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Graduate Student Handbook

Biomedical Sciences Doctoral Program



2020-2021

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This handbook is intended for Doctoral degree candidates in the Biomedical Sciences Program.

This handbook is a supplement to the ODU Graduate Catalog. Policies described in this handbook take precedence over general policies in the ODU Graduate Catalog. Please refer questions to the Graduate Program Director.

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As a graduate student in the Biomedical Sciences Program, you are an important part of the College of Sciences, College of Health Sciences and the Center for Bioelectrics. The value of your academic career here to you, to other students, the faculty, and the university, depends on the energy and enthusiasm which you devote to the endeavor. We hope it will be a thoroughly rewarding experience, both professionally and personally.

You should familiarize yourself with the university Graduate Policies and Procedures. These are given in the Graduate Catalog online (<http://catalog.odu.edu/graduate/>). In addition, you should know the following program information, policies and procedures.

I. Program Personnel

Graduate Program Director (GPD) Dr. Lesley Greene
e-mail: lgreene@odu.edu

Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC) Ms. Genny Conwell
e-mail: gconwell@odu.edu

Bioinformatics and Genomics Concentration Coordinator Dr. Jing He
e-mail: jhe@cs.odu.edu

Biological Chemistry Concentration Coordinator Dr. Steve Pascal
e-mail: spascal@odu.edu

Microbiology and Immunology Concentration Coordinator Dr. Holly Gaff
e-mail: hgaff@odu.edu

Bioelectric Sciences Concentration Coordinator Drs. P. Thomas Vernier/Michael Stacey
e-mail: pvernier@odu.edu & mstacey@odu.edu

Stem Cells and Regenerative Medicine Concentration Coordinator Dr. Harold Riethman
e-mail: hriethma@odu.edu

Biomedical Sciences PhD Committee: This committee responsible for planning policies related to the graduate program and for program admissions. The Graduate Program Director chairs this committee. Any problem related to the student's academic program is brought to this committee through the Concentration Coordinator or Graduate Program Director. Students may petition the committee to meet about matters that cannot be handled by the GPD or the student's Research Advisory Committee.

Link to Graduate Catalog: <https://catalog.odu.edu/graduate/>

II. Degree Requirements

For the broad requirements for granting the Ph.D., refer to the Graduate Catalogue. <https://catalog.odu.edu/graduate/graduateschool/>

A. Course Requirements

For course requirements refer to the Graduate Catalogue. <https://catalog.odu.edu/graduate/graduateschool/>

B. Seminars

All students are required to take two graded two-credit seminar courses and they are graded with a letter grade. Students must give their first seminar by the 5th semester. The second seminar near degree completion and at least one semester before defending their dissertation. The students committee should be in attendance for the seminar to participate in the graded evaluation.

Students are required to attend weekly science seminars in any department to enhance their learning experience. These will not be awarded academic credit.

C. Ph.D. Advisory/Doctoral Committee

Ph.D. students will work on an independent program of study under the guidance of an advisor and a committee of experienced researchers. There are a number of entry routes into the program. For Post-BS and post-MS students accepted directly into a laboratory, the committee is selected by end of first semester. For post-BS students on Assistantships or other forms of support (fellowships/scholarships) that involves rotations, the mentor and committee is selected by end of second semester. Extensions are based on extenuating circumstances as determined by the GPD.

In consultation with the advisor and approved by the Graduate Program Director, the student will form a committee of graduate faculty members, who will serve as members of the Advisory Committee (Complete the D1 Form).

You are required to meet with your committee at least once a year to discuss your academic and research progress and submit a progress report. A progress report must be signed by the student's advisor, committee and GPD after each committee meeting, with copies to each member of the student's Doctoral Advisory Committee. These are due by August 25th of each year.

Note: Once the Candidacy/Prospectus Exam is successfully passed you must complete the D2 Form with your advisor and committee which designates the Doctoral Committee.

Changing Doctoral Advisors is not encouraged. However, if the circumstances are compelling and justify the need, it is possible. A graduate student considering changing advisors must meet with the GPD. After meeting with GPD, the GPD may authorize the student to submit a written petition and Form D1/D2 to the Biomedical Sciences Doctoral Graduate Committee who will consider the best interests of the program and the student.

D. Yearly Progress Reports

Progress reports on the Biomedical Sciences Progress Report Form are due to the GPD (email to biomed@odu.edu) by 25 August each academic year for all Ph.D. students. Students must meet with the advisory/dissertation committee to discuss progress. A student must have an advisor and advisory committee in order to turn in a progress report. Problems identifying an advisor or forming a committee should be discussed with the GPD to investigate options. Failure to establish an advisor and committee may result in release from the program. Each member of the advisory committee must affirm that the student is making satisfactory

progress toward the degree by signing the progress report form. Failure to make satisfactory progress may result in termination from the program after being given a probationary period as determined by the GPD. Late progress report forms may jeopardize GTA awards and tuition waivers.

Post-MS students are expected to advance in a timely manner towards the doctoral defense which should be by the end of the 4th year in the program. Post-BS students are expected to defend their doctoral research by the end of the 5th year. Based on the nature of the research or other circumstances there can be delays to this projected timeline for a defense.

E. Combined Candidacy/Prospectus Exam

The student will write an NIH R15 style grant proposal on their planned doctoral research. It must incorporate evidence of independent, novel and creative contributions.

1. Written Exam

The Candidacy/Dissertation Prospectus exam must be completed by the end of the fifth semester of study. If a student has not completed the exam by the beginning of the fifth semester, the GPD will provide a schedule for completion of the exam by the end of the sixth semester.

A student who receives a FAIL on the written portion for reasons other than Academic Dishonesty may write a new proposal. The new proposal must be turned in within three months of the first examination. Failure to pass a second time will result in termination from the program. Students found to have plagiarized or otherwise violated ODU's Academic Dishonesty policy will FAIL the exam and be subject to disciplinary action by the Office of Student Conduct.

If the committee decides REVISE, the student will be allowed two weeks to make corrections to the document without assistance from the advisory committee. At the end of the two-week period, the student must return the written examination to the committee which will convene within one week to determine if the student has passed the examination and return a final decision to the GPD of PASS or FAIL using the Form D3. Further corrections or changes will not be allowed under any circumstances.

The results of the written examination is reported on the Form D3. Students must provide a copy of their final written examination to the GPD as a pdf in an email attachment.

2. Oral Examination

The oral part of the qualifying exam consists of a 40-50 min presentation to your advisory committee on the research idea presented in your written examination. The committee members will then question the student in closed session on topics taken from the student's proposal and any material covered in the student's coursework. The student is assigned a PASS/FAIL grade by the committee. The results of the oral examination is reported on the Form D3.

A student who receives a FAIL for reasons other than Academic Dishonesty may prepare a revised presentation within six weeks or opt for a terminal non-thesis M.S. degree in biology or chemistry if they have the required coursework for those programs. Terminal non-thesis degrees are not guaranteed. Failure to pass a second time will result in termination from the program.

Successful completion of the written and oral candidacy/prospectus exam involves submitting a signed Form D3 and D9. Complete the sections on Candidacy Examination and Dissertation Prospectus on the D3.

Note: Within one month after the Candidacy/Prospectus Examination has been passed, the student (in consultation with his/her advisor and permission of the GPD) will form a Dissertation Committee using the D2 Form.

F. Dissertation and Dissertation Defense

Students should apply for graduation the semester previous to the one in which graduation is anticipated (Complete the online application for graduation in [LEO Online](#) by clicking Apply to Graduate under the Student Records menu. Click this link for additional information about graduation <https://www.odu.edu/academics/graduation-commencement/graduation/graduation-candidates>. The deadlines for scheduling and completing a defense and submitting the dissertation to the GPD are provided by the GPC at the start of each semester.

1. Dissertation: The dissertation is the final and most important part of the work required for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Biomedical Sciences. The dissertation must be based on original research and make a contribution to existing knowledge of sufficient interest to warrant publication in a refereed journal. The format of the dissertation is determined by the 'Guide for Preparation of Theses and Dissertations (available from the ODU Graduate School website www.odu.edu/graduateschool), the selected Journal Model as well as the Dean's Checklist. Specific guidelines for Biomedical Sciences Dissertations are annotated in the Checklist. The student is required to submit a properly formatted dissertation to his/her committee, the GPD and GPC.

2. Dissertation Defense: The final examination of the candidate consists of a public seminar and the Oral Defense of the dissertation by the Doctoral Committee. Once the written dissertation is complete and satisfactory to the Doctoral Committee [i.e., in final form, barring any changes based on the defense], the student must defend his or her work in a public examination conducted by the Doctoral Committee with the Research Advisor serving as Chair. The Dissertation should be presented to the committee members well in advance of the Dissertation Defense. The Oral Defense cannot be scheduled until the committee members agree that the dissertation is in final form. The GPC will arrange to have the defense advertised according to University regulations. The Department or Center must schedule the location for the public seminar and oral defense by the deadline established by the Biomedical Sciences Program. A student should take into account the university requirement of a two-week lead time for the scheduling of a defense and public advertisement. The student must send a draft of the flyer in proper format to the GPD and GPC in a timely manner.

Although the defense is normally a final presentation of the research accomplishments, the faculty may ask any questions they feel the student should be able to answer. At the completion of the defense, the pass/fail decision is reported using Form D3 and Form D5. The Dissertation is reviewed by the GPD and GPC and upon acceptance it is then uploaded to ProQuest, signatures are not included. The GPD and the GPC need at least 2 weeks each to review the dissertations for correct formatting. Failure to properly format your dissertation in accordance with the Graduate School Dissertation Guide and Checklist may delay your graduation date. This will require you to enroll for at least 1 credit in the next semester.

Students should note that the final copies of the dissertation in order for a student to graduate during that semester. At the beginning of each semester, the GPD will publish a timeline for completion of the thesis and defense in order to assist students who plan to graduate during that semester to meet the Registrar's deadline. Any student who fails the defense can retake the exam once. A student who does not pass on their second attempt will no longer be eligible for a doctoral degree.

3. Dissertation Submission: Forms D3 and D5 must be submitted along with the final dissertation approved by the Doctoral Committee to the GPD. After the Dean's Office has signed the Form D5 you are completed. The final copy of the dissertation should be uploaded on ProQuest. All of the information needed for ProQuest can be found on the ODU Graduate School website. Paper copies of your dissertation are no longer required for submission to the library, although you may wish to print copies for yourself and your advisor. You will instead, upload your library copy to ProQuest and provide the Biomedical Sciences Doctoral Program an electronic copy. This should be completed no later than the last day of classes; it is important to pay attention to the deadlines.

G. ABD

Graduate students who passed their candidacy/prospectus exams are considered ABD. **(A)** They must register for at least one credit hour of research hours or course work in all future semesters, including summer sessions, to meet the requirements of the continuous enrollment policy, and **(B)** that registration for one credit hour of research credit constitutes a full academic load, subject to filing of appropriate paperwork (Form D4 and D9). **(C)** The Form D4 must be submitted every semester for all students receiving financial aid. **(D)** International students on an F-1 or J-1 visa must also submit a Reduced Course Load Request (RCL) form to the VISA office every semester.

Before registering for 1 credit make sure that you are near the 78 (Post-BS students) or 48 (Post-MS Students) required credits so that when you defend you have achieved in that semester the minimum number of credits required to graduate.

H. Important Milestones for Completion of the Ph.D. Degree *(unless extenuating circumstances)*

End of Second Semester

Appointment of the Advisor and Advisory Committee (Post-BS students on 1st year Assistantships) except in extenuating circumstances and approved by GPD

End of Fifth Semester

Presentation of first graded seminar

By Fifth Semester

Pass Candidacy Exam/Approval of Dissertation Prospectus
Appointment of Doctoral Committee

By Seventh or Eighth Semester

Presentation of second graded seminar

Eighth Semester or Later

Dissertation defense

III. Additional Policies

A. In-State Tuition (Domestic students, and US Residents only). *This does not include Active-Duty Military international students.*

Your tuition waivers will only cover in-state tuition fees after your first year. If you do not change residency to Virginia, you will be responsible for covering the amount above in-state levels.

Refer to the website: <https://www.odu.edu/tuition-aid/costs-tuition/tuition/in-state>

B. Assistantships and Financial Aid

The program and university may have different types of financial support for full-time graduate students in good academic standing. Reach out to the GPC for a list of potential sources.

C. Graduate Assistant G9 and G10 Forms

These forms must be completed every semester. We are in the process of creating a streamlined system.

VI. GRADUATE FORMS

All forms except for the “Yearly Progress Report Form” and “Rotation Form” can be found on the following website:

<https://www.odu.edu/graduateschool/forms>

Rotation Form

Yearly Progress Report Form

Evaluation of Non-ODU Transfer Credits **G1**

Notice of Change of Status **G2**

Re-Validation of Out-of-Date Graduate Credit **G3**

Graduate Assistant Responsibility Agreement **G9**

Graduate Assistant Performance Evaluation **G10**

Appointment of Doctoral Advisory Committee **D1**

Appointment or Change of Doctoral Dissertation Committee **D2**

Result of Doctoral Examination or Requirement **D3**

Doctoral Candidates 1-Hour-Full-Time Notification (ABD) **D4**

Doctoral Dissertation Acceptance and Processing **D5**

Leave of Absence from Doctoral Program **D7**

Advancement to Candidacy **D9**

Biomedical Sciences Catalogue Description

<https://catalog.odu.edu/graduate/graduateschool/>