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PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

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

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Associate Professor, Psychology  
jlg@stanford.edu

Merritt Maduke, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor, Molecular and Cellular Physiology  
maduke@stanford.edu

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.

Kalai Diamond  
Program Administrator  
kdiamond@stanford.edu

Marrium Fatima  
Student Services Officer  
mfatima@stanford.edu

Student Intranet
Bookmark the Neurosciences Student Intranet, which should be your go-to resource for information beyond what is in this handbook

Email Lists
The program maintains a handful of listservs for neuro students, postdocs, and faculty – visit the Student Intranet for addresses and information. neurofun@lists.stanford.edu is a student-only listserv moderated by Ilana Zucker-Scharff. Please email her to ask to be added to the list.

Neurosciences IDP Faculty
http://med.stanford.edu/neurogradprogram/faculty.html
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; develop comprehensive hypotheses
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. Take on scientific leadership roles through engagement in program and community service
9. Effectively transmit scientific knowledge through teaching, mentorship, and outreach
10. 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 in approximately 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

**Milestone, 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://bulletin.stanford.edu/programs/NEURS-PHD). Students must complete a qualifying exam, an Oral Examination, Written Dissertation, and have at least one (1) first author publication in a peer-reviewed journal resulting from the thesis research prior to graduation. 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 their own requirements.

**Enrollment Requirements**
Neurosciences Ph.D. students must be enrolled for full-time study (exactly 10 units) in every quarter including summer. Students are expected to complete all unit and course requirements by the end of Winter quarter of the 4th year, at which point they will be eligible for Terminal Graduate Registration (TGR) status. After being approved for TGR status, students will enroll in NEPR 802: TGR Dissertation, for zero units under their dissertation advisor 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. must be taken for a letter grade and must be passed with a grade of B or higher 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 and are expected to complete all Ph.D. degree requirements 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 1, 2, and 3 during Winter and Spring quarters. Students will enroll for 2 units during the quarter in which they give their presentation and 1 unit in the other quarter. MSTP students must complete 3 quarters of Journal Club, giving a presentation twice. In 2021-22, generally, 3rd years will present in the Winter, 2nd years will present in the Spring, and 1st years will not present.

Statistics Course Requirement
- Students must complete one statistics course
- Students may take any course on the pre-approved list: (https://med.stanford.edu/neurogradprogram/student-portal/pre-approved-course-list.html).
- If a student wishes to take a course that is not on the pre-approved list, they must request approval in advance of enrollment by submitting this form: (https://stanforduniversity.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dnhnuXUix1LDjGd). Courses must be approved in advance.

Advanced Neuroscience Course Requirement
- Students who started in 2019 or later can meet the advanced neuroscience course requirement by taking either:
  o Two (2) 3-unit courses; or
  o One (1) 3-unit course and a combination of 1- or 2-unit courses that add up to 6 (or more) units of coursework in total
- Students who started in 2018 or earlier can meet the advanced neuroscience course requirement by taking either:
  o Three (3) 3-unit courses; or
  o Two (2) 3-unit courses and a combination of 1- or 2-unit courses that add up to 6 units of coursework
- MSTP students must complete one advanced-level, 3-unit neuroscience course.
- Students may take any course on the pre-approved list: (https://med.stanford.edu/neurogradprogram/student-portal/pre-approved-course-list.html).
- If a student wishes to take a course that is not on the pre-approved list, they must request approval in advance of enrollment by submitting this form: (https://stanforduniversity.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dnhnuXUix1LDjGd). Courses must be approved in advance.

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 should be scheduled by June 1 annually and 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)

**IDP Reporting Requirements:**

1. 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/)
2. Prior to the meeting, the student should download the appropriate IDP form from the Biosciences IDP page linked above.
3. Meetings must be confirmed in GST by the advisor. It is recommended that students have their advisor log in during the meeting to make sure this is done.

**Thesis Committee Meetings**

Starting in the third year, students are required to meet with their thesis committee annually. In the fifth year and beyond, the student and committee will decide if more than one meeting is necessary. Meetings must be scheduled by June 1 and completed by August 1 annually. Meeting dates must be entered in GST by the student and confirmed in GST by the advisor. Exceptions should be documented by the advisor in GST. All committee members should be present at the meetings. Students must have a Green Light Meeting with the thesis committee at least 6 months prior to an anticipated thesis defense.
ADVISING

First Year Advising
All first year Neurosciences graduate students have an assigned First Year Advisor (FYA) drawn from a team of faculty members recruited to this role. Each FYA serves in this role for a 3 year term and provides assigned students with guidance on lab rotations, coursework, and thesis lab selection. First Year Advisors are meant to be an ally who can be relied upon to provide informed counsel about these and other issues during the first year. Should a student decide to rotate in the lab of their assigned FYA, a new advisor will be assigned to avoid conflicts of interest. Students are encouraged to stay connected to their FYA during the entire course of graduate study.

First year advisors meet as a team at least twice each academic year to share best practices and solicit advice for any difficult situations that arise.

Thesis Advisor and Committee
After a student officially joins a lab, 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. Students are encouraged to seek out additional mentoring from faculty such as their First Year Advisor, thesis committee members, or faculty members of the SoLiD program for non-research mentoring.

Additional Senior Faculty Mentors
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 (http://med.stanford.edu/neurogradprogram/student-portal.html) - expand the Advising and Mentoring section and see “Additional Volunteer Advisors.” Students are welcome and encouraged to reach out to them if it will be helpful.
YEAR 1

Year 1 Requirements, Milestones and Deadlines
1. September 7-17: Stanford Immersive Neurosciences Boot Camp
2. First Year Faculty Talks
3. First Year Advisor Meetings
4. October 18: NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Application
5. Coursework
6. Rotations
7. Spring Quarter: Program Service Discussions, First Year Milestone Meeting, Thesis Lab Selection
8. June 30: Deadline to use 1st year Travel Funds (see Financial Support and Fellowship Funding section)
9. Within 30 days of Thesis Lab Selection: Initial Advisor/IDP Meeting

Stanford Intensive Neurosciences Bootcamp
All new Neurosciences students are required to attend the Stanford Intensive Neurosciences (SIN) Bootcamp, which is held for the two weeks prior to the start of Autumn 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 Boot Camp Directors (John Huguenard and Scott Owen).

First Year Faculty Talks
Program-hosted dinners during SIN Boot Camp and weekly during autumn quarter are meant to introduce first year students to faculty, including labs that other students may not have had the opportunity to explore. They 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 into 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.

First Year Advising
Students are expected to discuss their rotation choices with their First Year Advisor (FYA) prior to committing and meet with their FYA during the first few weeks of the autumn quarter. A meeting in the second quarter is highly recommended, but less essential than the initial meeting in the Autumn and the Milestone Review in the Spring. 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 below) and to discuss their thesis lab selection before committing.
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.

**NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Application**

All students who are eligible for NSF Graduate Research Fellowships are expected to apply during their first or second year of graduate studies and encouraged to discuss their fellowship application with their First Year Advisor and rotation mentor (or PI if applying in the second year). The applications are generally due in October, and the program will send announcements about workshops to assist in preparing the application. The program is required to report on student applications, so students will be asked to submit confirmation of their submitted application.

**Coursework**

**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.

MSTP Students: In consultation with their PI, the Neurosciences Program Director, and/or Curriculum Chair, MSTP students will select three out of the eight neurosciences core modules to complete that will best complement their training. At least one core course must come from each of the pre-assigned Sections:

- Section 1: Systems, Cellular, Computational, Cognitive
- Section 2: Molecular, Development, Genetics, Anatomy

MSTP students are welcome to take additional core modules for their own knowledge and skill development.

**First Year Course Enrollment**

Permission codes are required to enroll in core modules and will be provided by program staff.

Autumn 2021:
1. NEPR 213: Genetics Core (2 units)
2. NEPR 205: Anatomy Core (2 units)
3. NEPR 212: Responsible Conduct of Neuroscience Research (1 unit)
4. BIOS 217: Foundations of Statistics and Reproducible Research (2 units)
5. NEPR 299 for Rotation Credit (3 credits)

Winter 2022
1. NEPR 204: Molecular Core (2 units)
2. NEPR 202: Development Core (2 units)
3. NEPR 201: Cellular Core (2 units)
4. NEPR 209: Introduction to Mathematical Tools for Neuroscience (1 unit)
5. NEPR 280: Neuroscience Journal Club (1 unit)
6. NEPR 299 for Rotation Credit (2 credits)

Spring 2022
1. NEPR 203: Systems Core (2 units)
2. NEPR 207: Cognitive Core (2 units)
3. NEPR 208: Computational Core (2 units)
4. NEPR 280: Neuroscience Journal Club (1 unit)
5. NEPR 299 for Rotation Credit (3 credits)

Summer 2022
1. NEPR 299 for SIN Credit (10 units)

It is not recommended that first year students take courses other than those listed above, or hold Teaching Assistantships, in order to prioritize time for the required coursework and lab rotations.

**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.

**Rotation Requirements**
- Students must complete rotations in three different labs by the end of the third quarter of their first year.
- Rotations completed in the ADVANCE Summer Institute may count as one of the three rotations. The fall rotation should be in a different lab from the summer ADVANCE rotation.
- In general, rotation start and end dates should align with the academic quarter.
- 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).
- Students are expected to discuss all rotations with their First Year Advisor.
● Students are encouraged to have a formal discussion with the rotation advisor at the start of each rotation to explicitly discuss expectations (e.g., expected accomplishments, time in lab, etc.).

● Students should work with their mentors to prepare a lab meeting presentation at the end of each rotation/quarter. The presentation could include a broad background of the field related to the project, a sound scientific premise for proposed studies, results of experiments or modeling, statistical justification of experimental design and sample size and analysis of data acquired (or other relevant criteria for rigorous, statistically sound analysis of the studies), steps taken to ensure reproducibility, limitations of experiments or approach, and future studies. This training is important for students to develop their presentation skills and scientific thinking, and a requirement for training programs with NIH funding (as ours is).

● Students and faculty will be asked to complete a feedback form at the end of each rotation.

● Students may end a rotation early if there is a particular reason to do so and must contact program staff prior to ending the rotation. If a rotation ends early and another rotation begins in another lab, this latter rotation still needs 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 program director.

● Students seeking a fourth rotation must arrange to meet with their First Year Advisor followed by a meeting with the program director as early as possible, and no later than Week 6 of spring quarter. At these meetings, the student should be prepared to provide specific scientific reasoning to justify an additional rotation. 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 before the first year, students should review rotation requirements and contact program staff if there are any questions. A list of faculty who are accepting students in their lab will be provided to students in early August. Students should contact prospective rotation mentors prior to arriving on campus, and it is advised that students try to set up their first rotation in advance if possible, ideally during summer. 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.

Once a possible rotation mentor has been confirmed, students must contact program staff to have the rotation noted.
Rotations for subsequent quarters should ideally be set near the middle of the prior quarter. Students are expected to discuss all rotations with their first year advisor, and confirm their plans with program staff prior to the end of the prior quarter:

- Winter rotations should be confirmed by Friday, December 17, 2021
- Spring rotations should be confirmed by Friday, March 25, 2022

**Rotation Credit**

- Students will enroll in credit (NEPR 299) under their rotation mentor no later than the Final Study List Deadline of each quarter. Rotations are taken C/NC.

**Program Service**

To achieve training goals for scientific leadership, the graduate program provides a variety of opportunities to engage in community and program service. Starting in 2022-23, to standardize training and promote distribution of service experiences, students will be expected to take on at least one service role during their second year in the program; discussion about roles and opportunities will be discussed during Spring quarter. For more information, see the [Community Involvement and Service](#) section of this handbook.

**First Year Milestone Meeting**

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, coursework performance, other graduate experience, and choice of thesis lab.

**Advisor/Lab Selection**

Neurosciences Ph.D. students will select a thesis advisor after completing three laboratory rotations and discussing their selection with the First Year Advisor and a program director. It is expected that students will select their thesis lab by the end of Spring quarter. Students who would like to be co-advised should discuss the reasons and approach for this arrangement with their First Year Advisor and a program director.

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 an AC member, the student must 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:

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).

After the student and thesis advisor have agreed to work together, and the lab choice is approved by the First Year Advisor and program directors, students must notify the student services staff. 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 providing 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 their advisor(s) to:

- Discuss and complete the Biosciences Individual Development Plan (IDP) ([https://biosciences.stanford.edu/current-students/idp/](https://biosciences.stanford.edu/current-students/idp/))
- Review and/or complete the Student-Advisor Expectation Scales (optional, available here: [https://vpge.stanford.edu/academic-guidance/advising-mentoring/advising-0](https://vpge.stanford.edu/academic-guidance/advising-mentoring/advising-0))

After the student officially joins a lab, the thesis advisor serves as the primary mentor.
Year 2 Milestones and Deadlines

1. Qualifying Exam: The Qualifying Exam should take place 6-9 months after joining the lab, and no later than June 30 (August 30 for MSTP G1)
   a. December 15: Deadline to Confirm Qualifying Exam Committee
   b. January 30: Deadline to schedule Qualifying Exam and confirm Pre-Quals Rigor Reviewer
   c. 4 weeks prior to Qualifying Exam Date: Submit Pre-Quals Rigor Document
   d. 2 weeks prior to Qualifying Exam Date: Submit Dissertation Proposal Paper
2. IDP Meeting: Schedule by June 1, Complete by August 1
3. June 30: Deadline to use 2nd year Travel Funds
4. Apply for Doctoral Candidacy by the end of Summer quarter
5. Form Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee by the end of summer quarter
6. Starting in 2022-23, 2nd year students will engage in program service activities; timing will be dependent on the specific role

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 their 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. Students are expected to complete degree program qualifying procedures and apply for candidacy by the end of their second year in the doctoral program (https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-4/subchapter-6/page-4-6-1). 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.
In rare cases the Program Directors may approve an extension of the qualifying exam deadline (including MSTP students); extensions must be requested well in advance.

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 Qualifying Exam Chair**

The Qualifying Exam Committee must be formed, and approved by a program director, by December 15 via the Qualifying Exam Committee Approval Form (available in the Forms section of the Student Intranet). Students whose last name begins with the letter A-K should contact Justin Gardner; whose last name begins with the letter L-Z should contact Merritt Maduke. Submit the form to program staff when complete.

The Qualifying Exam Committee is formed to judge the qualifying examination. The student may consult with their thesis advisor to choose individuals whom 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. The committee is selected by the student and is meant to provide mentorship and advocacy for the student. The Qualifying Exam Committee can subsequently become the Thesis Committee, but this is not required. 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 (and non-AC advisor, if applicable) is not a member and does not vote.
- The committee will be composed of faculty from more than one department
- At least two members must be current Training or Affiliate Faculty in the Neurosciences Program (see program website for current faculty)
- At least one committee member should be Associate Professor or higher
- One committee member will be selected to serve as Qualifying Exam Chair

**Qualifying Exam Chair**

The Qualifying Exam Chair is a member of the Qualifying Exam Committee who oversees the proceedings of the Qualifying Exam, sets 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 summarizing the exam and stating the outcome to the student, advisor, quals committee, and program staff.

**Scheduling the Qualifying Exam**

The exam must be scheduled, and the exam date communicated to program staff, by January 30 of the second year (G1 year).
The qualifying exam is typically completed with the student and all members of the examination committee attending in person. In some limited cases, it may be appropriate for the student or some or all members of the committee to participate remotely. The meeting format should be discussed well in advance and agreed upon by all members of the committee. It is the student’s responsibility to reserve a room for the exam or set up the Zoom meeting if remote. If meeting in person, the room should be reserved for 2.5 hours.

Please see links below to make room reservations:
- ChEM-H/Neuro Complex: https://chemhneuro.stanford.edu/building-info/room-scheduling
- LKSC, CCSR, or Alway: http://medscheduler.stanford.edu
- Clark Center: https://biox.stanford.edu/room_scheduling.html

It is 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.

Pre-Quals Rigor Document
The Pre-Quals Rigor Document is due at least four weeks prior to the Qualifying Exam Date. The student is responsible for identifying a faculty member (not the PI or a member of the quals committee) to review and approve the document before the written proposal deadline. The reviewer must be confirmed by January 30.

Rationale:
To meet expectations from NIH regarding experimental rigor in design and analysis we have added a component to the qualifying examination that probes these items separately from the research plan associated with a typical qualifying exam proposal. Incorporating this step is a means of targeting student training more directly into the work that they are performing will better serve the training philosophy of our program.

Requirement:
Students will submit a 1-2 page evaluation of their approach to ensuring rigorous and replicable results of their project. This should include the rationale for how experimental design, analysis, interpretation and reporting of results are planned to ensure robust and unbiased conclusions. Considerations for rigor and reproducibility will vary according to the project. Examples include: a power analysis justification of sample size, inclusion and exclusion criteria, appropriate choice of statistical tests, approaches to avoid p-hacking, randomization and blinding, pre-registration of an experiment and analysis, permutation analysis of null effects, bootstrapping to obtain confidence intervals, cross-validation and model comparison, availability plan for constructs, reagents, data and/or code. Sufficient detail of the approach, including statistical/quantitative
procedures, appropriate for publication in a Methods section of a peer-reviewed scientific journal such as The Journal of Neuroscience, should be provided.

Process: The appropriateness of the approach to rigor and reproducibility including quantitative/statistical procedures will be evaluated prior to the qualifying examination by a current Neurosciences program faculty member who is skilled in the area but not part of the qualifying committee. Students must select the reviewer in advance and get confirmation that they will be able to provide feedback on the document within 10 days of it being submitted. Students should confirm the Pre-Quals Rigor Reviewer by January 30 and send the reviewer’s name to program staff.

Submission:
The pre-quals rigor document is due at least four weeks before the qualifying exam date and will be submitted to the faculty reviewer (cc: to program staff) via email.

Review:
The faculty reviewer will provide feedback to the student within 10 days of receiving the pre-quals rigor document. This is an iterative process, and if there are points that need to be addressed, the faculty and student can go back and forth as needed until the faculty feels the document is satisfactory. The reviewer must confirm successful completion of this requirement to the student and program staff by email no later than two weeks before the qualifying exam (prior to the submission of the written proposal document). The qualifying examination cannot move forward without acceptable completion of this task.

Written Proposal
The written proposal (qualifying exam document) must be sent to the qualifying exam 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 6-12 pages long (including all figures 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](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/forms-e/fellowship-forms-e.pdf)). The statistical approach may reference the final Pre-Quals Rigor Document, which should also be attached as an appendix.

Qualifying 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 qualifying 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. Students should plan a 30-45 minute presentation that, with discussion, will last approximately 60-90 minutes.

Following the presentation by the student there will be a 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. Oral Exam Chair provides both the candidate and advisor with a summary of its evaluation (TBD).
8. Candidate obtains committee member signatures on Qualifying Exam Certification Form and submits completed paperwork to program staff.
9. Qualifying Exam Chair provides a written summary of the exam and result to the student, advisor, Qualifying Exam, program staff, and program directors.

Outcome of the Qualifying 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 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 quals 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 Qualifying Exam**

After the exam concludes, program staff will contact the Qualifying Exam Chair to request the decision of the committee and an appraisal of the student’s performance in the examination.

Within two weeks following the exam, students must meet with program staff to apply for Doctoral Candidacy and form the Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee.

**Admission/Advancement to Doctoral Candidacy**

A student will be admitted to candidacy if, in addition to the student fulfilling departmental prerequisites (including successful completion of the qualifying exam), the faculty makes the judgment that the student has the potential to successfully complete the requirements of the degree program.

Per university policy [http://gap.stanford.edu/4-6.html](http://gap.stanford.edu/4-6.html), students are expected to apply for doctoral 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.

To apply for candidacy, students complete the Application for Candidacy for Doctoral Degree form [https://stanford.app.box.com/v/appcanddoct](https://stanford.app.box.com/v/appcanddoct) and specify how they will fulfill the degree requirements. After completing the form, the student must have it reviewed by program staff for accuracy; it must then be signed by the dissertation advisor(s) followed by final approval by a program director. After obtaining all signatures, the student will submit the form to program staff for entry in Axess.

Candidacy is valid for five calendar years unless terminated by the program (for example, for unsatisfactory progress). All requirements for the Ph.D. degree, including thesis defense and written dissertation, must be completed before candidacy expires. Candidacy may be extended upon approval by a program director. 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.
Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee (Thesis Committee)

Role of the Thesis Committee
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. Throughout the graduate training, 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.

Forming the 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.

- Students should review additional University policies regarding Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committees (https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-4/subchapter-8/page-4-8-1)
- In the Neurosciences program, the Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee (DDRC) consists of the principal dissertation advisor (or co-advisors) and three other readers.
- Per university policy the DDRC may not have more than five members, the majority of whom must be on Academic Council.
- At least two members of the DDRC must be Training or Affiliate Faculty in the Neurosciences graduate program
- At least one Reader must be Associate Professor or higher
- The program directors 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.

After deciding on their DDRC, students will complete the following forms and have them approved by a Program Director:

1. Neurosciences Dissertation Reading Committee form - This form that details the program’s expectations of your committee members. Please have all members review and sign. (https://med.stanford.edu/neurogradprogram/student-portal.html)
2. Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee form - This is the official university form documenting your committee. Please read the first page and follow the instructions prior to filling it out. Obtain all member signatures on one form; do not submit multiple pages (https://stanford.app.box.com/v/docdiss-reading-committee-form)
3. If a student wants a non-AC member on the committee (refer to university policies regarding Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committees linked above), this form is also required: Petition for Non-Academic Council Doctoral Committee Members (https://stanford.app.box.com/v/doc-ctte-non-acad-council)
Students whose last name begins with the letter A-K should contact Justin Gardner; whose last name begins with the letter L-Z should contact Merritt Maduke. When complete, submit the approved forms to program staff.

**Thesis Committee Chair**
The student must identify one member from their thesis committee to act as the Chair of the Thesis committee. The thesis committee chair will not be your PI or co-mentor, should be an Academic Council member, and we strongly recommend they are Associate Professor or higher. The role of the thesis committee chair is to help advocate for you throughout your journey at Stanford and to help ensure you are getting what you would like most from your thesis committee meetings. The committee chair will also submit summary reports of thesis committee meetings to program staff.

**Program Service**
To achieve training goals for scientific leadership, the graduate program provides a variety of opportunities to engage in community and program service. Starting in 2022-23, to standardize training and promote distribution of service experiences, students will be expected to take on at least one service role during their second year in the program; discussion about roles and opportunities will be discussed in Spring quarter. For more information, please see the [Community Involvement and Service](#) section of this handbook.
YEAR 3

Year 3 Milestones and Deadlines

1. Apply for NIH NRSA and/or Other Outside Fellowships
2. Thesis Committee Meeting: Schedule by June 1, Complete by August 1
3. IDP Meeting: Schedule by June 1, Complete by August 1

Apply for NIH NRSA and/or Other Outside Fellowships
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.

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 the Financial Support and Fellowship Information section of this handbook for information about applying to, and managing, extramural grants and fellowships.

Thesis Committee Meeting
Starting in the third year, students are required to meet with their thesis committee at least once per year. 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/.

- Meetings must be scheduled by June 1 and completed by August 1 annually. Students must enter the meeting date in GST.
- Prior to the first meeting, students will select a Chair of the thesis committee. See information about the thesis committee chair below.
- All committee members should be present at the meetings. Exceptions should be documented by the advisor in GST.
- The committee meetings are expected to have 3 parts: (1) a presentation by the student to the full committee updating progress, problems, and plans; (2) a discussion with the student in the absence of the PI; and (3) a discussion with the PI in the absence of the student.
- Committee meetings will be tracked by the Neurosciences 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.
● 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 of the meeting to the student, committee, and program staff (Committee Meeting Evaluation Form, available in the Forms section of the Student Intranet). 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.
YEAR 4

Year 4 Milestones and Deadlines
1. NRSA Application Deadlines: December 8, April 8, August 8
2. Thesis Committee Meeting: Schedule by June 1, Complete by August 1
3. IDP Meeting: Schedule by June 1, Complete by August 1

Terminal Graduate Registration (TGR)
Terminal Graduate Registration, also known as TGR, is the point at which a student has completed all required coursework and has enough units (135) for the PhD degree. It is expected that Neurosciences IDP students will reach this milestone after the winter quarter of the fourth year. Program staff will monitor progress and communicate with students about eligibility for TGR and how to apply.

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. Students must have been approved for Advancement to Candidacy and submitted a Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee form in order to be eligible for TGR status. Additional information about TGR status is available online here: https://registrar.stanford.edu/students/tgr.

MSTP students do not go on TGR status, but instead become eligible for the MD program’s reduced medical tuition rate in Year G3; please contact the MSTP Program Manager for more information.

Thesis Committee Meetings
Similar to the third year, in the fourth year, students are required to meet with their thesis committee at least once. Meetings must be scheduled by June 1 and completed by August 1. All committee members should be present at the meetings. Exceptions should be documented by the advisor in GST. Students must enter meeting dates in GST, the advisor must confirm the meeting in GST, and the thesis committee chair will send a summary report of the meeting. 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.
YEAR 5+ / DEGREE COMPLETION

Year 5+ Milestones and Deadlines
1. Thesis Committee Meeting(s): Schedule by June 1, Complete by August 1
2. IDP Meeting: Schedule by June 1, Complete by August 1
3. First-Author Publication Requirement
4. Green Light Meeting: At least 6 months prior to anticipated thesis defense
5. Oral Examination (Thesis Defense)
6. Written Dissertation

Thesis Committee Meetings
In the fifth year and beyond, the student and committee should consider more frequent meetings in order to stay on track for achieving graduation requirements, in particular the publication requirement.

First Author Publication Requirement
The program requires one first-author peer-reviewed publication as a minimum requirement for 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 their 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 on as a postdoc to author additional publications from thesis research is at the discretion of the student and their 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 directors.

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 directors all approve the exception.

In order to be approved for graduation, students must submit to Neurosciences program staff (cc: to the dissertation advisor) 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 approximately 6-12 months prior to an anticipated thesis defense to discuss their 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/documents approval from all parties. Students may download the Green Light Meeting Form from the Forms section of the Student Intranet.

**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. In the Neurosciences program, 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. University policies and procedures related to the Oral Examination are available here: [https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-4/subchapter-7/page-4-7-1#anchor-292](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 Neurosciences doctoral dissertation is read and approved by the student’s approved Doctoral Dissertation Reading Committee to ensure that standards for departmental and university quality are met. For information and instructions regarding the doctoral dissertation visit [https://registrar.stanford.edu/students/dissertation-and-thesis-submission](https://registrar.stanford.edu/students/dissertation-and-thesis-submission). The Neurosciences program requires that students submit the written dissertation no more than one quarter after the thesis defense.
PLANNING FOR GRADUATION

Know Your Deadlines
Students are expected to review and mark all deadlines regarding the oral defense, dissertation, and submitting required forms and paperwork. University deadlines are firm and missing them can mean that you do not graduate as planned. If you have any questions, please contact program staff.

Graduation and Cardinal Care
Students graduating at the end of autumn or winter quarter will need to make a decision regarding their 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
The Neurosciences program requires that students submit the written dissertation no more than one quarter after the thesis defense. 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 (at least two weeks) to incorporate any resulting changes and submit 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. Neurosciences IDP students must complete the publication requirement prior to applying for a Graduation Quarter. The Graduation Quarter Request eForm, available in Axess, must be submitted before the first day of classes of the intended Graduation Quarter. Students are only allowed one 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 coordinated by the Office of Medical Student Affairs. Information about the School of Medicine Commencement is typically 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 weeks after the end of a given quarter; dates are posted on the Academic Calendar (https://registrar.stanford.edu/academic-calendar).

Ph.D. students often need what is called a Statement of Completion. This is a letter from the Office of the University Registrar confirming that a student has submitted an approved dissertation or thesis and will be recommended for a degree by the Faculty Senate. Students typically use this for postdoctoral appointments or to obtain employment before their degree is actually conferred.

Students are only eligible for a statement of completion if they have submitted a dissertation and it has been approved by the Registrar's Office. Students will receive email confirmation once the submission is approved by the Registrar's Office. This email confirmation will provide instructions for obtaining the Statement of Completion letter by essentially logging on to Axess, and going to the eDissertation/eThesis Center, where it should be ready and available as a link to the student.
THESS DEFENSE CHECKLIST

**6-12 Months Prior to Anticipated Defense**

- Hold your Green Light Meeting to clarify and document what your committee requires to be done before you can defend. Complete the Green Light Meeting Form with your committee, and after all committee members sign the form, send it to program staff. The Green Light Meeting Form is available in the Forms section of the Student Intranet.

**2-3 Months Prior to Anticipated Defense**

- Set a date and time for your defense. 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](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](https://biox.stanford.edu/about/building-services/room-scheduling)
  - ChEM-H/Neuro: [https://chemhneuro.stanford.edu/building-info/room-scheduling](https://chemhneuro.stanford.edu/building-info/room-scheduling)

**At Least 30 Days Before the Defense**

- Prepare the following materials for upload:
  - Completed University Oral Examination Form *without* signatures
  - A one-page abstract of your dissertation; this will be provided to the Oral Exam Chair
  - A flier if you want it included in announcements
- Submit the Oral Examination Scheduling and Approval Form ([https://stanforduniversity.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6VI6gLO84W2CBwi](https://stanforduniversity.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6VI6gLO84W2CBwi)) and upload the required documents. If you would like to hold your exam in hybrid/virtual format, this form will also be used to request approval by a Program Director.
- Send a reminder to all members of your committee and re-confirm their availability

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

- Send your dissertation to your thesis committee. 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**

- Your Oral Examination Chair will bring to the defense your abstract, Oral Examination Form, voting ballots, and instructions provided by program staff.
- After the exam the Oral Exam Chair will sign the University Oral Examination Form.

**After the Defense**

- Return the entire chair packet (with the ballots) to the program office by the next day.
- Program staff will update the Oral Examination Milestone in Axess.
DOCTORAL DISSERTATION SUBMISSION

The Neurosciences program requires that students submit the written dissertation no more than one quarter after the thesis defense.

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: https://registrar.stanford.edu/students/dissertation-and-thesis-submission.

This page 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 AND FELLOWSHIP INFORMATION

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 (or think you are being overpaid), please contact the program staff right away.

Student Funding
The Neurosciences program provides stipend, tuition, and Cardinal Care funding for PhD 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. Starting in Year 5 (MSTP Year G4), funding comes from fellowships procured by the student, from the student’s mentor, or a combination of the two. All funding is contingent upon students being in good standing with the program. 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 Biosciences Committee on Graduate Admissions and Policies (CGAP). In 2021-22, stipend rate is $47,280 ($11,820 per quarter).

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 is enrolled at their approved full-time status. 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.

Fees
The Campus Health Service Fee 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 and may not be waived. It. The Vaden Fee is not the same as health insurance. Students are responsible for paying the Vaden fee unless they have an individual fellowship that covers it (NSF GRFP is one such fellowship; NIH NRSA fellowship recipients may opt to use their Institutional Allowance to cover the fee.). 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.
Transitioning from Stipend to Salary Payments
In June of your 4th year (or MSTP G3 year), it is strongly recommended that you start a conversation with your advisor about the next year’s funding so that you can plan for any upcoming changes in your pay. Why? In Years 1-4 you are paid with fellowship stipends at the start of each quarter. In your 5th (or G4) year when your PI starts providing funding, they may pay you via a graduate Research Assistantship; these payments are disbursed twice per month. If you have an individual fellowship in Year 5, you should have this conversation with your PI as you approach the end date of your fellowship; once your PI picks up your full funding, that is the point at which you will likely transition to RA salary payments.

When you change from stipend to salary, 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 and plan to budget their money differently than when they received quarterly stipends. Program staff 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.

Salary
Starting in Year 5 (MSTP G4), mentors will provide the student’s full funding, or supplement a student’s individual fellowship to the Biosciences funding level. In many cases mentors will appoint students as a Graduate Research Assistant which pays a salary instead of stipend. Some notes about salary payments:

- Students being paid a Research Assistant salary must complete employment paperwork at the start of their appointment (October 1 for fall quarter)
- 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 workday if these dates fall on a weekend or holiday). The amount disbursed each pay period is 1/6 the quarterly total.
- 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://studentservices.stanford.edu/my-tuition-bill/understand-your-student-bill-payment-system/make-payment/payroll-deduction-plan

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.
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:
- Grant Writing Academy: https://grantwriting.stanford.edu/students/grad-funding/

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

Grant Writing Resources and Support
- Biosciences Grant Writing Academy: https://grantwriting.stanford.edu/students/
- Stanford Biosciences Student Association (SBSA) – 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 any 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 to prioritize time for core coursework and lab rotations. 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).
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 purchases.

Additional travel funding: If you are presenting a research paper or poster at a scientific meeting, you may apply for a Biosciences Travel Grant: https://biosciences.stanford.edu/current-students/resources/travel-grant-program/. 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.

Outside Employment
Doctoral students are expected to be full-time students. Outside employment, consulting, or other work is generally not permitted and must be discussed with and approved by the program directors in advance of initiating such work (or continuing, if initiated prior to joining the Neurosciences program). Summer internships must also be discussed with and approved by the student’s dissertation advisor and program directors well in advance.

Additional Funding Resources
- Graduate Cash Advance - Helps graduate students with expenses before their graduate financial support is posted to their student account or TA/RA salary is paid. (https://financialaid.stanford.edu/grad/funding/index.html)
- Graduate Student Aid Fund - Assists with University fees (i.e., health services fee, health insurance) (https://financialaid.stanford.edu/grad/funding/index.html)
- Graduate Emergency Grant-in-Aid Funds - 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) (https://financialaid.stanford.edu/grad/funding/index.html)
- Financial Aid Office - Information and application forms for federally subsidized student loans (https://financialaid.stanford.edu/grad/)
- 1:1 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 (https://mindovermoney.stanford.edu/people/coaches)
- Graduate Housing Loan - assists with move-in costs for off-campus housing (https://financialaid.stanford.edu/loans/other/gradhousing.html)
- Opportunity Fund Assistance with expenses (including conference travel) for diversity and first-generation students (https://fli.stanford.edu/financial-support/opportunity-fund)
● Biosciences Travel Grant Program - Defray conference fees including registration, travel, lodging, and food (https://biosciences.stanford.edu/current-students/resources/travel-grant-program/)

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

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

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

● Mind Over Money – Financial literacy for Stanford students (https://mindovermoney.stanford.edu/)

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

● Office of the Vice Provost for Graduate Education – Provides information about graduate fellowships including SIGF, DARE, and more (https://vpge.stanford.edu/)

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

Community Involvement and Service to the Program
The Neurosciences Graduate Program aims to train the next generation of scientific leaders in neuroscience. Scientific leadership requires commitment to high ethical and community standards for the field of neuroscience and for society. Active participation in activities that serve the neuroscience community and beyond are an important part of this commitment.

To achieve training goals for scientific leadership, the graduate program provides a variety of opportunities to engage in community and program service. Starting in 2022-23, to standardize training and promote distribution of service experiences, students will be expected to take on at least one of these service roles during their second year in the program.

Available roles will depend on program needs that the students and faculty identify and may change from year to year, but examples include the following:

**Teaching**: Become a teaching assistant or course instructor for one of the neurosciences graduate program offerings. Teaching opportunities provide a way to develop one’s skills in communicating scientific knowledge and offer a direct way for students to improve graduate education in the program. Moreover, it is often said that you don’t know something truly until you try to teach it to someone else; these opportunities also offer a way to improve one’s own scientific knowledge and understanding.

**Program support**: Volunteer for one of the student rep positions. Many of these roles have been created in direct response to needs for the program that previous students have identified and offer a way to positively impact the quality of the program for everyone. For example: Admissions, Social, Mentorship and Onboarding, Retreat, Communications, Student Speaker and Wu Tsai Seminar Rep positions are available.

**Committee service**: Serve on one of the program committees. These committees have been established to work on improving different aspects of the program, such as, Mentorship, Curriculum, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging and the Program committee. These committees provide students a chance to have their voices heard as the faculty leadership works to improve the program.

Acting in these roles is considered by the program to be an important part of a student’s professional development and as such are not performed for direct remuneration. Scientists throughout their career take on roles and activities that they deem important for science and society for which they do not receive direct monetary compensation for, but nonetheless perform as part of their professional responsibilities.
However, some roles require work or services that represent significant commitment of time and/or effort, beyond what is typically required for graduate students. Some students take on, or are asked to take on, a large amount of responsibilities compared to others. This can be true particularly for women and students of color (see here, for example). In recognition for such exemplary efforts, the program distributes bonus payments as a “thank you” at the end of the year to a limited number of roles as determined by the program directors. A key consideration that the program directors use for bonus payments is whether the role involves active and sustained organizational effort that is not typical of standard committee work. Achieving equity across different roles and different students is an important guiding principle.

In pursuing our interests in neuroscience, all of us in the program, including both students and faculty, enjoy enormous academic freedom to pursue our own interests and improve ourselves through education, research, and teaching. With this privilege comes the responsibility of giving back to our community and to society.

**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.

**Lending Library**
The program maintains a small collection of neuroscience books in E165 that may be borrowed by Neurosciences students. Please return them when you’re done!
UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

**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 contact the Student Services Center directly. Your requests for information and assistance are directed to experts in various sections of the university who respond by email and phone. To request support from the Student Services Center visit: [https://stanford.service-now.com/services/?id=services_portal_home](https://stanford.service-now.com/services/?id=services_portal_home).

**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](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](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](https://gap.stanford.edu)
- Stanford Bulletin - The official statement of Stanford’s degree requirements and courses – [https://bulletin.stanford.edu](https://bulletin.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](http://lane.stanford.edu/index.html)
- Office of Accessible Education (OAE) - Support and services for students with disabilities - [https://oae.stanford.edu](https://oae.stanford.edu)
- Office of the Vice Provost for Graduate Education (VPGE) - Fellowships and other funding, professional development, and networking - [https://vpge.stanford.edu](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](https://vptl.stanford.edu).

**Community**
- Asian American Activities Center - [https://a3c.stanford.edu](https://a3c.stanford.edu)
- Bechtel International Center - [https://bechtel.stanford.edu](https://bechtel.stanford.edu)
- Biomedical Association for the Interest of Minority Students (BioAIMS) - [https://www.bioaims.com](https://www.bioaims.com)
- Black Community Services Center - [https://bcsc.stanford.edu](https://bcsc.stanford.edu)
- El Centro Chicana y Latino - [https://elcentro.stanford.edu](https://elcentro.stanford.edu)
- Graduate Student Council - [https://assu.stanford.edu/gsc](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 Inclusion, Belonging and Intergroup Communication (formerly known as the Diversity and First-Gen Office) - https://ibic.stanford.edu/
● Office for Military-Affiliated Communities - https://military.stanford.edu
● Queer Student Resources - https://queer.stanford.edu
● Office for Religious and Spiritual Life -https://orsl.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

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

Health and Wellness
The program leadership appreciates the student-led initiative to improve support of student mental health and mental illness. We are working on initiatives to provide better support and to produce the requested curated, annually updated mental health resource flow chart. The current list of health and wellness resources is below.
● Mental Health Resources at Stanford: https://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/mental-health-resources-stanford
● 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
● Stanford recreation mental health resources: https://rec.stanford.edu/mentalhealth/
● Office for Religious and Spiritual Life Office - https://orsl.stanford.edu
   https://religiouslife.stanford.edu
● Meeting the moment: https://orsl.stanford.edu/meeting-moment
● Vaden Student Health Center - Point of contact for all things health related including medical care and health insurance - https://vaden.stanford.edu
● Vaden wellbeing resources: https://vaden.stanford.edu/virtualwellbeing
● 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
● therapist-generated skills-based videos: https://helpcenter.stanford.edu/resources/short-skills-based-videos
● Stanford libraries wellness resources: https://guides.library.stanford.edu/Well-Being
● Other wellness resources: https://continuingstudies.stanford.edu/building-resilience-webinar
   https://healthyliving.stanford.edu/classes/register/webinars.php
● Meditation and yoga:
   https://healthyliving.stanford.edu/classes/register/webinars.php
   https://med.stanford.edu/contemplation.html
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJBzKhdVJ7c
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dbQu1ADaeRk
   https://insight timer.com/

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

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
● 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