboratory Hazard Awareness
- Hazard Communication (HAZCOM)
- Fire Safety (online or instructor-led)

Additional trainings will be assigned based on laboratory activities and identified hazards. (See: https://ehs.fiu.edu/_assets/docs/training/required-training-laboratories.pdf).

Students involved in human or animal research must complete all required training and obtain the appropriate committee approvals before initiating any research activities. All required approvals must be obtained prior to commencing research activities.

- Research involving human subjects requires approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (http://research.fiu.edu/irb/).
- Research involving vertebrate animals requires approval from the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) (http://research.fiu.edu/iacuc/).
- Research involving recombinant DNA, biohazardous materials, or other activities subject to biosafety oversight requires approval from the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) (http://research.fiu.edu/ibc/).

Course Syllabus and Teaching Learning Format

The syllabus for each course contains the learning objectives, schedule of activities, topics to be presented, faculty involved, listing of course materials, evaluation system, grading policies, and all other course policies, including attendance expectations. A variety of learning formats may be used, including lectures, discussion groups, individual and group projects, and lab work.

Graduate students may access information about the course syllabi, content, announcements, documents, recordings of all lectures via CanvasMed. Students are expected to check the websites regularly for updates and changes.

Conduct of Examinations

A variety of assessment formats are used, including objective multiple-choice questions (MCQ), oral and written reports, exams, and essays. Course directors will review results with the class following an examination.

Exam Grades

Students may raise concerns about exam questions during the exam using a “challenge card.” Students can also raise concern about exams with the BMS Curriculum and Evaluation Committee and the Graduate Program Director. Students will receive their exam results individually. General class performance on individual exams will be provided to students in the results report. High score, low score, mean, median, and the standard deviation will ordinarily be in the reports for objective exams.

Course Grades

Performance in courses will be graded either numerically, letter grade, or pass/fail. Since the University Graduate School employs a letter grading system, all numerical grades will be converted to letter grades. The grading system for a given course will be clearly described in the course syllabus. Unless otherwise indicated, the following conversion between numerical and letter grades will be implemented.

% Marks	Grade Conversation	Points per credit hour
≥ 90 - 100	A	4.00
≥ 80 - <90	A-	3.67
≥ 70 - <80	B+	3.33
≥ 60 - <70	B	3.00
≥ 50 - <59	C	2.00
> 50	F	0

Forgiveness Policy

Graduate courses are not eligible for grade forgiveness. The FIU Grade Forgiveness policy is only applicable to undergraduate courses. [Source: https://policies.fiu.edu/files/454.pdf]

Academic Grievance Procedure

Quality education thrives in environments built on mutual respect, open communication, and transparency between students and faculty. While most academic concerns can be resolved through informal discussion, FIU provides a clear, impartial process for addressing formal academic grievances when needed.

Often grievances grow out of misunderstandings or misperceptions between faculty and students regarding expectations for performance or behavior. Faculty have an obligation to ensure that students are aware of academic and professional expectations.

Students have a concomitant obligation to pursue diligently and to satisfy and uphold the student honor code and all professional standards. Students are bound to observe and respect the policies, rules and regulations of the University, their respective departments, and their instructors. Many grievances related to student-faculty relations may be settled informally, via open and transparent processes of communication.

Before filing a formal grievance, students must first attempt to resolve concerns informally, by speaking directly with the instructor, then with the department chair/director if necessary. The Office

of the Ombudsperson is available to provide guidance and support to students and faculty throughout this process: 305-348-2797 or Ombuds@fiu.edu.

When all means of informal resolution have been exhausted, the parties involved must have an impartial and transparent forum in which to seek review and resolution of the academic grievance.

Students and faculty may contact the Faculty Fellow for Academic Integrity to initiate or respond to a formal academic grievance, once the informal resolution has concluded (FFAI@fiu.edu).

The University's Academic Grievance Policy and Procedures, including flowcharts, FAQs, eligibility, timelines, and forms, are available online at: https://ffai.fiu.edu and the full policy document is available at: https://policies.fiu.edu/files/737.pdf.

Academic Standing

To remain in good academic standing, graduate students must maintain a graduate GPA of 3.0 earning a Grade 'B' or higher in each course. For doctoral students, for whom an annual evaluation is required, satisfactory performance in the annual evaluation is necessary in order to maintain good academic standing.
[Source: https://policies.fiu.edu/files/758.pdf]

Final Grades

Final grades at FIU are posted online in the MyFIU PantherSoft portal (http://my.fiu.edu). Students earning a grade below 'B' in a course may be required to repeat the course or complete an alternative remediation process, as determined by the Course Director and approved by the Curriculum Committee and Program Director.

Warning

A graduate student whose cumulative graduate GPA falls below a 3.0 for the first time in a given term will be placed on warning, indicating academic difficulty.

A doctoral student whose annual evaluation is unsatisfactory in a given year will be placed on warning, indicating difficulty in progressing through the program.

The Graduate Program Director and the BMS Student Affairs Committee will work with the student to improve academic performance.

Probation

A graduate student whose cumulative graduate GPA falls below 3.0 for a second term will be placed on probation, indicating serious academic difficulty.

A second unsatisfactory annual evaluation for doctoral students will result in probation, indicating serious difficulty in progressing through the program.

Dismissal

A graduate student on probation whose cumulative and semester GPA's fall below a 3.0 for a third term will be automatically dismissed from the program and the University. The student has ten working days to appeal the dismissal decision. The appeal must be made in writing to the Dean of the University Graduate School. An electronic Petition for Exception to Graduate Requirements will be initiated by the Program Manager at the request of the student.
[Source: https://onestop.fiu.edu/registration/appeals/academic-dismissal/]

A student may also be dismissed for failure to make satisfactory progress toward degree completion or failure to complete all the requirements for a graduate degree within the time limits for degree completion. Each unit must have a policy specifying the criteria for satisfactory progress at each stage of the program.

A student may be dismissed for non-compliance with the continuous enrollment policy for doctoral students who have advanced to candidacy or master's students with an approved research proposal.

A third unsatisfactory annual evaluation for doctoral students will result in dismissal.

Advisor Assignment and Change of Advisor

Students enter the program with Primary Advisor(s) already identified and committed to supporting their academic and research training. The Advisors serve as the student's primary mentor and is responsible for guiding the student's research, academic progress, and professional development. The advisor-student relationship is a critical component of a successful graduate experience, requiring clear communication, mutual respect, and shared expectations regarding research goals, training, and degree progress.
While every effort should be made to resolve concerns through open and professional communication, students may request a change of Advisor if they believe that significant differences, irreconcilable disagreements, or incompatibility are preventing a productive mentoring relationship. Students considering a change of Advisor are encouraged to consult with the Graduate Program Director to discuss their concerns and explore possible resolutions.
A change of Advisor requires identification of a new faculty member who agrees to serve as the student's Advisor and approval by the Graduate Program Director. Students should be aware that changing Advisors may affect research progress, funding arrangements, and the timeline for degree completion, particularly if the change occurs after substantial progress has been made on a research

project. For this reason, students are encouraged to address concerns promptly and carefully consider the implications of changing Advisors.

Annual Student Evaluation and Mentoring Plan

The Annual Student Evaluation and Mentoring Plan is required of all PhD students on an annual basis until they successfully complete the program. The primary purpose of this process is to facilitate meaningful engagement among the student, Primary Advisors, and dissertation committee members in evaluating academic and research progress and providing ongoing mentorship. Student performance is assessed in accordance with the requirements of the PhD in Biomedical Science Program and University Graduate School policies.

The Annual Student Evaluation and Mentoring Plan form must be submitted to the University Graduate School by May 30th of each year. For first-year students, the evaluation is conducted by the Graduate Program Director. Thereafter, annual evaluations are conducted by the student's Advisor and Dissertation Committee, with input from the Student Affairs Committee, as appropriate.

Learning Environment

FIU Student Conduct and Honor Code

Students enrolled in the PhD Program in Biomedical Science must adhere to the FIU Student Conduct and Honor Code: https://regulations.fiu.edu/FIU-2501-2025-06-16.pdf

The Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity (SCAI), works to ensure that FIU is a "safe and stimulating environment in which scholarship and personal growth may occur" (Code, pg. 1). SCAI is tasked with administering the application of FIU Regulation 2501, the Student Conduct and Honor Code (Code) in a fair and developmental manner. Through the application of the Code, the safety and growth of community members is protected, and the integrity of an FIU degree is preserved. Additional information is available online: https://dasa.fiu.edu/all-departments/student-conduct-and-academic-integrity/index.html

Student behavior that violates FIU Regulation 2501 Student Conduct and Honor Code will be processed by SCAI. Reports regarding violations of the Student Conduct and Honor Code can be made directly to SCAI through the online Incident Reporting Form or by calling (305)348-3939.

Academic Misconduct

Within the FIU Student Conduct and Honor Code, academic misconduct is defined as "any act or omission by a student, which violates the concept of academic integrity and undermines the academic mission of the University in violation of the Code." Academic misconduct violations are reported to SCAI and include:

- Academic Dishonesty
- Bribery
- Cheating
- Commercial Use
- Complicity
- Falsification of Records
- Misrepresentation
- Multiple Submission
- Plagiarism

Students are encouraged to review the complete list of prohibited conduct and related procedures in the FIU Student Conduct and Honor Code. Cases of alleged academic misconduct are reviewed and resolved in accordance with University policies and procedures.

Discrimination and Harassment

FIU is committed to providing a learning and work environment free from any form of discrimination or harassment based on race, color, pregnancy, religion, age, disability, national origin, marital status, veteran status, and sex, including gender, gender expression, gender identity, and sexual orientation. FIU's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) is responsible for administering FIU Regulations 105 and 106, which prohibit such discrimination and harassment and set forth procedures for responding to such allegations.

OCR responds to and investigates allegations in accordance with University policies, procedures, and regulations as well as applicable federal laws, including Title VI, Title VII, Title IX, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

FIU Regulation 105 and 106

Conduct that may violate FIU Regulation 105 (Sexual Harassment [Title IX] and Sexual Misconduct) and Regulation 106 (Nondiscrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation [Title VII]) should be reported directly to the Office of Civil Rights (OCR).

Reports may be submitted online at https://report.fiu.edu, by mail, or in person at 11200 SW 8th Street, Primera Casa (PC) 220, Miami, FL 33199.

A student may also report mistreatment or seek guidance from the FIU Ombuds, HWCOM Ombuds, BMS Graduate Program Director or the BMS Student Affairs Committee.

HWCOM Professionalism Standards

Professionalism Standards at HWCOM are defined by the Professional Attributes (behaviors and attitudes) that govern the professionalism expectations of all HWCOM community members, including students, faculty, and staff.

Professionalism Attributes

All members of the HWCOM community (including students, faculty, and staff) are expected to demonstrate the following professional attributes:

- *Accountability:* The individual demonstrates a willingness to accept responsibility for actions, admit error, and be accountable to self, team, patients, and society. Accountability includes the ability to self-assess balance and emotional well-being and to seek help if unable to carry out duties.

- *Adaptability:* The individual is able and willing to adjust to meet the needs of new or changing circumstances.

- *Collaboration:* The individual effectively works with others, demonstrating respect, clear communication, and willingness to cooperate in an open-minded fashion.

- *Conscientiousness:* The individual demonstrates thoroughness and dependability in following through with assigned tasks.

- *Critical Thinking:* The individual uses an investigatory and analytic approach to all situations. The individual is inquisitive, thoughtful, and able to work through a problem.

- *Discernment:* The individual demonstrates awareness of the limits of their own knowledge or skills and applies knowledge and skills appropriately for their level of training.

- *Emotional Intelligence:* The individual demonstrates awareness of emotions of self and others and uses this information to act with situational awareness.

- *Ethical Behavior:* The individual demonstrates ethical behavior in the classroom and patient care environments (demonstrating beneficence and non-maleficence and promoting autonomy and justice) and is compliant with FIU and HWCOM policies and regulations.

- *Integrity:* The individual demonstrates truth-telling and the absence of deception in their interactions with others.

- *Respect:* The individual demonstrates proper regard toward faculty, staff, patients, and peers in diverse settings and interactions.

- *Self-Improvement:* The individual is responsive to feedback and is willing to assess self and set personal goals for development. This includes assessing personal coping strategies, managing conflicts between personal and professional responsibilities, and seeking help appropriately when needed.

HWCOM is committed to promoting academic and professional success for students, faculty, and staff at all locations to promote an atmosphere of mutual respect, collegiality, fairness, integrity, and trust. Students, faculty, and staff bear significant responsibility in creating and maintaining this atmosphere. Violations of professionalism standards by any member of the College may be discussed with the FIU Ombuds, HWCOM Ombuds, BMS Graduate Program Director, the BMS Student Affairs Committee, or may be reported through the university reporting process at https://report.fiu.edu.

Student Professionalism Violations

If the initial SCAI review determines that the student **has not violated** the university's student conduct and honor code, reports of student unprofessional behavior will be referred back to the HWCOM's

Senior Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and HWCOM's Associate Dean of Research for the overall evaluation of a student's professionalism in accordance with HWCOM Policies and Standards.

HWCOM's Senior Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and HWCOM's Associate Dean of Research will meet with the student and review all available information (including the initial report). This review may result in any of three possible outcomes, guided by precedent, individual circumstances, and severity of the violation:

1. resolution with no further action;
2. a confidential consent agreement acknowledging wrongdoing with no further action; or
3. referral of the student to the Program Committee for possible actions.

If the initial SCAI review determines that the **student has violated** the university's student conduct and honor code, SCAI will make an initial determination on university sanctions. Except in cases where the action has resulted in expulsion, following a determination from SCAI, reports of student unprofessional behavior will then be referred back to HWCOM's Senior Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and HWCOM's Associate Dean of Research for the overall evaluation of a student's professionalism in accordance with HWCOM Policies and Standards.

HWCOM's Senior Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and HWCOM's Associate Dean of Research will meet with the student and review all available information (including the initial report and any SCAI determinations). This review may result in any of three possible outcomes, guided by precedent, individual circumstances, and severity of the violation:

1. resolution with no further action;
2. a confidential consent agreement acknowledging wrongdoing with no further action; or
3. referral of the student to the BMS Student Affairs Committee for possible additional actions.

Student Mistreatment

FIU HWCOM has defined mistreatment as any behavior that is harmful or offensive and unreasonably interferes with a student's learning*. Such behavior may be verbal (swearing, humiliation, insults), emotional (neglect, a hostile environment), and physical (threats, physical harm). Examples of mistreatment include but are not limited to:

- Public embarrassment/humiliation
- Physical harm or threats of physical harm
- Requirement to perform personal services
- Unwanted sexual advances, requests to exchange sexual favors for grades or other rewards
- Denial of opportunities for training or rewards based on personal beliefs, personal characteristics, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, or religion
- Use of offensive remarks/names based on personal beliefs, personal characteristics, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, or religion

- Issuance of lower assessments/grades based on personal beliefs, personal characteristics, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, or religion
- Other behaviors which are contrary to the spirit of learning and/or violate trust between the teacher and learner

*Students should be aware that doctoral student training is a rigorous process, and feedback may occasionally be uncomfortable. For example, on-the-spot questioning is frequently utilized in higher education to not only assess knowledge, but also to promote synthesis and application of that knowledge. In and of itself, questioning does not constitute mistreatment but can become so if intended to publicly embarrass or humiliate a student. Students should take this background into account when assessing potential cases of mistreatment

All students, faculty, and staff affiliated with FIU HWCOM shall report all incidents of alleged mistreatment. Mistreatment can be reported anonymously at https://report.fiu.edu. A student may also report mistreatment or seek guidance from the FIU Ombuds, HWCOM Ombuds, BMS Graduate Program Director or the BMS Student Affairs Committee.

Attendance Policies

Regular attendance and active participation are essential components of doctoral training in the PhD Program in Biomedical Science. Students are expected to attend all required classes, seminars, laboratories, and program-sponsored activities to ensure mastery of course content and achievement of program learning outcomes and performance objectives.

As a full-time doctoral program, the PhD Program in Biomedical Science requires students to devote themselves fully to their academic, research, and professional development activities. This commitment includes the timely completion of coursework, active participation in seminars and program events, and sustained engagement in laboratory research. Graduate education extends beyond the classroom; therefore, students are expected to maintain regular participation in research and scholarly activities throughout the year, including periods when classes are not in session.

Course instructors may establish specific attendance and participation requirements and may consider attendance, preparedness, and engagement when evaluating student performance. Course-specific attendance policies, expectations, and any associated penalties for non-attendance will be outlined in the course syllabus and discussed during the first week of class. Excessive absences may result in academic penalties, up to and including a failing grade, as specified by the instructor.

Enrollment in a course is limited to students who are officially registered through the University. Individuals who are not properly enrolled or otherwise authorized by the University may not attend classes, laboratories, or other instructional activities.

Failure to comply with attendance, participation, or research engagement expectations may result in referral to the BMS Student Affairs Committee for review and appropriate action.

Seminar Attendance and Professional Development

Students are expected to attend program-sponsored seminars and scientific events at HWCOM throughout their graduate training. These include:

- Dr. Herbert and Nicole Wertheim Lecture Series at MMC (in person for MMC-based students; remotely for CTS-based students);
- Treasure Coast Seminar Series at CTS (in person for CTS-based students; remotely for MMC-based students);
- MMC and CTS Recruitment Guest Lectures;
- MMC Medical and Graduate Students & Residents Research Symposium;
- CTS Annual South Florida Translational Research Symposium; and

- Other relevant seminars, workshops, lectures, and scientific presentations offered by HWCOM, CTS, and affiliated academic units.

Participation in these activities is an important component of doctoral training, providing opportunities for scientific enrichment, professional development, networking, and exposure to emerging areas of biomedical research. Students may be required to document attendance upon request by the program.

Failure to meet attendance or participation expectations may result in referral to the BMS Student Affairs Committee for review and the implementation of appropriate corrective actions.

Excused Absences

The Excused Absence Policy is designed to provide graduate students with the flexibility to address personal, medical, family, and professional obligations while minimizing disruptions to their educational experience and academic progress. Students are not required to request an excused absence for activities that are not designated as mandatory by the program.

Students who anticipate missing a mandatory class, seminar, laboratory, examination, or other required activity should submit an Absence Excusal Form as far in advance as possible (refer to Appendix A). For planned absences, students are expected to notify the BMS Program Manager and submit the request at least four (4) weeks prior to the anticipated absence whenever feasible. Failure to provide advance notice may affect the approval of the request unless extenuating circumstances exist.

If a student is uncertain whether a particular circumstance qualifies for an excused absence or believes an exception to policy may be warranted, the student should consult with the BMS Program Manager.

All excused absences are subject to review and approval by the program, and students remain responsible for completing any coursework, examinations, assignments, or other academic requirements associated with the missed activity.

Excused absences may be granted for the following circumstances. Supporting documentation may be required.

Unplanned Absences

- Acute illness or injury
- Accidents
- Death of an immediate family member
- Other emergencies, reviewed on a case-by-case basis

Planned Absences

- Routine healthcare appointments
- Religious observances
- Student's wedding or the wedding of an immediate family member
- Maternity, paternity, or parental leave
- Funeral services
- Military orders, training, or deployment
- Administrative, legal, or immigration-related matters
- Jury duty or other court-related obligations
- Scholarly and professional activities, including the presentation of scholarly work at conferences or scientific meetings

Excused absence requests are generally **not granted** for:

- Professional, scholarly, or academic activities while a student is on academic probation
- Weddings other than those of the student or an immediate family member
- Graduation ceremonies
- Social events
- Family vacations, reunions, or recreational travel

Emergency Absence Procedures

In the event of an unplanned absence, students must notify the BMS Program Manager as soon as reasonably possible. An Excused Absence Request Form must be submitted as soon as circumstances permit.

Students who are absent for three (3) or more consecutive days due to illness must provide documentation from a licensed healthcare provider verifying the illness and the dates affected. The program reserves the right to request additional documentation when necessary to evaluate an absence request.

If a prolonged illness, injury, or other medical condition substantially impairs a student's ability to meet program requirements, the student may be required to take a Leave of Absence in accordance with University and program policies.

Leave Requests

Students working as Graduate Assistants do not earn sick or vacation days. Any leave request is determined by the student's Primary Advisor(s) and/or the Graduate Program Director.

Leaves of Absence

A student who finds it necessary to be excused from registration in a graduate degree program for three consecutive semesters, or for one semester in the case of students subject to continuous enrollment requirements, must formally request a Leave of Absence (LOA) from the program.

Students who have an approved dissertation proposal on file with the University Graduate School (UGS) are subject to the University's continuous enrollment policy 380.008 and must remain continuously enrolled in three (3) dissertation credits each semester until graduation, unless an approved leave of absence or other exception has been granted in accordance with University policy.

Leave of Absence requests are submitted through the University Graduate School's Electronic Petition for Exception to Graduate Requirements process. Students seeking a leave must first consult with the BMS Program Manager, who will prepare and submit the petition on the student's behalf. Requests must be clearly justified and are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Students are expected to initiate the request and provide all supporting documentation prior to the start of the semester for which the leave is being requested.

Leave will generally be granted in cases involving personal hardship or family need. Academic standing is not considered a reason for granting a leave of absence.

Students returning from a leave of absence should be aware that changes may have occurred during their absence that could affect their academic progress. As a result, students may be required to modify their research committee membership, research plan, timeline for degree completion, or other program requirements, as determined by the Graduate Program Director and the student's Primary Advisor(s). Students are encouraged to meet with the BMS Program Manager, Graduate Program Director, and Primary Advisor(s) before returning to ensure a smooth transition back into the program.

[Source: https://policies.fiu.edu/files/380.048]

Program Governance

The success of the PhD Program in Biomedical Science depends on the active involvement of faculty members who serve on program committees dedicated to supporting students and maintaining academic excellence. These committees oversee admissions, recruitment, curriculum development, student progress, professional development, and overall program evaluation.

Throughout their graduate training, students may work directly or indirectly with one or more of these committees. The committees serve as important resources for mentoring, academic guidance, policy oversight, and continuous improvement of the student experience. The primary responsibilities of each committee are described below.

Executive Committee

- Oversees all aspects of the PhD in Biomedical Science program and the functioning of all other BMS committees.
- Reviews the charter of all BMS committees.
- Identifies the membership for all BMS committees.
- Decides on admissions recommendations with the advice of the Admissions Committee and the Primary Advisor faculty.
- Supervises recruitment strategies with the advice of the Recruitment Committee
- Decides on curriculum changes and improvements with the advice of the Curriculum and the Student Affairs Committees.
- Evaluates the graduate program performance and propose actions to enhance the graduate student experience.
- Designs, initiates, and maintains a robust continuous quality improvement (CQI) and program review process.
- Encourages interaction among graduate students.

Recruitment Committee

- Implements best practices and develop strategic recruitment plans to attract highly qualified students to the program.
- Employs all resources available through the University Graduate School (UGS).
- Joins UGS in their recruitment trips.
- Identifies and participate in recruitment trips and attend career fairs.
- Identifies and directly contact potential students.
- Develops and distributes promotional materials, such as brochures, posters, etc.
- Coordinates mailings and videoconferences.
- Maintains the recruitment aspects of the program website.

- Identifies and propose promotional materials to enhance recruitment efforts.
- Proposes award of Dean's fellowship to highly qualified applicants.

Admissions Committee

- Annually review admission requirements to the PhD program and provide advice to the Graduate Program Director on suggested changes to admission requirements and procedures.
- Prepares rubric based on the admission requirements for the evaluation of applicants to the program and review applications selecting applicants' interview.
- Interviews applicants for further consideration for the program faculty, with emphasis on the comments of faculty that has positions in their labs.
- Requests faculty feedback on the applicants.
- Invites domestic applicants to visit FIU. Organize the visit and ensure faculty access to applicant information.
- Prepares a report to the BMS Executive Committee with the conclusions on each applicant, summaries of applicant applications, and faculty feedback on the applicants.
- Tracks the success of the admissions process each year.
- Provides a written report on the activities and recruitment outcome to the Graduate Program Director.

Curriculum and Evaluation Committee

- Continuously monitors the effectiveness of the curriculum and proposes changes whenever necessary.
- Considers requests for changes in the curriculum that may be related to course content, deletion and/or addition of courses.
- Review, modify, and evaluate curriculum, beginning with program and student learning objectives.
- Advises the Graduate Program Directorr on a uniform grading policy
- Interacts closely with faculty in the development of new courses.
- Oversees that the graduate students have completed all necessary laboratory safety courses and inform the Graduate Program Director on failures to complete mandatory training.
- Ensures that the quality of graduate student training remains consistently high throughout the program.
- Reviews, and when necessary, suggests changes to the curricular aspects of the individualized student development plan and report to the Primary Advisor, and Graduate Program Director.

Student Affairs Committee

- Coordinates graduate student orientation efforts with the Graduate Program Director.
- Reviews and, when necessary, suggest changes to the programmatic aspects of the individualized student developmental plan, and reports to the Primary Advisor and Graduate Program Director yearly.
- Monitors and evaluates the progress of each graduate student. Identifies any problems and brings it to the attention of the student, the Advisor, and the Graduate Program Director
- Reviews dissertation committee membership for compliance with programmatic requirements, student personalized development plan, and graduate school regulations. Provides feedback to the student, Advisor, and notifies the Graduate Program Director.
- Advice regarding the request from the student to change Advisor or membership of the Dissertation Committee and inform the Graduate Program Director.
- Evaluates and advises the Graduate Program Director on recommendations by Advisor(s) or dissertation committees for student dismissal.
- Provides counseling to aid in the personal growth of the student.
- Assigns two members of the committee as Faculty Counselors for graduate students at MMC and CTS to support students in solving grievances and other difficulties. The Counselors advise and support students in meetings with other faculty or in interactions with the administration.
- Advise the Graduate Program Director on student misconduct issues.
- Oversees extra-curricular activities of the graduate students and informs the Graduate Program Director.
- Evaluates the grades of graduate students and informs the Advisor(s) and the Graduate Program Director about concerns.
- Provides mentoring when student performance is unsatisfactory and establishes a plan to help the student overcome any issues related to performance.

Doctoral Degree Requirements

The PhD in Biomedical Science requires a minimum of 75 post-baccalaureate credits, of which at least 15 credits are allocated for dissertation research. Students must have at least 42 credits at MMC. Students are required to achieve a grade of B or higher in all courses and maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher, refer to guidelines under 'Final Grades' section on page 41 for further details
[Source: https://catalog.fiu.edu/programs/BIOMED:PHD/requirements-uz47h]

University Graduate School - Online Dissertation Milestones

Dissertation milestones represent key stages in a doctoral student's progress toward completing the dissertation and are essential requirements for successful completion of the PhD program. These milestones include:

1. Program for Doctoral Degree and Application for Candidacy
2. Appointment of Dissertation Committee
3. Dissertation Proposal
4. Preliminary Approval of Dissertation and Request for Oral Defense
5. Final Electronic Dissertation Approval

[Source: https://gradschool.fiu.edu/online-dissertation-milestones/#toggle-id-1]

The Online Dissertation Milestone Activity Guide is available through MyFIU (https://my.fiu.edu) in the Student environment under the Tasks tile. Before initiating any dissertation milestone, students should consult with the BMS Program Manager, Primary Advisor(s), and/or Graduate Program Director for academic guidance and to obtain any required approvals.

Students are responsible for adhering to all dissertation policies, procedures, timelines, and deadlines, as well as submitting all required documentation for each milestone. Incomplete submissions will be returned and may delay progress toward degree completion.

Students should regularly monitor the status of their Online Dissertation Milestone(s) through MyFIU and maintain communication with their academic advisors, including the Primary Advisor(s), Dissertation Committee, and Graduate Program Director, to track approvals and address any feedback or requested revisions.

Dissertation milestone submissions received by the University Graduate School (UGS) by the applicable deadlines will be reviewed for approval. Students should allow adequate time for the review process. If additional information, documentation, or revisions are required, the appropriate UGS representative will contact the student.

Selection of Dissertation Committee

The Dissertation Committee is initiated by mutual agreement between the student and the Primary Advisor(s). Committee appointments are made by the Dean of the University Graduate School on the recommendation of the Graduate Program Director and the Dean of HWCOM. The Dean of the University Graduate School shall have the authority to appoint an additional Graduate Faculty member to any dissertation committee.

The Dissertation Committee consists of a minimum of four (4) members of the Graduate Faculty. At least two (2) of the four members must be from HWCOM, one of whom will serve as the chairperson, and at least one (1) member must be from another academic department at FIU. The fourth member may be: from the academic department offering the degree, from another academic department at FIU, or from outside the institution who has been reviewed and approved by the program and the University Graduate School. The committee must be selected so that the relevant emphasis of the dissertation are fully represented.
[Source: https://policies.fiu.edu/files/780.pdf]

The Committee Chairperson

- Must have specialized academic competence in the student's major field of research, be tenured or tenure-earning, and hold Graduate Faculty (GF) Status.
- The student's Primary Advisor will serve as Chair of the Dissertation Committee for dissertation-related meetings, including annual progress review meetings. For the Qualifying Examination and Candidacy Examination, the Advisor will transfer responsibility for overseeing the examination to another committee member. Following each committee meeting, the Chair should meet with the student to discuss the committee's recommendations and the outcome of the review.

Non-FIU Committee Members

- Non-FIU Graduate Faculty committee members must submit a full CV, complete the Commitment Form for Non-FIU Committee Members, and be approved by HWCOM's Associate Dean for Research.
- These individuals must also understand the time commitment required to review the doctoral student's proposal, participate in annual progress meetings, attend the dissertation defense, and complete the University's required Data Privacy and Security attestations to access FIU online platforms.

The Dissertation Committee oversees all aspects of the student's dissertation research. The committee will meet with the student at least once annually to help plan research activities, review progress, and provide written reports to the Graduate Program Director. The BMS Executive Committee may also review and provide recommendations regarding the suitability of committee membership.
The composition of the Dissertation Committee may be changed if a committee member is no longer available to participate or if the student or chair of the committee believes there are valid reasons to

add or replace a committee member. The committee change must be justified and all outgoing and incoming members must agree to be removed or added. Committee changes must be recommended by the committee chair, the Graduate Program Director, and the Dean of HWCOM. Committee changes must be approved by the Dean of the University Graduate School.

Qualifying Examination

After successful completion of mandatory courses, students will be enrolled in the Qualifying Examination (GMS 6961). This generally would occur after the students have completed all mandatory and elective academic courses, but no later than the end of the 5th term of study (excluding the summer terms). The Qualifying Examination determines, in part, the student's eligibility for admission to candidacy for the PhD degree. The exam is designed to test the student's knowledge of biomedical sciences, as well as assess creativity and rationality of research design. The exam is composed of two parts:

(i) A written exam. The student will submit a comprehensive review on a topic chosen by the Dissertation Committee. The review article will consist of an Abstract, Introduction, Scope (covered topics), Conclusions, and References. The student will prepare a second version of no more than 5 pages for submission to the Graduate College.

(ii) Oral defense of the review article before the Dissertation Committee.

Student will be provided two opportunities to take the qualifying exam. Under the extenuating circumstances another opportunity may be provided based on the standing committee's decision after which they could be dismissed from the program.

Dissertation Proposal

After successfully passing the Qualifying Examination, students must prepare and defend a Doctoral Dissertation Proposal (GMS 6963). A dissertation is a formal scholarly work that presents original research and contributes new knowledge or perspectives to a field of study. The dissertation proposal serves as an important milestone in the doctoral program, documenting the student's research progress to date and outlining the proposed direction, objectives, and methodology of the dissertation research.

The dissertation proposal is intended to provide a framework for the planned research; however, the final dissertation may differ substantially from the proposal as the research evolves. New findings, opportunities, and unforeseen challenges may influence the scope and direction of the project. Consequently, the dissertation proposal does not constitute a contract between the student and the University, and the completed dissertation may require significantly more work than originally anticipated.

Proposal Format and Length

The dissertation proposal must be prepared in the style of an American Heart Association (AHA), National Institutes of Health (NIH), or National Science Foundation (NSF) predoctoral fellowship application and is limited to a maximum of eight (8) pages. The proposal must adhere to the following formatting requirements:

- Standard paper size: 8.5" × 11"
- Margins: at least 0.5 inch on all sides (top, bottom, left, and right)
- Font: Arial, Helvetica, Palatino Linotype, or Georgia
- Font size: 11-point or larger
- Font color: black
- A Symbol font may be used for Greek letters or other special characters; the minimum font size requirement still applies.
- Type density must not exceed 15 characters per inch (including spaces).
- Text spacing must not exceed six lines per inch.
- Figures, charts, tables, graphics, and figure legends may use smaller fonts, provided they remain clear and legible.

A complete list of references must be included in a separate Bibliography and References Cited section. This section does not count toward the 8-page proposal limit.

Proposal Organization

The dissertation proposal should follow the outline provided below and be presented in the specified sequence. Suggested page lengths for individual sections are intended only as guidelines. Regardless of section lengths, the narrative portion of the proposal must not exceed the 8-page maximum.

1. Specific Aims (Maximum 1 Page)

The Specific Aims section should clearly and concisely describe the goals of the proposed research project.

- State the overall goals of the proposed research and summarize the anticipated outcomes, including the expected impact of the findings.
- Clearly identify the specific objectives of the research, such as testing a hypothesis, developing a novel design, solving a specific problem, challenging an existing paradigm or clinical practice, addressing a critical barrier to progress in the field, or creating a new technology.

2. Research Strategy (Maximum 7 Pages)

The Research Strategy must be organized using the following section headings and presented in the order listed below:

(a) Background and Significance

- Provide the scientific background and rationale for the proposed research.
- Summarize and critically evaluate relevant findings from the existing literature.

- Identify gaps in current knowledge that the proposed research is intended to address.
- Explain the significance of the problem or critical barrier to progress in the field.
- Describe how the proposed project will advance scientific knowledge, technical capabilities, and/or clinical practice within the relevant discipline(s).

(b) Innovation

- Explain how the proposed research challenges, refines, or advances current research or clinical practice paradigms.
- Describe any novel theoretical concepts, approaches, methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions that will be developed or utilized.
- Discuss the advantages of these innovations compared with existing approaches.
- Explain any refinements, improvements, or new applications of existing theories, methods, instrumentation, or interventions.

(c) Approach

- Describe the overall research strategy, methodology, and analytical techniques that will be used to accomplish the proposed aims.
- Explain how data will be collected, managed, analyzed, and interpreted.
- Include resource-sharing plans, when applicable.
- Discuss potential challenges, alternative approaches, and benchmarks for evaluating success.
- Identify any procedures, situations, or materials that may present hazards to personnel and describe the precautions that will be taken to mitigate risks.

Published experimental details referenced within the Research Strategy should be appropriately cited, with complete references provided in the Bibliography & References Cited section.

3. Bibliography & References Cited

Include all references cited in the proposal. Each citation must include:

- Title of the article, chapter, or book
- Names of all authors
- Journal or book title
- Volume number (if applicable)
- Page numbers
- Year of publication

There is no page limit for this section; however, students should include only references that are directly relevant to the proposed research.

Additional Requirements

In summary, the research plan should clearly address the following questions:

- What do you intend to do?

- Why is the work important?
- What has already been done?
- How will you conduct the proposed work?

The dissertation proposal must be submitted to all members of the Dissertation Committee at least two weeks prior to the proposal presentation and defense.

Before approval of the dissertation proposal, students must complete the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Certification. As discussed earlier in this handbook (see page 23), all graduate students must remain current with required laboratory-specific and institutional safety training. Students engaged in research involving recombinant DNA, human subjects, vertebrate animals, or other regulated activities must complete all required training and obtain the necessary institutional approvals before initiating research activities.

Dissertation Proposal Seminar and Admission to Candidacy

The student must present the dissertation research proposal in a public seminar. This requirement is fulfilled through enrollment in the one-credit Dissertation Proposal Seminar (GMS 6964) course. The course is graded on a Pass/Fail basis.

As part of the seminar, the student will deliver a formal oral presentation of the proposed research using PowerPoint or an equivalent presentation format. For the purposes of the Dissertation Proposal Seminar and examination, the student's Primary Advisor(s) may not serve as Chair of the Dissertation Committee.

Following the presentation, the Dissertation Committee will evaluate the student based on the following criteria:

a) Has the student demonstrated the ability to design a feasible and scientifically sound research project?
b) Has the student demonstrated sufficient knowledge of the scholarly literature relevant to the proposed research?
c) Has the student presented the proposal, both written and oral, in a professional and scholarly manner?
d) Has the student demonstrated an appropriate level of scientific knowledge and understanding of the fundamental principles and applications of biomedical science?
e) Does the proposed research constitute an acceptable and feasible doctoral dissertation project?

Evaluation of these criteria will occur through an oral question-and-answer examination conducted immediately following the public seminar. The oral presentation and examination will be held consecutively as a single session.

The Dissertation Committee Chairperson is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the proposal examination is conducted within a reasonable timeframe;
- Ensuring that the student is evaluated fairly, consistently, and rigorously; and
- Ensuring that a written evaluation is prepared promptly and provided to both the student and the Graduate Program Director.

Formal admission to PhD candidacy occurs when a student has successfully completed all of the following requirements:

- Completed all required coursework with a cumulative graduate GPA of 3.0 or higher
- Passed the Qualifying Examination
- Prepared a Doctoral Dissertation Proposal
- Successfully defended the dissertation proposal before the Dissertation Committee

Immediately following the proposal defense, the Dissertation Committee (DC) will deliberate and vote on the student's admission to candidacy. Admission to candidacy requires a unanimous vote of the committee members affirming that the student has successfully passed the candidacy examination.

A candidacy examination may not be passed conditionally. A determination of "Pass" cannot be contingent upon the completion of additional coursework, supplementary research projects, or any other requirements beyond the examination itself. Students will be notified in writing of the examination outcome within five (5) business days of the examination date.

If a student does not pass the candidacy examination, the Dissertation Committee may, at its discretion, permit a reexamination. Any re-examination must occur within six (6) months of the original examination date and at a time agreed upon by both the student and the committee. Successful completion of the candidacy examination is required for continued enrollment in the doctoral program. Students who fail the candidacy examination twice will be dismissed from the program.

Following admission to candidacy, doctoral students must maintain continuous enrollment by registering for a minimum of three (3) dissertation credit hours each semester, including the Summer term, until all dissertation requirements have been completed. [Source: https://policies.fiu.edu/files/783/]

International students must also comply with applicable full-time enrollment requirements during the academic year. Failure to maintain continuous enrollment may result in dismissal from the program.

Students who are unable to register for a given term must request an approved Leave of Absence through the graduate program in accordance with University Graduate School policies.

Dissertation Research and Preparation

Following admission to candidacy, students are expected to devote their efforts primarily to dissertation research and scholarly activities under the supervision of their Dissertation Committee. Students must maintain compliance with all applicable research training, regulatory approvals, safety requirements, and continuous enrollment policies throughout the dissertation phase of the program.

Preliminary Approval of Dissertation and Request for Oral Defense

A dissertation is required of all candidates for the PhD degree and must conform to the formatting and presentation standards outlined in the University Graduate School Manual for Electronic Theses and Dissertations.

As evidence of scholarly productivity, students are expected to submit one or more manuscripts for publication in peer-reviewed journals prior to the dissertation defense. It is anticipated that the student will serve as the first or senior author on at least one peer-reviewed publication arising from the dissertation research.

The Dissertation Defense Seminar (GMS 7981) takes place after the dissertation has been completed and approved by the Dissertation Committee as ready for defense. Any revisions recommended during the defense may be incorporated into the final dissertation document following the examination.

To allow adequate time for review, students should submit the dissertation to all members of the Dissertation Committee at least four (4) weeks prior to the anticipated defense date.

After submitting the dissertation and completing all other requirements for the PhD degree, the student must submit a Request for Oral Defense to the Dean of the University Graduate School. This request must be approved by the Dissertation Committee and the Dean of the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine (HWCOM). The Request for Oral Defense must be submitted to the University Graduate School at least three (3) weeks prior to the scheduled defense date or by the published University Graduate School deadline, whichever occurs first.

The University Graduate School publishes dissertation submission and graduation deadlines annually. Failure to comply with these deadlines may require enrollment in an additional academic term before the degree can be awarded. Students are strongly encouraged to work closely with their Primary Advisor(s) to ensure timely completion of all dissertation and graduation requirements.

Students must apply for graduation through the MyFIU portal by selecting "Apply for Graduation" under the *Academics* menu. Graduation application deadlines are published in the University's Academic Calendar.

Dissertation Defense Announcement

The Dissertation Defense Seminar is a public event and serves as an invitation to members of the University community to attend the presentation and participate in the discussion. The defense must be held on a business day during a regular academic term at the time, date, and location specified in the official announcement. All Dissertation Committee members are expected to attend.

The defense announcement must be distributed at least two (2) weeks prior to the defense and must include:

- A concise one-page summary of the dissertation
- Dissertation title
- Student's name
- Dissertation Committee Chairperson's name
- College and department
- Date, time, and location of the defense

A sample defense announcement is available on the University Graduate School website: https://gradschool.fiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/SampleDefenseAnnouncement.pdf

Dissertation Defense Examination

The dissertation defense begins with a public presentation of the student's research. Following the public seminar, the Dissertation Committee will conduct a closed-session oral examination of the candidate. Upon completion of the examination, the candidate and any guests will be excused while the Dissertation Committee deliberates.

The Dissertation Committee will evaluate the candidate's performance and vote to either pass or fail the dissertation defense. The outcome of the examination will be communicated to the student in accordance with University Graduate School procedures.

Final Electronic Dissertation Approval

The outcome of the dissertation defense is recorded through the Final Electronic Dissertation Approval Milestone in PantherSoft. Following a successful defense, students must complete all required revisions and satisfy all University Graduate School dissertation submission requirements before final approval can be granted.

Detailed instructions for the Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) submission and approval process are available online: https://gradschool.fiu.edu/the-final-etd-process/. To further assist students with final dissertation preparation, the University Graduate School provides an ETD Common Edits Checklist, which identifies frequently encountered formatting and submission issues. Students are

strongly encouraged to review this checklist prior to submitting the final dissertation: https://gradschool.fiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Common-Edits-Checklist-2025-non-writable.pdf

Successful completion of the dissertation defense, submission and approval of the final ETD, and fulfillment of all degree requirements will culminate in the awarding of the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree.

Funding for PhD Students

Graduate Assistantships

The PhD Program in Biomedical Science in association with the University Graduate School offers a limited number of assistantships to support graduate students. Graduate Assistants may teach, conduct research or have other responsibilities that contribute to the student's professional development. Policies and guidelines for graduate assistantships are available online: https://gradschool.fiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/GA-Handbook-2026-2027.pdf

Students who are awarded graduate assistantships must:

- Meet the minimum graduate school full-time registration requirements
- Maintain good academic standing by maintaining a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher
- Maintain reasonable progress towards the graduate degree

A graduate assistantship consists of a 20-hour per week employment appointment and includes tuition waivers and subsidized health insurance benefits. Students are responsible for per credit tuition fees, per semester fees, and other miscellaneous fees as listed on the University Graduate School website: https://gradschool.fiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/GA.TA_.RA-Summary-Chart-2026-2027-Fall-2026.pdf

Graduate assistants are required to participate in the University-sponsored health insurance plan unless they demonstrate equivalent coverage and receive an approved insurance waiver. The University Graduate School will automatically enroll eligible students in the health insurance plan. Students are responsible for paying a portion of the health insurance premium, which is deducted from their paycheck throughout the academic term. Health insurance coverage and benefits are administered through Academic Health Plans (AHP): https://fiu.mycare26.com/

Graduate Assistants may not engage in additional employment without prior approval from the department. Any outside employment requires an approved petition from the University Graduate School. This petition process is initiated by the BMS Program Manager on behalf of the student.

[Source: https://gradschool.fiu.edu/students/funding/assistantships/]

The maximum annual funding package is currently $38,500, which may include assistantship stipends, fellowships, scholarships, and other program-sponsored funding.

Students are strongly encouraged to pursue both intramural and extramural fellowship opportunities for which they may be eligible. In the event that Primary Advisor(s)' grant funding becomes

unavailable, the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine will make reasonable efforts to provide continued student support, contingent upon satisfactory academic and research performance.

Advisor-Granted Bonuses

Students who demonstrate exceptional performance and receive evaluations indicating performance above expectations may be eligible for a discretionary bonus awarded by their Primary Advisor(s).

To award a bonus, the Advisor(s) must obtain approval from the Program Director and receive authorization from the Associate Dean for Research. Any bonus awarded must be funded through the Advisor's available research or discretionary funding sources and is subject to applicable University policies and funding availability.

Important: Any advisor-granted bonus is considered part of the student's total annual funding package and counts toward the program's maximum annual funding limit of $38,500, which includes assistantship stipends, fellowships, scholarships, bonuses, and other program-sponsored funding.

Taxes

Any portion of stipend or fellowship used for living expenses is subject to U.S. taxes. The interpretation and implementation of the tax laws is the domain of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Students may consult a tax expert for advice.

Termination of Graduate Assistantship

Graduate Assistants with a cumulative graduate GPA below 3.0 or who fail to comply with university policies regarding graduate assistantships will have their assistantship cancelled by the University Graduate School. Graduate Assistants who fail to maintain satisfactory academic progress may also have their assistantship cancelled by the University Graduate School. Cancellation of an assistantship within an active term will result in reversal of the tuition fee waiver, i.e., the student will become fee liable for all applicable resident or non-resident tuition. Cancellation of an assistantship may also result in termination of the subsidized health insurance. Employment may be terminated at any time if work performance is unsatisfactory.
[Source: https://policies.fiu.edu/files/763.pdf]

Additional Funding Opportunities

HWCOM BMS Graduate Program Dean's Fellowship

The purpose of the Dean's Fellowship is to attract highly qualified graduate students to the PhD in Biomedical Science Program at the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine. Students are awarded these fellowships based on their academic achievements, qualifications, and potential to become

leaders in biomedical science research and translational medicine. Applicants are nominated by the BMS Recruitment Committee and selected by the BMS Executive Committee.

Recipients may receive up to $5,000 annually, subject to the availability of program funds and budgetary approval. Dean's Fellowship support is applied toward the student's overall funding package and counts toward the maximum annual program funding limit of $38,500 per student, per academic year. Continued receipt of fellowship support is contingent upon satisfactory academic progress and compliance with program requirements.

HWCOM BMS Graduate Program Dean's Scholarship

The purpose of the Dean's Scholarship is to recognize and promote academic excellence among graduate students in the PhD in Biomedical Science Program at the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine. Students are awarded these scholarships based on their academic performance, scholarly achievements, and potential to become leaders in biomedical science research and translational medicine. This scholarship is available only to students who have completed their first year of enrollment in the program. Eligible students may be nominated by their Primary Advisor(s) to the BMS Student Affairs Committee for consideration.

Recipients may receive up to $3,500 annually, subject to the availability of program funds and budgetary approval. Dean's Scholarship support is applied toward the student's overall funding package and counts toward the maximum annual program funding limit of $38,500 per student, per academic year.

University Graduate School (UGS) Fellowships

The University Graduate School is committed to excellence in graduate education and is proud to offer fellowship opportunities for new and continuing students. It is important to note that funding for the fellowships is limited and very competitive. To be considered for specific awards, it is critical to submit a complete application prior to the stated deadline. Additional information is available online: https://gradschool.fiu.edu/students/funding/fellowships/

- *UGS Presidential Fellowship:* The Presidential Fellowship is utilized for the recruitment of outstanding PhD-track students to graduate programs at FIU. Each fellowship provides a four-year award package to the fellow.
- *UGS Veteran's Fellowship:* In honor and recognition of our veterans' service, the University Graduate School has established the UGS Veteran's Fellowship. This fellowship provides support to student veterans to pursue their doctoral education at Florida International University. The UGS awards the Veteran's Fellowship once a year in the Fall term.
- *UGS Doctoral Evidence Acquisition Fellowship (DEA):* The Doctoral Evidence Acquisition (DEA) Fellowship is specifically intended to support doctoral students who have no financial support for evidence acquisition activities or those students whose current means of financial support would significantly interfere with or preclude their ability to collect the evidence needed for their doctoral research.

- *UGS Dissertation Fellowship (DF):* Dissertation Fellowship (DF) provides support to highly qualified FIU doctoral students during the data analysis and writing phase of their dissertation. It is intended to facilitate the timely completion of high-quality manuscripts and dissertations. Students who are conducting outstanding research in their discipline and have established a notable record of publication during their doctoral studies (in comparison to others in their discipline) are favored in the application process. Dissertation Fellows are expected to graduate within 1 year after receiving the award.

Why Apply for Additional Funding?

Students are strongly encouraged to pursue external fellowships, scholarships, and other funding opportunities throughout their graduate training. Even when supported by an assistantship, external funding provides numerous academic, professional, and financial benefits:

Enhanced Financial Support: Fellowship stipends are often higher than departmental assistantship stipends and may include additional benefits, such as tuition support, health insurance, or fee coverage that is not otherwise provided.

Greater Research Independence: External funding allows students to focus more directly on their own research and scholarly activities, rather than on teaching or other assistantship responsibilities.

Professional Recognition: Receiving a competitive external award demonstrates academic excellence, initiative, and the ability to develop and communicate a compelling research proposal. These attributes are highly valued by academic institutions, industry employers, and funding agencies.

Strengthened Internal Funding Applications: Applications for FIU funding opportunities, such as the Doctoral Evidence Acquisition (DEA) Fellowship and Dissertation Year Fellowship (DYF), may be strengthened by a student's history of seeking external funding. Demonstrating initiative in pursuing funding opportunities is viewed favorably, regardless of whether previous applications were successful.

Skill Development: Preparing fellowship and grant applications helps students develop essential skills in scientific writing, proposal development, project planning, and research communication. These experiences are invaluable for future academic and professional success and can facilitate the dissertation-writing process.

Expanded Career Opportunities: Many external fellowships provide networking, mentoring, and professional development opportunities that can broaden a student's academic and career prospects.

Travel and Professional Development

Graduate students are encouraged to attend and present their research at scientific conferences, professional meetings, and other professional development events. Travel authorization (TA) requirements are as follows:

- No Travel Authorization (TA) required:
    - Travel associated with required curricular activities, such as travel between the Modesto A. Maidique Campus (MMC) and the Center for Translational Science (CTS) to attend a scheduled course or other required instructional activity.
- Travel Authorization required:
    - Travel between MMC and CTS for non-curricular activities, including research meetings, laboratory activities, seminars, recruitment events, professional development activities, or other university-related business.
    - Travel related to research presentations, dissertation or thesis committee meetings, recruitment activities, conferences, workshops, or other professional development events that involve travel more than 50 miles from the University.

The travel process and request form is embedded in Appendix B.

Student Travel Funding

To support student professional development, the Program provides limited travel funding, subject to the availability of funds and program approval.

- *CTS Annual South Florida Translational Research Symposium:* First-year PhD students are required to attend the symposium and may receive up to $75 toward registration costs. Beginning in the second year of study, PhD students are required to present their research at the CTS annual symposium. Registration fees for student presenters will be waived. Round-trip bus transportation between MMC and CTS will be provided by the event organizers.
- *MMC Annual Medical and Graduate Students & Residents Research Symposium:* First-year PhD students are required to attend the symposium. Beginning in the second year of study, PhD students are required to present their research at the annual symposium. There is no registration fee associated with the symposium. However, CTS-based students may receive up to $120 in mileage reimbursement for travel to and from MMC to participate in this event.
- *Conference and Professional Development Travel:* Beginning in the second year of study, PhD students may receive up to $500 annually to support travel for conferences, research presentations, workshops, and other professional development activities. Funding requests must be approved by both the BMS Program Manager and the Graduate Program Director.

Students are encouraged to seek additional support through conference sponsors, professional organizations,Primary Advisor(s), and university-sponsored travel funding programs. Program funds are intended to supplement, rather than replace, other available sources of travel support.

- *Graduate & Professional Student Committee (GPSC):* Students may visit the GPSC website for information regarding eligibility requirements, application deadlines, and funding opportunities: https://dasa.fiu.edu/all-departments/student-government-association/committees/graduate-professional-student-committee/. Eligible students may receive up to $500 in travel support through the GPSC.
- *Primary Advisor Funding:* Additional travel support may be available through a student's *Primary* Advisor(s). Funding is provided on a case-by-case basis and is contingent upon the availability of funds, the purpose of the travel, and its alignment with the student's research and scholarly activities.

Student Resources

HWCOM Medical Library

The HWCOM Medical Library, located on the third floor of the FIU Steven and Dorothea Green Library, provides study space, research resources, and library services for HWCOM students. Facilities include individual and group study areas, computers, printing and copying services, and access to electronic resources.

Students have access to extensive collections of biomedical journals, books, databases, and other research materials through the Medical Library and FIU Libraries. Resources are available both on campus and remotely through the Medical Library website. Students may also request materials not available through FIU using interlibrary loan services at no cost.

The Medical Library offers additional services, including literature searches, research support, instructional materials, and training resources designed to assist students in developing information literacy and evidence-based research skills.

Physical access to the Medical Library is available through Panther ID card access. Additional information regarding library resources, services, policies, and hours of operation can be found on the HWCOM Medical Library and FIU Libraries websites:

- https://medicine.fiu.edu/resources/medical-library/index.html
- https://libguides.medlib.fiu.edu/COMlibrary/policies
- https://library.fiu.edu/

Student Health and Wellness Services

Students have access to a variety of University resources that support academic success, physical and emotional well-being, financial wellness, and personal development. Additional information is available at: https://dasa.fiu.edu/student-support/wellness/. Services include:

- Athletic Training
- Campus Recreation
- Counseling and Psychological Services
- Dean of Students
- Disability Resource Center
- Financial Wellness Program
- Health Compliance
- Healthy Living Program
- Student Conduct & Academic Integrity

- Student Food Pantry
- Student Health Clinics
- Victim Empowerment Program

HWCOM Ombuds Office

The ombuds office serves all students in the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine, including those enrolled in the PhD program. The ombuds provides a confidential, independent, and informal space to discuss concerns, clarify goals, and explore options for managing or resolving conflicts.

The office maintains strict confidentiality, with limited exceptions in situations involving a risk of serious harm or when required by university policy or applicable law. The ombuds promotes fairness in all processes affecting students but does not advocate for any individual party in a dispute and does not hold formal decision-making authority.

The services provided by the ombuds office are in addition to the consultations to the BMS Student Affairs Committee.

Responsibilities of the Ombuds

Typical concerns brought to the ombuds office include issues related to the work/learning environment and performance, fear of retaliation, and professional misconduct. Any issue may be brought the ombuds.

- Providing a neutral safe and confidential environment to talk.
- Listening to concerns and complaints, and discussing appropriate options.
- Mediating conflicts and engaging in unbiased diplomacy.
- Providing information and referring students to appropriate resources.
- The ombuds office will not participate in existing academic processes or formal grievance processes. Our aim is to resolve issues before formal action is pursued.

Additional information is available online: https://medicine.fiu.edu/resources/current-students/md-resources/student-affairs/ombuds-office/

HWCOM Ombuds Contact Information

Heidi von Harscher, Ph.D.
Ombuds
Assistant Dean for Professionalism
305-348-1461
vonharsc@fiu.edu

Additional FIU Student Services

Students may also access the following University resources:

- Campus Life, http://campuslife.fiu.edu
- Department of Emergency Management, http://dem.fiu.edu/
- Office of Civil Rights, https://ocr.fiu.edu/
- Parking and Transportation, http://parking.fiu.edu/
- University Police Department, https://police.fiu.edu/
- Veterans and Military Affairs, https://dasa.fiu.edu/all-departments/veteran-and-military-affairs/

Emergency Contact Information

On Campus

- For campus security and personal safety measures, please visit https://police.fiu.edu/
- FIU Police Department – Contact Information:
    - Emergency Phone Numbers

  24 Hours – 7 Days a Week
  Modesto Maidique Campus: (305) 348-5911
  Biscayne Bay Campus: (305) 919-5911
    - Non-Urgent Safety Concerns or Questions

  305-348-2626
- Call boxes are found throughout the parking lots in both campuses and can be used in case of emergency or motorist assistance.

Off Campus

- For off-campus emergencies, call 911.

Technology Policies

Students must abide by the technology policies and regulations governing both the university and those specific to HWCOM Information Technology (HWCOM IT).

FIU Policies

- Data Stewardship
- Digital Millennium Copyright Act
- Code of Computing Practice
- Information Technology Security
- IT Security Procedure: Sharing Access to IT Resources: Password Management
- Uses and Disclosure of Patient Protected Health Information for Media, Public, Teaching, Diagnostic, and Emergency Operation Purposes
- Email Policy
- Security Incident Reporting

Additional information technology policies are available online: https://security.fiu.edu/.

Personal Devices

Students are required to maintain access to a personal laptop computer and/or mobile device capable of supporting the academic, research, and administrative activities of the PhD Program in Biomedical Science. Students are responsible for obtaining and maintaining any software, hardware, and internet connectivity necessary to access University systems, complete coursework, participate in program activities, and fulfill academic requirements.

Personal devices, including laptops, smartphones, tablets, and similar technologies, that are used for FIU HWCOM business or to access University information systems must comply with FIU and HWCOM policies and procedures. Where applicable, devices must be approved by HWCOM Information Technology (IT), and users are expected to follow all University requirements related to information security, privacy, and the use of institutional resources, including policies governing access to electronic systems and protected information.

Students should be aware that HWCOM IT does not provide technical support for personal devices. Students are therefore responsible for ensuring that their equipment remains functional and compatible with University systems.

For examinations administered through the program, students may be required to use University-provided computers rather than personal devices. When applicable, loaner laptops will be provided for examination purposes at no cost to the student.

Appendix A – Absence Excusal Form

Student Name: _____ **Panther ID**: _____
Name of Primary Advisor: _____ **Lab Location:** _____
Requested Date(s) of Absence: _____

Type of Absence:
☐ Illness or Medical Appointment
☐ Family Emergency
☐ Bereavement
☐ Conference/Professional Meeting
☐ Research-Related Travel
☐ Jury Duty
☐ Military Service
☐ Religious Observance
☐ University-Sponsored Activity
☐ Other (please explain): _____

Course(s), Seminar(s), or Program Activities Missed:

Student Acknowledgement:

I understand that:

- Submission of this form does not automatically guarantee that the absence will be excused.
- I remain responsible for completing all missed coursework, examinations, assignments, laboratory activities, and program requirements.

_____ _____
Student Signature Date of Request

BMS Program Approval:

_____ _____
Primary Advisor Signature Date of Request

_____ _____
Graduate Program Director Signature Date of Request

Appendix B – Travel Process and Request Form

The Travel Request Form is provided in this appendix as an embedded fillable PDF. The form includes instructions regarding required documentation, approval procedures, and submission requirements. To access the form, select (double-click) the image below to open the fillable PDF. Once opened, students may complete the form electronically and submit it according to the instructions provided.

FIU | Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine

PHD STUDENT/GRADUATE ASSISTANT – TRAVEL PROCESS

PhD students must follow the below process when submitting travel requests.

1. Students/Graduate Assistants (GAs) must complete and submit all required forms to the PhD Program Manager **at least ten (10) weeks prior to the travel dates**. Of note, students/GAs must complete the following before contacting the PhD Program Manager:
    a. apply for FIU Graduate & Professional Student Committee travel funding
        i. GPSC Travel Funding Information: https://dasa.fiu.edu/all-departments/student-government-association/committees/graduate-professional-student-committee/
        ii. Application Link: https://webforms.fiu.edu/view.php?id=176663)
            - The PHD Program Manager must be listed as the Travel Liaison
        iii. GPSC Travel Funding Limits:
            - Domestic travel up to $500
            - International travel up to $700
            - Professional Development to $300
            - ONLY ONE allocation per academic year
            - ONLY Early Bird registrations will be covered for funding
            - Lodging will be funded up to $300 of the total funding listed above
    b. **delegate proxy access** for the creation of travel authorizations in PantherSoft (refer to page 3 for step-by-step instructions).
    c. obtain written approval from their Principal Investigator (PI) / Supervisor (see page 9).

2. The PhD Program Manager will review all submitted forms and create a travel authorization in PantherSoft on behalf of the student/GA.
    a. Students/GAs **cannot** travel on behalf of FIU without an approved travel authorization in PantherSoft.
    b. Per FIU policy, the PhD Program Manager **cannot** book travel until the travel authorization has been fully approved in PantherSoft.

3. Once the travel arrangements have been finalized, the student/GA will receive a travel packet containing all relevant confirmations.

4. Upon completion of travel, the student/GA must submit copies of the event agenda and all receipts for incidentals within **five (5) business days** to the PhD Program Manager.
    a. If the student/GA received FIU GPSC travel funding, all required post-travel documents must also be submitted online using the following link: https://webforms.fiu.edu/view.php?id=243935.

Rev. 02.24.26 **Page 1 of 9**