Stanford Neurosciences Graduate Program

PhD Program Handbook
Academic Year 2020-21
PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

Program Office
290 Jane Stanford Way, E165
Stanford, CA 94305-5420
Website: http://med.stanford.edu/neurogradprogram.html

Program Director
Nirao Shah, M.B.,B.S., Ph.D.
Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and of Neurobiology

Lily Duong
Administrative Associate to Dr. Shah
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Program Staff
Program staff are the primary resources for information on degree requirements, deadlines, and administrative policies and procedures throughout the student’s enrollment in the program. They can also be consulted for guidance and referral about just about anything.

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Neurosciences IDP Faculty
http://med.stanford.edu/neurogradprogram/faculty.html

Wu Tsai Neurosciences Institute Faculty
https://neuroscience.stanford.edu/people/affiliated-faculty/grid

University Academic Profiles
https://profiles.stanford.edu/
Ph.D. TRAINING OBJECTIVES

Students accepted to the Stanford Neuroscience Program will complete training intended to prepare them to be leaders in their chosen fields. Independent research and scholarship are the foundation of this training, which emphasizes how to think clearly and critically; to conceptualize, debate, challenge and defend a position; and to understand and follow the ethics of the field. Specifically, the goals of the Ph.D. program are that students learn to:

1. Identify important scientific questions;
2. Design experiments that address these questions using the most appropriate methods;
3. Perform experiments and collect data with the highest degree of rigor and reproducibility;
4. Analyze data using appropriate statistical criteria and power;
5. Troubleshoot scientific problems;
6. Organize and write manuscripts that will be published in leading peer-reviewed journals;
7. Organize and present research seminars that communicate ideas and results effectively to a variety of audiences, including a lay audience;
8. Teach effectively in small and large contexts, either alone or as part of a team of teachers;
9. Communicate and collaborate effectively with colleagues across all diversity definitions including (but not limited to) disability, gender, race, and socioeconomic status.

The Neurosciences program believes that learning these skills is an essential part of training. It is important that work toward a Ph.D. be accomplished within 5 years so that students can begin their own scientific careers in a timely fashion. To achieve this, students, together with their thesis advisors and committee members, need to set realistic milestones for their time in graduate school.

COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY

The Neurosciences program is an inclusive community that welcomes trainees, staff, and training faculty from across the full spectrum of diversity definitions, including, but not limited to, disability, gender, race, and socioeconomic status. There is no place in the program for discrimination of any kind, including during hiring, teaching, doing science, advancing careers of community members, or participation in other activities. We believe that creative ideas and learning happen best in a safe and respectful environment, and we pride ourselves in providing such a workplace for everyone. It is expected that faculty who accept graduate students for Ph.D. work will implement best practices to ensure that such an environment is in place in their laboratory.
Ph.D. DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Unit and Course Requirements
Students must complete a minimum of 135 units for their Ph.D. A maximum of 45 external transfer units is allowed (https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-3/subchapter-2). Course requirements are published in the Stanford Bulletin (https://exploredegrees.stanford.edu/). Students are held to the requirements included in the Bulletin published for their year of matriculation. Program requirements and policies may change year to year and it is the student’s responsibility to be familiar with his or her own requirements.

Enrollment Requirements
Neurosciences Ph.D. students must be enrolled for full-time study (exactly 10 units) in every quarter including summer. After being approved for Terminal Graduate Registration (TGR) status in the 4th year, students will enroll in NEPR 802: TGR Dissertation, for zero units every quarter until the degree is completed. MSTP students should enroll per MSTP program guidelines.

Correct registration and meeting enrollment deadlines are the responsibility of the student, as are financial consequences that arise from not registering appropriately. Students encountering difficulty of any kind are encouraged to contact program staff right away for guidance. Enrollment deadlines are posted on the Registrar’s website here: https://registrar.stanford.edu/academic-calendar.

Courses required for the Neurosciences Ph.D., including rotations, taken in 2020-21 can be taken for CR/NC or S/NS instead of a letter grade. If a course is taken for a letter grade then a grade of B or better is necessary for these courses to meet the passing requirement (a B- does not count as a passing grade). MSTP students must enroll in Ph.D. courses for a letter grade or CR/NC for this academic year and must complete all Ph.D. course requirements, complete and defend their thesis before returning to the M.D. curriculum for clinical rotations.

Training in the Responsible Conduct of Research
Per NIH requirements (https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/not-od-10-019.html), predoctoral trainees must participate in instruction in the responsible conduct of research “no less than once every four years.” This training is first completed in autumn of Year 1 by taking NEPR 212: Responsible Conduct of Neuroscience Research. Students must complete additional training in Year 5 by taking MED 255: The Responsible Conduct of Research.

Journal Club
Students will enroll in NEPR 280: Neurosciences Journal Club and Professional Development Series in Years 2 and 3 during Winter and Spring quarters. Students will enroll for 2 units during the quarter in which they give their talk and 1 unit in the other quarter. Third-year students give a talk in Winter, with second-year students presenting in Spring.
Milestones
The following milestones are required of all Ph.D. students. All forms and papers must be turned in to the Neurosciences program office.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Year</td>
<td>Quarterly Rotation Confirmations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First Year Advisor Meetings</td>
<td>Within the first two weeks of autumn quarter</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NSF Application</td>
<td>Late October</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quarterly Rotation Evaluations</td>
<td>End of Each Quarter</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advisor/Lab Decision</td>
<td>End of Spring Quarter</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First Year Milestone Evaluation Form</td>
<td>End of Spring Quarter</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IDP Meeting</td>
<td>August 1</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Year</td>
<td>Qualifying Exam Committee Form</td>
<td>End of Autumn quarter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISTP G1 Year</td>
<td>Qualifying Exam Date Scheduled</td>
<td>January 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dissertation Proposal Paper</td>
<td>Two weeks prior to Qualifying Exam</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dissertation Presentation (Qualifying Exam)</td>
<td>June 15 (August 30 for MISTP G1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Application for Doctoral Candidacy Form</td>
<td>Before end of Summer Quarter</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dissertation Reading Committee Form</td>
<td>With Candidacy Form</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IDP Meeting</td>
<td>August 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NRSA Application</td>
<td>December 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Year</td>
<td>Thesis Committee Meeting Form</td>
<td>June 1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IDP Meeting</td>
<td>August 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Year</td>
<td>Thesis Committee Meeting Form</td>
<td>June 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IDP Meeting</td>
<td>August 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Autumn Progress Report</td>
<td>November 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Request for TGR Status Form</td>
<td>135 units and all course requirements done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Year</td>
<td>Thesis Committee Meeting Form and Green Light Meeting Form</td>
<td>At least of 6 months prior to defense for the Green Light Meeting Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First Author Publication</td>
<td>Prior to graduating</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IDP Meeting</td>
<td>August 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Draft of Dissertation</td>
<td>Due to committee 30 days before defense</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thesis Defense</td>
<td>University Oral Exam Form</td>
<td>3 weeks prior to defense</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dissertation Abstract (one page)</td>
<td>3 weeks prior to defense</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thesis Defense Flier</td>
<td>3 weeks prior to defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submitting Thesis</td>
<td>No later than 1 quarter following defense.</td>
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</table>
First Year Advising
All first year Neurosciences graduate students have an assigned First Year Advisor. This faculty member provides guidance on lab rotations, coursework, thesis lab selection, and approves lab rotations. First Year Advisors are meant to be an ally who can be relied upon to provide unbiased and informed counsel about these and other issues during the first year as well as the entire course of graduate study.

Students are required to meet with their First Year Advisor during the first two weeks of the autumn quarter, and the students are exclusively responsible for scheduling this meeting. Enrollment will be restricted if the meeting is not documented, and students are required to notify program staff after the meeting has taken place. A meeting in the second quarter is at the discretion of the student and his/her First Year Advisor. First year students will also meet with their First Year Advisor for their First Year Milestone Review at the end of the Spring quarter. Details about this meeting are provided on Page 11.

MSTP G1 students who have already joined a lab can discuss topics related to their thesis work, course requirements, preparing for the qualifying exam, and mentorship.

Stanford Intensive Neurosciences Bootcamp
All new Neurosciences students are required to attend the Stanford Intensive Neurosciences Bootcamp (SIN), which is held during the first week of autumn quarter. Second week of bootcamp will be most likely in Spring quarter. Full participation is required; no outside appointments are allowed on weekdays during this time and any absence must be approved well in advance by the SIN Directors.

Core Modules
First year students participate in eight separate but integrated modular courses whose primary goals are to provide a broad overview across the diverse areas in neuroscience. Each module is three weeks long, with no more than 18 hours of in-class time. The core modules provide foundational information across a breadth of neuroscience and expose students to how rigorous and reproducible research is done in a given area by providing exercises in experimental design and data analysis. Modules are meant to prepare students to take a higher-level course in the area, allow students to attend seminars in an area and extract important information, and read and critically evaluate a paper in a given area. As each student has different strengths and weaknesses, core modules are an excellent mechanism by which collaboration, leadership and mentorship can be experienced, and such interactions are strongly encouraged.
First Year Course Enrollment
Permission codes are required to enroll in core modules and will be provided after students submit their next confirmed rotation information to program staff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Autumn 2019</th>
<th>Winter 2020</th>
<th>Spring 2020</th>
<th>Summer 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NEPR 203: Systems Core (2 units)</td>
<td>NEPR 204: Molecular Core (2 units)</td>
<td>NEPR 207: Cognitive Core (2 units)</td>
<td>NEPR 399 for Thesis Research credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEPR 213: Genetics Core (2 units)</td>
<td>NEPR 202: Development Core (2 units)</td>
<td>NEPR 208: Computational Core (2 units)</td>
<td>Advanced Courses, Statistics, or Elective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEPR 212: Responsible Conduct (1 unit)</td>
<td>NEPR 201: Cellular Core (2 units)</td>
<td>NEPR 205: Anatomy Core (2 units)</td>
<td>NEPR 299 for SIN credit (1 units)-TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEPR 299 for SIN credit (4 units)</td>
<td>NEPR 299 for SIN credit (1 units)</td>
<td>NEPR 299 for SIN credit (3 units)-TBD</td>
<td>NEPR 299 for Rotation Credit (1 unit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEPR 299 for Rotation Credit (1 unit)</td>
<td>NEPR 299 for Rotation Credit (3 unit)</td>
<td>NEPR 299 for Rotation Credit (1 unit)</td>
<td>NEPR 299 for Rotation Credit (1 unit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 units total</td>
<td>10 units total</td>
<td>10 units total</td>
<td>10 units total</td>
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First Year Faculty Talks
Program-hosted dinners during SIN and autumn quarter are meant to introduce first year students to faculty with whom they may not be familiar. They are invaluable as a means of meeting faculty, learning about their work and life experiences, and identifying labs that other students may not have had the opportunity to explore. They also provide insight into potential collaborative labs, thesis committee members, and they are an important means by which students can expand their scientific network at Stanford. While attendance is not an absolute requirement as it is for classes, faculty volunteer to attend with the expectation that students want to – and will – be there. A great deal of effort goes in to scheduling the dinners, and it is expected that students will demonstrate professional courtesy by attending. Attendance is taken to ensure accountability with regard to food expenditures and to monitor trends.

NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Application
Eligible students must apply for the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship in the first year. Questions regarding eligibility should be referred to NSF or Neurosciences program staff. The program will send announcements about workshops to assist in preparing the application. Students must forward the email confirming application submission to program staff.
Rotations
The purpose of lab rotations is to learn about and participate in a PI’s research program and to assess fit with PI, research interests, and others in the lab for dissertation research. The purpose of a rotation is not to complete a project or have a publication. If those things happen that’s great, but that is not the primary purpose or expectation, nor should you continue working on the project from one rotation while doing another rotation.

Rotation Requirements
• Students must complete rotations in three different labs by the end of the third quarter of their first year.
• Rotation start and end dates must align with the academic quarter. Rotations may not be extended into the next quarter. Starts the week after Bootcamp
• At least two rotation mentors must be Training Faculty in the Neurosciences IDP. See faculty list here: http://med.stanford.edu/neurogradprogram/faculty.html
• Any rotation mentor (within or outside the Neurosciences IDP) must declare their ability, in principle, to accept rotation students in their lab for thesis work. This must happen prior to seeking formal approval to rotate with the mentor (see next point). A list of faculty who have agreed to do so will be provided to you in early August.
• All rotations must be formally pre-approved in writing by a student’s First Year Advisor or program staff.
• Reports are required after each rotation. Program staff will communicate deadlines and instructions but it is the student’s responsibility to complete them on time. Enrollment permissions and stipend payments for the next quarter will be withheld until after the report is submitted.
• At the start of each rotation students are required to set up a time for a formal lab meeting (with the rotation lab) that is scheduled before the end of the quarter. During this meeting students should present results from the rotation project. This presentation should also include scholarly introduction and background to the project, experimental design and justification for approach, results, and conclusions and alternative interpretations. It is fine to have few if any concrete results to present. This presentation should be viewed as training for effective scientific communication, thinking rigorously about a project, and designing experiments whose outcomes are interpretable and reproducible by others. The presentation will be evaluated by the rotation mentor as part of the final grade “CR/NC”.
• Students may end a rotation early only if there is a particular reason to do so and must contact program staff and the First Year Advisor prior to ending the rotation. If a rotation is ended early and another rotation is begun in another lab, this latter rotation would still need to be completed at the end of that same quarter.
• Except in exceptional circumstances, students must join a thesis lab after three rotations and before the start of summer quarter. Thesis advisors must be pre-approved by the First Year Advisor or program director.
• Students seeking a fourth rotation must arrange to meet with their First Year Advisor followed by a meeting with the program director; at these meetings, the student should be
prepared to provide specific scientific reasoning to justify an additional rotation. The meeting with the First Year Advisor must be concurrent with the First Year Milestone Review and precede the meeting with the program director. If a student knows that s/he will be seeking a fourth rotation, the student is required to reach out to schedule meetings with the First Year Advisor and program director as soon as possible, but no later than four weeks before the end of the third (Spring usually) quarter. The First Year Advisor and the program director will consult with each other following these meetings, and a fourth rotation will be approved only if there is consensus on this course of action.

Setting Up Lab Rotations
During the summer, students should review rotation requirements and contact program staff if there are any questions. Students may contact prospective rotation mentors prior to arriving on campus. Once a possible rotation mentor has been confirmed prior to arrival, students must contact program staff to have the rotation approved. It is advised that students try to set up rotation in advance if possible, ideally at the beginning of the previous quarter. This is perhaps especially important if the rotation project will need difficult-to-obtain reagents or entail work with animals. However, students should not arrange all three rotations prior to arriving at Stanford. We expect (and the data support it) that students will meet or hear about other faculty whose research program is appealing. Students will have both formal and informal opportunities to interact with possible faculty mentors and explore new scientific areas after arriving on campus. Having at least one empty rotation slot will afford the flexibility to choose such a rotation mentor.

- Fall rotations must be approved before Monday, September 14
- Winter rotations must be approved no later than Friday, November 20
- Spring rotations must be approved no later than Friday, March 19
- Students will enroll in one unit of rotation credit (NEPR 299) under their rotation mentor no later than the Final Study List Deadline of each quarter. Rotations must be taken for a letter grade.
- Students will enroll in one unit of rotation credit (NEPR299) under their rotation mentor no later than the Final Study List Deadline of each quarter. Rotations will be taken for “CR/NC or S/NS”. Student must enroll in a total of 10 units.

An enrollment hold will be placed on each student’s account until all requirements are met each quarter (completing the rotation report, written confirmation that the lab meeting presentation requirement was met for the current quarter, and a rotation is confirmed for the next quarter). Holds must be lifted before students will be able to enroll in courses for the next quarter. Note: Stipends are not disbursed until a student is enrolled in courses. A $200 late fee will be assessed if a student is not enrolled by 5:00 pm on the first day of classes.

The Registrar’s calendar is online here: https://registrar.stanford.edu/academic-calendar
– It is recommended that students put important dates on your own calendars to help you meet enrollment deadlines.
Note: Although minimum enrollment to have your stipend disbursed is 8 units, Neurosciences students must enroll in exactly 10 units every quarter, including summer, until they are approved for Terminal Graduate Registration (TGR) status in the 4th year of study.

### 2020-221 Rotation Deadlines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Events</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thursday, September 1</strong></td>
<td>• Axess opens for Autumn enrollment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students will be allowed to enroll. You will be provided permission codes that are needed to enroll in the core modules and Responsible Conduct course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monday, September 14</strong></td>
<td>• Deadline to have fall rotation approved. Even if a Winter or Spring rotation is lined up and approved, students will need to confirm a Fall rotation by this date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monday, September 14</strong></td>
<td>• At-Status Enrollment Deadline for Autumn*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monday, September 14</strong></td>
<td>• First Day of Autumn Quarter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Preliminary Study List Deadline for Autumn **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Rotation Start Date (Sep 21 after bootcamp)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friday, October 2</strong></td>
<td>• Final Study List Deadline for Autumn ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friday, December 13</strong></td>
<td>• Last Day of Autumn Quarter for classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friday, November 20</strong></td>
<td>• Deadline to submit Autumn rotation report and written confirmation of end-of-rotation lab meeting presentation.</td>
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<td>• Deadline to notify program staff of winter rotation mentor</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• After both items above are completed, staff will lift enrollment holds and provide permission codes that are needed to enroll in the core modules</td>
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<td>• December 20 is the last day before winter closure, following which all administrative paperwork can only be filed in the new year (Jan 11). Submitting the report by Wednesday will allow Kalai and Marrium time to lift hold on enrollment for the next quarter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friday, January 1</strong></td>
<td>• At-Status Enrollment Deadline for Winter*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monday, January 11</strong></td>
<td>• First Day of Winter Quarter</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Preliminary Study List Deadline for Winter **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Rotation Start Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friday, January 29</strong></td>
<td>• Final Study List Deadline for Winter ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friday, March 19</strong></td>
<td>• Last Day of Winter Quarter for classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Deadline to submit Winter rotation report and written confirmation of end-of-rotation lab meeting presentation.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Deadline to notify program staff of spring rotation mentor</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• After both items above are completed, staff will lift enrollment holds and provide permission codes that are needed to enroll in the core modules</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- It is recommended that you put important dates on your own calendars to help you meet enrollment deadlines. Although minimum enrollment to have your stipend disbursed is 8 units, Neurosciences students must enroll in exactly 10 units every quarter, including summer, until they are approved for TerminalGraduate Registration(TGR)status in the 4 th year of study.

**At-Status Enrollment Deadline:** Deadline to enroll in at least 8 units so that the stipend will be disbursed during the first week of the quarter.

**Preliminary Study List Deadline:** First Year Neurosciences students must be enrolled for at least 8 units by 5:00pm or will be charged a late study list fee of $200.

**Final Study List Deadline:** Last day to add or drop a class; last day to adjust units on a course with variable units; last day for tuition reassessment for dropped courses or units. After the Final Study List Deadline, students may withdraw from a course until the Course Withdrawal deadline and a 'W' notation will appear on the transcript.
**First Year Milestone Review**

First year students are required to meet with their First Year Advisor toward the end of their third quarter (Spring usually) to discuss all three lab rotation experiences and evaluations (by students and rotation mentors), coursework performance, other graduate experience, and choice of potential thesis lab. The student can reach out to their First Year Advisor to schedule this meeting as early as they would like but no later than six weeks before the end of the third quarter. If the First Year Advisor deems that the student has excelled in both rotation research and coursework, the Advisor will recommend that the student be allowed to join a lab for thesis research. Any concerns at this point will be discussed by the First Year Advisor with the program director.

**Advisor/Lab Selection**

The principal dissertation advisor, also called thesis advisor or research advisor, provides guidance and direction to the doctoral student’s research, as well as evaluation of the student’s progress.

Per University policy revised in 2018, the principal dissertation advisor must be an Academic Council (AC) member. If a desired thesis advisor is not on Academic Council, the student can have co-advisors. In this case, the AC member will have the role of Principal Advisor and the non-AC member will have the role of Co-Advisor. Students should review university policies about dissertation advisors:  
https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-4/subchapter-8/page-4-8-1

Dissertation Advisors in the Neurosciences program are required to provide financial support for their student(s) starting in the fifth year of training (G4 year for MSTP students).

Neurosciences Ph.D. students will select a thesis advisor after completing three laboratory rotations and discussing their selection with the First Year Advisor or program director. It is expected that students will select their thesis lab by the end of Spring quarter.

The student will notify the student services staff once the student and thesis advisor have agreed to work together and after the lab choice is approved by the First Year Advisor or program director. Staff will enter this information in Axess and send a letter to the mentor detailing the program goals, expectations, and requirements. The advisor will sign the letter as an agreement to the terms of signing as a thesis advisor and provide the required financial support, and the student will receive a copy of the signed letter.

**Initial Thesis Advisor Meeting**

Within 30 days of joining a lab, the student must meet with his/her advisor(s) to:
- Review Neuroscience program degree requirements and mentoring guidelines
- Discuss and complete the Biosciences Individual Development Plan (IDP)
- Review and/or complete the Student-Advisor Expectation Scales (optional)
After the student officially joins a lab, the thesis advisor serves as the primary mentor. Students are encouraged to seek out additional mentoring from faculty such as their First Year Advisor or thesis committee members. Additional senior faculty who are familiar with the program and have been identified as excellent mentors and are willing to meet with neuroscience program students are listed on the Neurosciences Student Intranet here: [http://med.stanford.edu/neurogradprogram/student-portal.html](http://med.stanford.edu/neurogradprogram/student-portal.html)

Students are welcome and encouraged to reach out to them if it will be helpful.

**Individual Development Plan (IDP)**
The IDP was designed to help students take ownership of their training, pause and reflect, think intentionally about goals, identify and use resources, have an open dialogue with their mentor, and establish clear expectations and steps to meet goals. All students must meet face-to-face and one-on-one with their thesis advisor at least once per year to complete all individual items in the IDP; meetings must be held no later than August 1 annually. The Office of Graduate Education tracks compliance with the timeline of filing IDPs. Learn more about the IDP at [http://biosciences.stanford.edu/current/idp](http://biosciences.stanford.edu/current/idp)

- The student should enter the meeting date in GST as soon as it is scheduled [https://biosciences.stanford.edu/current-students/idp/reporting/](https://biosciences.stanford.edu/current-students/idp/reporting/)
- Prior to the meeting, the student should download the appropriate IDP form from the Biosciences IDP page linked above.
- Meetings must be confirmed the meeting in GST by the advisor. It is recommended that students have their advisor log in during the meeting to make sure this is done.

**Qualifying Exam**
The goals of the qualifying examination are:

1. To determine the student’s preparedness to pursue research on a thesis topic based on a broad knowledge base of neuroscience as well as a strong technical knowledge base
2. Assess the student’s ability to think critically as well as his/her familiarity with relevant background information and alternative experimental approaches
3. To explore whether potential problems have been considered within the project and to ensure feasibility as well as that the project can be completed in a reasonable time frame.

**Timing of the Qualifying Exam**

Neurosciences Ph.D. students are expected to complete the qualifying exam 6-9 months after joining a lab and no later than June 30 of the second year in the program. MSTP students in the Neurosciences program will have joined a lab prior to starting their Ph.D. training and per MSTP policy are expected to qualify during their G1 year. Because they are also taking core modules during the G1 year, MSTP students may schedule their qualifying exam for the summer at the end of the G1 year, no later than August 30.

It is especially important for students who are supported by Stanford Graduate Fellowships (SGF) to qualify by the end of the Spring quarter of the second year, as failure to do so can result in funding being withheld or forfeited until the student qualifies.
Failure to complete the qualifying exam by the end of the third year (MSTP G2 year) will be considered grounds for dismissal from the program.

Qualifying Exam Committee and Chair
The Qualifying Exam Committee is formed to judge the qualifying examination. The student may consult with his/her thesis advisor to choose individuals who they consider to be best able to assess the student’s preparedness to pursue doctoral research and judge the scientific content of what will ultimately become the student’s thesis work. Note: The thesis advisor is not a member of the qualifying exam committee.

Requirements for Qualifying Exam Committee Membership:
- The committee must have 3 voting members (the thesis advisor or co-mentor are not members and do not vote)
- At least two members must be Training or Affiliate Faculty in the Neurosciences Program
- At least one committee member must be tenured (Associate Professor or higher)
- At least one committee member must be a member of the Academic Council
- The committee will be composed of faculty from more than one department

The student will select a member of the Qualifying Exam Committee to serve as the Quals Exam Chair. The thesis advisor cannot serve as Quals Exam Chair. The Quals Exam Chair will oversee the proceedings of the Qualifying Exam, set the tone and organization of the exam (i.e., order of questioning, timing of questioning, leads the discussion when the student has left the room), and provides ballots for a secret vote. After the exam, the Quals Chair will send a report to the student, advisor, quals committee, program staff summarizing the exam and stating the outcome.

Students must send the names of the approved Qualifying Exam Committee and the exam date to student services staff by end of Autumn quarter of the second year (G1 year). After this information is submitted, students will be allowed to enroll in Winter quarter courses.

Scheduling the Qualifying Exam
The exam must be scheduled and the date communicated to program staff by January 30 of the second year (G1 year). It is the student’s responsibility to reserve a room for the exam. The room should be reserved for 2.5 hours. For rooms in LKSC, CCSR, or Alway, use http://medscheduler.stanford.edu. For rooms in Clark, use https://biox.stanford.edu/room_scheduling.html. It is also the student’s responsibility to communicate all event details (date, time, location) to the committee and program staff. Program staff will send an email to the student, advisor, and qualifying exam committee with instructions and post-exam deliverables.
Written Proposal
The proposal must be sent to the committee and program staff at least 2 weeks prior to the scheduled exam date. If the proposal is not submitted on time the committee can require the student to reschedule the examination.

The proposal should be 6-8 pages long (including all figures and statistical analysis but not including references) and written in the format of an NRSA fellowship proposal (https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/forms-e/fellowship-forms-e.pdf). The proposal must include a 1-2 page evaluation of the student’s statistical approach to data analysis, and this must be tailored to specifics of the proposed project because not all statistical approaches may be valid for particular experiments. The approach may include a power analysis and the rationale for how the student designed experiments in terms of statistical analysis. Justifications of sample size need to be included. Statistical approaches and their specific applications including likely alternative approaches must be included.

Oral Examination
The student must take the Qualifying Exam Certification Form to the exam so that it can be signed by all committee members at the conclusion of the meeting. The form will be sent to the student and committee by email and is also available on the program intranet.

The thesis advisor does not participate in the asking or answering of questions and does not vote. At most the advisor can clarify questions for the student to answer.

The quals exam will begin with a concise, prepared presentation of the thesis proposal. Students should only present important background information, specific aims, key preliminary data, potential limitations, and possible future directions. This presentation should last no more than 25 minutes and be presented on no more than 20 slides. Faculty shall not interrupt during this presentation by the student so that s/he has the opportunity to present the project as planned. The Chair of the committee will ensure that this presentation is not interrupted and does not exceed allotted time. Following the presentation by the student, there will be a freeform discussion of the project with committee members. Faculty may ask questions related to scientific background and prior work, rationale of proposed studies, interpretation of results, limitations, experimental design and methods, and data analysis relevant to the proposal. A suggested format for the order of proceedings during the quals exam is provided below:

1. Committee meets with advisor (candidate is not present) to discuss the student’s overall situation and progress (less than 5 minutes)
2. Candidate joins the committee and advisor to discuss the student’s overall situation and progress (less than 5 minutes)
3. Candidate gives prepared presentation of the proposal as described above
4. Committee meets with advisor (candidate is not present) to discuss results of the examination (less than 5 minutes)
5. Committee meets without either candidate or advisor present (usually less than 5 minutes)
6. Time should also be provided for the committee to meet with the student without the advisor being present.
7. Chair of examination committee provides both the candidate and advisor with a summary of its evaluation (TBD)
8. Candidate obtains committee member signatures on paperwork
9. Candidate submits completed paperwork to Program Administrators
10. Chair of examination committee provides Program Administrators with a brief written summary of exam.

Outcome of the Exam
There are three possible outcomes of the exam: (1) Pass; (2) Conditional Pass: (3) No Pass. Conditional Pass is considered a pass, but further work needs to be done in order to complete the qualifying exam process. With a Conditional Pass, the committee can require that the student provide additional write-up of specific background material, an experiment, alternative interpretations/approaches, or other topic; the student could also be required to defend again a component of the proposal; or the Conditional Pass may require the student to form and meet with their thesis committee within a specified, shorter timeframe if, for example, the qual committee concludes that some proposed experiments are worth re-visiting quickly because they are too risky. It is not expected that a Conditional Pass will require a student to perform particular experiments and then re-defend the proposal based on the experimental outcome. The additional requirements are presented both verbally and in writing to the student. In the event that the student does not pass the qualifying examination, the Quals Committee will meet with the Program Director to consider whether extenuating circumstances warrant permitting the student to be examined a second time. If so, the Quals Committee will decide upon a time and format for the second examination. If the student is not given an opportunity to take a second examination, or if the student fails the second examination, s/he will be dismissed from the program. The dismissal shall be made in writing.

After the Exam
The Chair of the Qualifying Exam Committee will send an email providing the decision of the committee and an appraisal of the student’s performance in the examination. Students must meet with program staff within two weeks of the qualifying exam to discuss subsequent program requirements/milestones: Applying for Admission for Doctoral Candidacy and forming the Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee.

Admission/Advancement to Doctoral Candidacy
Admission to a doctoral degree program is preliminary to, and distinct from, admission to candidacy. Admission/Advancement to candidacy for the doctoral degree is a judgment by the faculty in the program of the student’s potential to successfully complete the requirements of the degree program. Admission to candidacy is granted following a student’s successful completion of qualifying procedures. Per University policy (http://gap.stanford.edu/4-6.html), students are expected to complete the program’s qualifying procedures and apply for candidacy by the end of their second year in the Ph.D. program. Students with a VPGE fellowship must
advance to candidacy before the end of the second year in order to be eligible for continued funding. MSTP students should advance to doctoral candidacy by the end of Year G1.

Students must submit the Application for Candidacy for Doctoral Degree form (https://stanford.app.box.com/v/appcanddoct) to specify their program of study to fulfill degree requirements. The Application for Candidacy for Doctoral Degree is an official University document and great care should be taken to ensure its accuracy prior to submission. When complete (with student and thesis advisor signature) it must be submitted to the Neurosciences program office for review and approval by the program director.

A student will only be admitted to candidacy if, in addition to the student fulfilling departmental prerequisites, the faculty makes the judgment that the student has the potential to successfully complete the requirements of the degree program.

Candidacy is valid for five calendar years unless terminated by the department (for example, for unsatisfactory progress). All requirements for the Ph.D. degree, including thesis defense and written dissertation, must be completed before candidacy expires. The time limit is not automatically extended by a student’s leave of absence.

Failure to make minimum progress or complete university, department, and program requirements in a timely or satisfactory manner may lead to dismissal.

**Fellowships**

After the qualifying exam, eligible students should apply for the NIH NRSA. Application deadlines are December 8, April 8, and August 8 annually. Contact the program administrators if you plan to submit an application or have questions regarding your eligibility. Applicants must attend a computer training session led by the Office of Sponsored Research prior to submitting the application; program staff will send announcements about when the workshops are being offered. See [Applying for Grants and Fellowships](#) for information about applying to, and managing, extramural grants and fellowships.

**Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee (Thesis Committee)**

Every doctoral dissertation is read and approved by members of the Stanford faculty to ensure that standards for departmental and university quality are met. In the Neurosciences program, the Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee (DDRC) consists of the principal dissertation advisor and three other readers. It’s strongly recommended that at least two readers must be Training or Affiliate Faculty in the Neurosciences graduate program, and at least one reader must be tenured (Associate Professor or higher) and a member of the Academic Council. Per university policy the DDRC may not have more than five members, the majority of whom must be on Academic Council. Due to their area of expertise being aligned with the proposed research project, in many cases members of a student’s Qualifying Exam Committee may also serve on the DDRC but this is not required.
Normally, all DDRC members are members of the Stanford University Academic Council (AC) or are emeritus AC members, and the principal dissertation advisor must be an AC member. The program director may approve the appointment of a reader who is not a current or emeritus member of the AC, if that person is particularly well qualified to consult on the dissertation topic and holds a Ph.D. or equivalent foreign degree. Students should review University policies regarding Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committees: https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-4/subchapter-8/page-4-8-1.

After deciding on their DDRC, students must complete and the following forms to the program office for approval by the Program Director:

- Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee form
  (https://stanford.app.box.com/v/docdiss-reading-committee-form)
- Neurosciences Dissertation Reading Committee form

If a non-AC member is desired, students must also submit this form:

- Petition for Non-Academic Council Doctoral Committee Members

Students with questions about the dissertation committee should contact program staff for clarification.

The student should also identify one voting member from their committee to act as the Chair of the Thesis committee, no need to add another member for this role. This person should not be your PI or Co-mentor. The role of this member as chair is to help advocate for you throughout your journey at Stanford, as an additional advisor to help ensure you are getting what you would like most from your thesis committee meetings. Chair should be academic council member and we strongly recommend they are tenured (Associate level or above).

**Thesis Committee Meetings**

As stated on the Stanford Biosciences website, in addition to reading and approving the doctoral dissertation, the role of the thesis committee is to facilitate an open exchange of scientific ideas and results, ensure timely progress to the completion of the degree, and provide guidance on career direction. Students will regularly update the committee on their progress and engage in discussions that help focus the research. Thesis committee members can also serve as general advisers to the student.

**Requirements**

- Students will select a Chair of the thesis committee; the Chair of the thesis committee cannot be the dissertation advisor, a co-mentor, or a collaborator on the student’s project. The Chair of the thesis committee is required to email program staff following every meeting to provide a summary on update of scientific progress, any scientific or other concerns, and timelines to expected publication and graduation. The entire committee, including dissertation advisor, and the student will be copied on this email.
• Starting in the third year, students are required to meet with their thesis committee at least once per year.
• In the fifth year and beyond, the committee will decide if more than one meeting is necessary.
• Meetings must be scheduled by June 1 and completed by August 1 annually.
• Due to the challenges in scheduling a meeting with multiple faculty, students are required to schedule the meeting at least 4 months in advance.
• All committee members should be present at the meetings. Exceptions should be documented by the advisor in GST.

After each thesis committee meeting
• The advisor must confirm the meeting in GST (http://biosciences.stanford.edu/current/reporting)
• The thesis committee chair will send a summary report/form of the meeting to the student, committee, and program staff. The purpose of this is to keep the program apprised of student progress and to ensure that students are adequately supervised. Program leadership will review these updates as a means of ensuring students are on track and that the program is addressing any concerns as early as possible during a student’s tenure. The form is available on the Student Intranet (http://med.stanford.edu/neurogradprogram/student-portal.html)

Committee meetings will be tracked by the program and the Office of Graduate Education. Students who do not meet the annual meeting requirements may have holds placed on their enrollment or stipend payments.

The Biosciences website has suggestions and advice from students about thesis committee meetings here: https://biosciences.stanford.edu/current-students/curriculum-and-requirements/yearly-committee-meetings/.
TGR (Terminal Graduate Registration) Application
Terminal Graduate Registration, also known as TGR, is the point at which a PhD student has enough units (135) for the PhD degree and has completed all required coursework. With no additional coursework necessary for the degree, TGR status allows students to register at a significantly reduced tuition rate while they work on the dissertation.

It is expected that students will complete all course requirements and have enough units to be eligible for TGR after Winter quarter of the fourth year. Program staff will monitor progress and communicate with students about eligibility for TGR and how to apply. Additional information about TGR status is available online here: https://stanford.app.box.com/v/tgrreq.

MSTP students do not go on TGR status, but instead become eligible for the MD program’s Research Rate tuition while completing the PhD; please contact Lorie Langdon, MSTP Program Manager (lorie.langdon@stanford.edu) for more information.

Publication Requirement
The program requires one first-author peer-reviewed publication as a minimum for requirement degree conferral. The publication must report a significant component of the student’s dissertation research and include research conducted while the student is a member of the Stanford Neurosciences graduate program.

The final number of peer-reviewed research products and the appropriate venues for their publication is unique to each student and dissertation project, and thus is to be decided by the dissertation advisor, thesis committee, and student. If the student already has a first author peer-reviewed publication, then time to degree completion should take priority. For example, if the student has already completed five years in the program and has published findings from his/her thesis work as a first author in a peer-reviewed publication, then it is expected that the student will defend their thesis work and graduate. Staying back as a postdoc to author additional publications from thesis research is at the discretion of the student and his/her thesis committee. Co-first author manuscripts can be considered acceptable at the discretion of the committee which needs to make such a recommendation to the program director.

Exceptions can be made for (a) manuscripts accepted but not yet published or (b) manuscripts submitted for peer-review, provided that the student’s advisor, thesis committee, and program director all approve the exception.

In order to be approved for graduation, students must send an email to Neurosciences program staff (cc: to the dissertation advisor) with the PDF or URL of the publication(s) that meet the publication requirement documented above. Publication information should be sent as early as possible (preferably as soon as the publication is accepted or comes out), but no later than the dissertation submission deadline.
Green Light Meeting for Graduation
Students must convene the thesis committee at least 6 months prior to an anticipated thesis defense to discuss his/her readiness to graduate, what remains to be completed before the student can defend, and set an approximate date for the defense and graduation. This is called a “Green Light Meeting.” Decisions and agreements at this meeting must be documented in the Green Light Meeting Form that is signed by the student, dissertation advisor, and thesis committee members, and submitted to program staff. Changes to this document must be made prior to the thesis defense and must have written/documented approval from all parties. Students may download the Green Light Meeting Form from the Student Intranet here: http://med.stanford.edu/neurogradprogram/student-portal/forms.html.

Oral Examination (Thesis Defense)
Every Ph.D. student must pass a university oral examination. The purpose of the university oral examination is to test the candidate’s command of the field of study and to confirm fitness for scholarly pursuits. The Oral Examination is evaluated by the Principal Dissertation Advisor, 3 Examiners, and an additional out-of-department chairperson who is not part of the thesis committee. (https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-4/subchapter-7/page-4-7-1#anchor-292)

Written Dissertation
Completion of a satisfactory dissertation is a university requirement for conferral of a doctoral degree. The doctoral dissertation is expected to be an original contribution to scholarship or scientific knowledge, to exemplify the highest standards of the discipline, and to be of lasting value to the intellectual community. Every doctoral dissertation is read and approved by at least 4 members of the Stanford faculty (the student’s approved Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee) to ensure that standards for departmental and university quality are met.
PLANNING FOR THESIS DEFENSE AND DISSERTATION SUBMISSION

Know Your Deadlines
Students must review and mark all dates and deadlines regarding the oral defense, dissertation, and submitting required forms and paperwork. Under no circumstances are extensions granted, and missing deadlines can mean that you do not graduate as planned which can be potentially very costly in multiple ways. If you have any questions, please contact the program administrator.

Graduation and Cardinal Care
Students graduating at the end of autumn or winter quarter will need to make a decision regarding Cardinal Care coverage. Review information on how to cancel or maintain (at your own expense) coverage after graduation: https://vaden.stanford.edu/insurance/cardinal-care-overview-and-benefits/enrollment-cardinal-care.

Planning to Submit the Written Dissertation
Check the academic calendar (https://registrar.stanford.edu/academic-calendar) for the deadline to submit the dissertation to the Registrar. Allow enough time after the oral defense to incorporate any resulting changes and finish the written dissertation by the Registrar’s submission and approval deadline.

Graduation Quarter
Reduced tuition is available to some students for the quarter in which they will submit their dissertation as long as all other degree requirements have been met except for the oral exam. The form (https://stanford.app.box.com/v/grad-qtr) must be submitted before the first day of classes of the intended Graduation Quarter. Students are only allowed one Graduation Quarter. Students must complete the publication requirement prior to applying for a Graduation Quarter.

Application to Graduate
Students must submit an Application to Graduate in Axess; information about this process is online here: https://registrar.stanford.edu/students/graduation/applying-graduate.

Commencement
Commencement is held once each year after Spring quarter. University Commencement information is available online here: https://commencement.stanford.edu/. The School of Medicine has a Commencement ceremony for MD and Biosciences PhD and MS students that is managed by Tanicia Perry (tanicia@stanford.edu) in the Office of Medical Student Affairs. Information will be sent in mid-Spring quarter. If you would like to participate in the School of Medicine ceremony and haven’t seen an announcement by mid-April, please contact program staff.
Degree Conferral and Statement of Completion
Degrees are officially conferred some weeks after the end of a given quarter; dates are posted on the Academic Calendar (https://registrar.stanford.edu/academic-calendar).

Graduating students who need a letter confirming that the PhD will be conferred may request a Statement of Completion; this a letter from the University Registrar confirming that a student has submitted a dissertation/thesis and will be recommended for a degree by the Faculty Senate. The letter is typically used for postdoctoral appointments or to obtain employment before their degree is actually conferred. Note that the dissertation must already be submitted and approved by both the Final Reader and the Registrar’s office prior to requesting a Statement of Completion. To request the letter, submit a HelpSU ticket directed to the Records Unit in the Office of the University Registrar. For more information, visit https://registrar.stanford.edu/students/certifications-and-verifications/statement-completion.
Thesis Defense Checklist

At Least 6 Months Prior to Anticipated Defense

☐ Get cleared to defend. Hold your Green Light Meeting at least 6 months prior to your anticipated defense to clarify and document what your committee requires to be done before you can defend. Send Green Light meeting form to program staff.

☐ Confirm your Oral Examination Committee and Oral Examination Chair. Please see the policy on Oral Examination Committees here: https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-4/subchapter-7/page-4-7-1.

☐ Set a date and time for your defense and notify Neuroscience Program Administrators. All Oral Examination Committee members must participate in both the public and private portions of your defense so the date may depend largely on when they are available. Per University policy the final thesis defense/Oral Exam cannot exceed 3 hours (http://gap.stanford.edu/4-7.html).

☐ Reserve a room for your defense and post-defense committee meeting.
  - Clark Center: https://biox.stanford.edu/about/building-services/room-scheduling.

At Least Three Weeks Before the Defense

☐ Send the following items to program staff: (1) your completed University Oral Examination Form without signatures, (2) a one-page abstract of your dissertation, and (3) a flier if you want it included in announcements. The Oral Examination Form is online here: http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/registrar/files/doc_orals.pdf)

☐ Send a reminder to all members of your committee and re-confirm their availability

At Least Two Weeks Prior to the Defense

☐ Send the nearly-finished dissertation to your thesis committee (not the Oral Exam Chair). It should be 90% complete and contain all the figures/data that will be included in the final copy of your dissertation.

On Defense Day

☐ The Orals committee chair will bring a packet to the defense that contains your abstract, Oral Examination Form, voting ballots, instructions on how to lead the defense/meeting, and what to do with the Oral Examination Form after the defense

☐ After the exam the Oral Exam Chair will sign the University Oral Examination Form.

☐ Students should plan to bring the entire chair packet (with the signed Oral Exam Form and ballots) to the program office no later than the next business day.

After the Defense

☐ Bring the entire chair packet (with the ballots) to the program office by the next day.

☐ Program staff will enter the Oral Examination Milestone as completed in Axess.
Dissertation Submission Information
It is the student’s responsibility to become expert with all of the dates and deadlines regarding submitting the dissertation. Under no circumstances are extensions granted, and missing deadlines can result in a delay in degree conferral that can be potentially very costly in many ways.

Doctoral dissertation requirements are set by the University. Here is the link to the Registrar’s instructions, deadlines, and resources for submitting your Dissertation and Thesis:

The page above has links to many helpful resources including checklists and instructions for both electronic and paper dissertation submission, formatting guidelines, form requirements, deadlines, FAQs, and Open Lab Sessions to get help. Take your time in reviewing the information to make sure you understand what is expected and required, and where to find help if and when you need it.
FINANCIAL SUPPORT

University Bill
University billing occurs monthly. All tuition and fees charged between billing cycles are grouped and displayed in Stanford ePay. Students should review their university bill at least quarterly to make sure there are no overdue charges; late fees are the responsibility of the student. For more information about billing and to view your student account, visit https://sfs.stanford.edu/. If you have any questions about charges or are missing a payment please contact the program staff right away.

Student Funding
The Neurosciences program provides stipend, tuition, and Cardinal Care funding for students in Years 1-4 of their PhD careers. The MSTP program provides support to students in Years G1 and G2, with the Neurosciences program funding Year G3. All funding is contingent upon students being in good standing with the program. Starting in Year 5 (MSTP Year G4), funding will be provided by fellowships procured by the student, by the student’s mentor, or a combination of the two. The amount and frequency of payment disbursements depends on the type of funding a student has. Students should sign up for direct deposit in Axess; if you do not set this up a paper check will be sent to the mailing address in Axess.

Funding Levels
All Ph.D. students supported by department or university funds receive the stipend/salary amount established by the Committee on Graduate Admissions and Policies (CGAP) for the fourteen degree programs in the Biosciences.

Stipends
Students supported by the Neurosciences or MSTP program, and who have an individual fellowship, will receive stipend payments. Stipends are disbursed at the start of each quarter if the student has already enrolled. Taxes are not withheld from stipend payments. It is the student’s responsibility to report the income and pay the necessary taxes. Most substantial charges will be automatically deducted from your stipend (campus housing, campus fees) and the disbursement you receive is what is left after those deductions.

The Associated Students at Stanford University Fee is charged quarterly to “directly fund activities of student organizations.” It can be waived during the first two weeks of each quarter at http://waivers.stanford.edu. The Campus Health Service Fee may not be waived. It covers many of the services provided at Vaden Health Center including primary care visits, CAPS evaluation and short-term therapy, and health and wellness programs. This is not the same as health insurance. Students are responsible for paying this fee unless they have an individual fellowship that covers it (NSF GRFP is one such fellowship).
Salary
Starting in Year 5 (MSTP G4), mentors provide the student’s full funding, or supplement a student’s individual fellowship to the Biosciences funding level. In most cases mentors appoint graduate students as a Research Assistant which pays a salary instead of stipend. Some notes about salary payments:

- Students being paid a Research or Teaching Assistant salary must complete employment paperwork at the start of their appointment (October 1)
- Salary payments are disbursed semi-monthly through the Stanford University Payroll Office. Paychecks are issued twice per month on the 7th and 22nd (or on the preceding work day if these dates fall on a weekend or holiday).
- Taxes are withheld from salary payments and Pay Statements are available in Axess. You will receive a W-2 for these payments.
- Campus fees are not automatically deducted from your paychecks. If you would like to enroll in payroll deduction, visit [https://sfs.stanford.edu/student-accounts/pay-your-bill/payroll-deduction](https://sfs.stanford.edu/student-accounts/pay-your-bill/payroll-deduction)

Transitioning from Stipend to Salary Payments
It is strongly recommended that you start a conversation with your advisor in June of your 4th year (MSTP G3) or if your fellowship is coming to an end, about the next year’s funding so that you can plan for any upcoming changes in your pay. Why? The last stipend payment for Year 4 (MSTP G3) is disbursed in mid-June. The first salary payment is disbursed on October 22. Each salary payment will be for ½ month of pay (1/6 of the quarterly stipend), and taxes will be withheld on top of that. As such students will need to budget and make the stipend payment last longer. Program administrators will try to provide ample warning to students coming up on such a transition, but students should take ownership of their finances and budget accordingly.

Grants and Fellowships
While the program guarantees funding for all students who are in good standing, applying for fellowships is an important part of graduate training. It not only develops scientific (and grant) writing skills but can also assist in further clarifying the aims of your research project. Whether you choose a career in industry or academia, these skills will also be transferable to your chosen field. Finally, receiving additional graduate fellowships adds prestige to your CV and makes you more marketable to employers upon graduation. Students are expected to apply for appropriate awards and encouraged to consult their faculty advisors when preparing fellowship applications.

For lists of funding opportunities available, visit:
[http://biosciences.stanford.edu/current/grants-fellowships/graduate-fellowships.html](http://biosciences.stanford.edu/current/grants-fellowships/graduate-fellowships.html)
[http://med.stanford.edu/rmg/funding/grad_student.html#list](http://med.stanford.edu/rmg/funding/grad_student.html#list)

To stay updated on workshops and fellowship deadlines, join the Biosciences fellowship mailing list: [https://mailman.stanford.edu/mailman/listinfo/fellowship-mentoring/](https://mailman.stanford.edu/mailman/listinfo/fellowship-mentoring/).

Grant Writing Resources and Support
Biosciences Grant Writing Academy: [https://grantwriting.stanford.edu/students/](https://grantwriting.stanford.edu/students/)
Stanford Biosciences Student Association (SBSA) – [http://sbsa.stanford.edu](http://sbsa.stanford.edu)

The Stanford Research Management Group (RMG) holds mandatory computer training sessions to prepare students to submit the NIH NRSA application. Announcements about workshop dates will be sent to the neurostudents listserv as they are announced.

**If You Are Awarded a Fellowship**

Notify program administrators right away and forward your award notice to determine when your funding should begin and to ensure funds are disbursed correctly.

**Fellowship Reporting Deadlines**

Students who have SGF support are required to advance to pass the qualifying exam and doctoral candidacy by the end of the 2nd year. NSF GRFP and NIH NRSA recipients must report on progress annually, and NSF students must declare their tenure status annually in March. Be sure to check your email for calls to action for your fellowships. Failing to submit fellowship reports or declare tenure for the NSF on time can result in your award being revoked by the funding agency. NSF awardees should check their email in FastLane to make sure it is current.

**Teaching Assistantships**

In general, students should not hold a TA position in the first year. Students who have been offered a paid TA position on campus must let the program administrators know prior to accepting to ensure the pay will be compliant with University policies associated with fellowships and assistantships ([https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-7](https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-7)).

**Travel Funding**

The Neurosciences Program provides travel funds to Year 1 and Year 2 PhD students, and G1 MSTP students ($750 per year). Travel funds can be used towards conference-related travel expenses such as airfare, lodging, ground transportation, conference registration fees, and meals. Funds must be used by June 30 and do not roll over into the next year. Contact program staff prior to making any travel reservations or purchase.

Additional travel funding: If you are presenting a research paper or poster at a scientific meeting, you may apply for a Biosciences Travel Grant: [http://biosciences.stanford.edu/current/resources/travel.html](http://biosciences.stanford.edu/current/resources/travel.html). Some individual fellowships provide a travel allowance; please consult your funding agency or award letter for more information. Students may also receive travel funding from their PI.

**Other Funding Resources**

- Graduate Cash Advance ([https://sfs.stanford.edu/gradcashadvance](https://sfs.stanford.edu/gradcashadvance)) - Helps graduate students with expenses before their graduate financial support is posted to their student account and/or TA/RA salary is paid
- Graduate Student Aid Fund ([https://financialaid.stanford.edu/pdf/GraduateStudentAidFund.pdf](https://financialaid.stanford.edu/pdf/GraduateStudentAidFund.pdf)) - Assists with University fees (i.e., health services fee, health insurance)
• Graduate Emergency Grant-in-Aid Funds ([https://financialaid.stanford.edu/pdf/EmergencyGrant-In-Aid.pdf](https://financialaid.stanford.edu/pdf/EmergencyGrant-In-Aid.pdf)) - If graduate students experience an unexpected financial hardship (e.g., medical, legal), it is possible to apply for grant-in-aid (small grants, not loans)

• Financial Aid Office ([https://financialaid.stanford.edu/grad/](https://financialaid.stanford.edu/grad/)) - Information and application forms for federally subsidized student loans

• 1:1 Financial Coaching ([https://sfs.stanford.edu/11-financial-coaching](https://sfs.stanford.edu/11-financial-coaching)) - Mind Over Money’s 1:1 financial coaching program provides students with the opportunity to share their personal financial circumstance with university-trusted individuals and explore ideas and build skills

• Graduate Housing Loan ([https://financialaid.stanford.edu/loans/other/gradhousing.html](https://financialaid.stanford.edu/loans/other/gradhousing.html)) - assists with move-in costs for off-campus housing

• Opportunity Fund ([https://diversityandfirstgen.stanford.edu/resources](https://diversityandfirstgen.stanford.edu/resources)) - Assistance with expenses (including conference travel) for diversity and first-generation students

• Biosciences Travel Grant Program ([https://biosciences.stanford.edu/current-students/resources/travel-grant-program/](https://biosciences.stanford.edu/current-students/resources/travel-grant-program/)) - Defray conference fees including registration, travel, lodging, and food

• Student Budget ([https://financialaid.stanford.edu/grad/budget/index.html](https://financialaid.stanford.edu/grad/budget/index.html)) - Provides estimated expenses

• Bechtel ([https://bechtel.stanford.edu/](https://bechtel.stanford.edu/)) – Provides information for international students about on-campus employment, CPT, OPT, internships and taxes

• Student Financial Services ([https://sfs.stanford.edu/](https://sfs.stanford.edu/)) - Provides information about the bill, tax information, third party sponsor invoicing, etc.


• Biosciences Financial Support Resources ([https://biosciences.stanford.edu/current-students/resources/financial/](https://biosciences.stanford.edu/current-students/resources/financial/))

• VPGE ([https://vpge.stanford.edu/](https://vpge.stanford.edu/)) – Provides information about graduate fellowships

• Gateway to Financial Activities ([http://web.stanford.edu/group/fms/fingate/](http://web.stanford.edu/group/fms/fingate/)) – Provides administrative resources (e.g., sign-up for direct deposit, tax treaty information).

**Outside Employment**

Doctoral students are expected to be full-time students; outside employment or consulting or other work is generally not permitted and must be discussed with and approved by the program director in advance of initiating (or continuing, if initiated prior to joining the Neurosciences program) such work.
ADDITIONAL PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS AND RESOURCES

Community Involvement and Service to the Program
Students make this program great and everyone is encouraged to be active participants in the Neurosciences community by attending events and taking on key roles within the program such as Student Leaders, serving as a TA for SIN Bootcamp or one of the core modules, leading various program-sponsored workshops, or joining the Neurosciences Graduate Student Network or NeuWrite.

Neurosciences Student Leaders play key roles in the program, coordinating program initiatives and ensuring that the student perspective and interests are kept at the forefront. Opportunities to get involved are announced by program staff annually and include organizing Interview Session events, selecting speakers for the annual program retreat, SuperBrainFood (senior student talks), Wu Tsai Seminars, coordinating SIN Tea Time, Happy Hours and more. Students receive compensation for involvement.

First Year Mentorship  Town Hall Meetings  SuperBrainFood
SIN Tea Time          Summer Party           Happy Hours
Student retreat       Interclass Hangouts  RIPS
Holiday Party         Wellness workshops  Anything else you think of!
Interview Session     Fellowship workshops

Annual Student Retreat
The annual Neurosciences Student Retreat is a student-organized retreat held each fall with lectures by external speakers and Stanford faculty who have been nominated by Neurosciences students. Attendance is strongly encouraged.

Student Intranet
Bookmark the Neurosciences Student Intranet, which should be your go-to resource for information beyond what is in this handbook: http://med.stanford.edu/neurogradprogram/student-portal.html

Email Lists
The program maintains a handful of mailing lists to easily reach all students in the program, specific cohorts, faculty, and postdocs. Listerv addresses are posted on the Student Intranet. Students can post directly to a list to which they belong (neurostudents and their own cohort list) if the message is sent from their @stanford.edu email address, otherwise the message must be approved by a moderator (program staff). neurofun@lists.stanford.edu is moderated by Ilana Zucker-Scharff. Please email her to ask to be added to the list.
Lending Library
The Leslie Allyn Meltzer Lending Library is a small collection of neuroscience books in Modular B that may be borrowed by Neurosciences students. Titles and availability may be accessed via the Student Intranet.

Student Services Center (SSC) at Tressider Union and Service Now
While we encourage you to contact us with administrative questions, there are times when we will ask you to submit a help ticket (https://stanford.service-now.com/services/?id=services_portal_home). These requests for information and assistance are directed to experts in various sections of the university who respond by email and phone. We use this service too, and they have almost always been able to address our concerns.

Vacation Policy
The Neuroscience Program recommends that all students be granted a minimum of two weeks of vacation each year. Students should communicate with their advisor in advance about time away from lab.
UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

Graduate Life Office (GLO) - Provides comprehensive and impartial guidance and information about all aspects of life as a graduate student. The Assistant Deans can help you with personal issues, roommate problems, family issues, health concerns, academic challenges, financial difficulties, etc. [http://glo.stanford.edu]

Gateway for New Graduate Students - Find the resources you need to begin your graduate career at Stanford. [https://vpge.stanford.edu/gradgateway]

Academic Support & Policies
- Graduate Academic Policies and Procedures (GAP) – University policies and other information related to the academic progress of Stanford graduate students, from their application and admission to the conferral of degrees and retention of records - [https://gap.stanford.edu]
- Stanford Bulletin - The official statement of Stanford's degree requirements and courses - [https://exploredegrees.stanford.edu]
- Lane Medical Library - Offers classes and workshops for technology and software programs including Adobe Illustrator and R - [http://lane.stanford.edu/index.html]
- Office of Accessible Education (OAE) - Support and services for students with disabilities - [https://oae.stanford.edu]
- Vice Provost for Graduate Education (VPGE) - Fellowships and other funding, professional development, and networking - [https://vpge.stanford.edu]
- Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning (VPTL) - Resources to students as both learners and instructors, and academic skills coaching - [https://vptl.stanford.edu]

Community
- Asian American Activities Center - [https://a3c.stanford.edu]
- Bechtel International Center - [https://bechtel.stanford.edu]
- Biomedical Association for the Interest of Minority Students (BioAIMS) - [https://www.bioaims.com]
- Black Community Services Center - [https://bcsc.stanford.edu]
- Diversity and First-Gen Office - [https://diversityandfirstgen.stanford.edu]
- El Centro Chicana y Latino - [https://elcentro.stanford.edu]
- Graduate Student Council - [https://assu.stanford.edu/gsc]
- Graduate Student Programming Board - [http://web.stanford.edu/group/gspb/cgi-bin/wordpress]
- The Markaz Resource Center - [https://markaz.stanford.edu]
- Native American Cultural Center - [https://nacc.stanford.edu]
- Office for Military-Affiliated Communities - [https://military.stanford.edu]
- Queer Student Resources - [https://queer.stanford.edu]
- Religious Life Office - [https://religiouslife.stanford.edu]
• Stanford Biosciences Student Association - http://med.stanford.edu/sbsa.html
• Student Activities and Leadership - https://sal.stanford.edu
• Women’s Community Center - https://wcc.stanford.edu

Confidential Resources
• Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) - https://vaden.stanford.edu/caps
• Confidential Support Team (CST) - Support for students impacted by sexual assault and relationship violence - https://vaden.stanford.edu/get-help-now/confidential-support-team
• Office of the Ombuds - https://ombuds.stanford.edu
• Religious Life Office - https://religiouslife.stanford.edu
• The Bridge Peer Counseling - https://web.stanford.edu/group/bridge
• Biosciences Peer Mentors (BioPeers) - BioPeers provide free and private peer-to-peer support for the Biosciences graduate student community - https://biosciences.stanford.edu/current-students/resources/health-and-wellness-resources/peer-mentoring

Family Life
• Bechtel International Center - https://bechtel.stanford.edu
• Dependent Health Insurance - https://vaden.stanford.edu/insurance/dependent-insurance-coverage

Health and Wellness
• The Bridge Peer Counseling - https://web.stanford.edu/group/bridge
• Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) - https://vaden.stanford.edu/caps
• Confidential Support Team (CST) - Support for students impacted by sexual assault and relationship violence - https://vaden.stanford.edu/get-help-now/confidential-support-team
• iThrive – Offers courses, workshops, discussion groups and student internship opportunities to examine the research-based knowledge and skills to flourish at Stanford - https://vaden.stanford.edu/wellness/ithrive-student-health-and-well-being
• Office of Sexual Assault & Relationship Abuse Education & Response (SARA) - https://sara.stanford.edu
• Recreation and Wellness - Gym/athletic facilities, classes, and intramural sports, etc. - http://rec.stanford.edu
• Religious Life Office - https://religiouslife.stanford.edu
• Vaden Student Health Center - Point of contact for all things health related including medical care and health insurance - https://vaden.stanford.edu
• Wellness Network directory - https://mentalhealth.stanford.edu
• Weiland Health Initiative - Promotes wellness across gender identities and sexual orientations - https://weiland.stanford.edu
• Windhover Contemplation Center - https://windhover.stanford.edu
• 5-SURE - Safe escort on campus – https://alcohol.stanford.edu/5-sure/5-sure-service

International Students
• Bechtel International Center - https://bechtel.stanford.edu
• English for Foreign Students - https://language.stanford.edu/programs/efs/languages/english-foreign-students
• Immigration Issues and Resources - https://immigration.stanford.edu
• Immigrants’ Rights Clinic - https://law.stanford.edu/immigrants-rights-clinic

Professional Development
• BioSci Careers - Career resources specifically supporting the professional development of medical and life science trainees - http://med.stanford.edu/bioscicareers.html
• Vice Provost for Graduate Education (VPGE) - https://vpge.stanford.edu
• BEAM, Stanford Career Education - https://beam.stanford.edu
• Haas Center for Public Service - https://haas.stanford.edu