GRADUATE PROGRAM HANDBOOK

2023–2024

Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics
Texas A&M University

Introduction

Welcome to the Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics at Texas A&M University! The *Graduate Program Handbook* describes relevant BCBP and TAMU policies and should guide you throughout your graduate tenure. While every attempt has been made to ensure that the university policies outlined herein are accurate, the 2023–2024 TAMU Graduate Catalog remains the authoritative source for TAMU rules and regulations. All policies are subject to change.

Contents

Graduate and Professional School Calendar | Fall 2023

June 7	**Wednesday**	Last day for Graduate and Professional School to receive degree plan in DPSS if graduating in December 2023.
July 7	**Friday**	Electronic Thesis/Dissertation System re-opens for December 2023 degree candidates.
August 16	**Wednesday**	First day to apply for degrees to be awarded in December 2023.
August 16	**Wednesday**	First day students can clear Thesis and Dissertation Services for December 2023 graduation.
August 18	**Friday**	Last day to register for Fall semester classes.
August 21	**Monday**	First day of Fall semester classes.
August 25	**Friday**	Last day to CLEAR for August 2023 graduation. (Applies ONLY to those students not clearing final degree evaluation on day of final degree audit.)
August 25	**Friday**	Last day for adding/dropping courses for the Fall semester by 5:00 p.m.
August 25	**Friday**	Last day to clear Thesis and Dissertation Services to avoid registration in Fall 2023 semester.
September 1	**Friday**	Last day for Graduate and Professional School to receive a completed MDD petition in DPSS from master's students to change degree level (e.g. doctoral to masters) and graduate in December 2023.
September 6	**Wednesday**	Last day for the Registrar's office to approve a certificate added by the student's department for the Fall semester. Certificates are not added by the Graduate and Professional School.
September 22	**Friday**	LAST DAY TO APPLY FOR DEGREES TO BE AWARDED IN DECEMBER BY 5:00PM without a late fee. A diploma fee of $47.50 must be paid either at registration or at the Fiscal Office (GSC). Complete the application for degree form via the Howdy Portal. A LATE CHARGE OF $50.00 WILL BE ASSESSED TO STUDENTS WHO APPLY FOR GRADUATION AFTER 09-22-23.
September 25	**Monday**	Last day for Graduate and Professional School to receive a completed MDD petition in DPSS from master's students to change a degree within the same level (e.g. master's to master's) and graduate in August 2023.
October 2	**Monday**	Last day or 10 working days prior to the examination, whichever comes first for the Graduate and Professional School to receive completed "Final Exam Request" in ARCS.
October 16	**Monday**	Last day to take final examination.
October 30	**Monday**	Last day for Graduate and Professional School to receive the completed/approved Written Dissertation/Record of Study Approval form in ARCS. The PDF file of thesis must be uploaded via the web to Electronic Thesis/Dissertation System †by 5:00 p.m.
November 15	**Wednesday**	Last day for all students to drop courses for the Fall semester with no penalty (Q-drop). Last day to officially withdraw from the University for the Fall semester.
December 1	**Friday**	Degree Plans Submitted
December 4	**Monday**	Last day to apply for graduation.

Graduate and Professional School Calendar | Spring 2024

Preliminary examination results must be received and approved by the Graduate and Professional School prior to submitting the "Final Exam Request" in ARCS.

October 23, 2023	**Monday**	Last day for Graduate and Professional School to receive degree plan in DPSS if graduating in May 2024.
November 21, 2023	**Tuesday**	Electronic Thesis/Dissertation System re-opens for May 2024 degree candidates.
December 18, 2023	**Monday**	First day to apply for degrees to be awarded in May 2024.
December 18, 2023	**Monday**	First day students are able to clear Thesis and Dissertation Services for May 2024 graduation.
January 12	**Friday**	Last day to register for Spring semester classes. Refer to the Student Business Services website for more information on billing due dates.
January 16	**Tuesday**	First day of Spring semester classes.
January 19	**Friday**	Last day to CLEAR for December 2023 graduation. (Applies ONLY to those students not clearing final degree evaluation on the day of final degree audit.)
January 22	**Monday**	Last day for adding/dropping courses for the Spring semester by 5:00 p.m.
January 22	**Monday**	Last day to clear Thesis and Dissertation Services to avoid registration in Spring 2024 semester.
January 29	**Monday**	Last day for Graduate and Professional School to receive a completed MDD petition in DPSS from master's students to change degree level (e.g. doctoral to masters) and graduate in May 2024.
January 31	**Wednesday**	Last day for the Registrar's office to approve a certificate added by the student's department for the Spring semester. Certificates are not added by the Graduate and Professional School.
February 16	**Friday**	LAST DAY TO APPLY FOR DEGREES TO BE AWARDED IN MAY BY 5:00PM without a late fee. A diploma fee of $47.50 must be paid either at registration or at the Fiscal Office (GSC). Complete the application for degree form via the Howdy Portal. A LATE CHARGE OF $50.00 WILL BE ASSESSED TO STUDENTS WHO APPLY FOR GRADUATION AFTER 02-16-2024.
February 19	**Monday**	Last day for Graduate and Professional School to receive a completed MDD petition in DPSS from master's students to change a degree within the same level (e.g. master's to master's) and graduate in May 2024.
February 26	**Monday**	Last day or 10 working days prior to the examination, whichever comes first for the Graduate and Professional School to receive completed "Final Exam Request" in ARCS.
March 8	**Friday**	Last day to take final examination.
March 22	**Friday**	Last day for Graduate and Professional School to receive the completed/approved Written Dissertation/Record of Study Approval form in ARCS. The PDF file of dissertation must be uploaded via the web to the Electronic Thesis/Dissertation System†.
April 16	**Tuesday**	Last day for all students to drop courses for the Spring semester with no penalty (Q-drop). Last day to officially withdraw from the University for the Spring semester.
April 30	**Tuesday**	Last day to apply for graduation.

CLEARANCE FOR MAY 2024 DEGREE CANDIDATES

TBD	Academic Degree Evaluations conducted the Monday after Graduation Ceremony. Academic Degree Evaluation results available once reports run.

COMMENCEMENT CEREMONIES

TBD	Master's and Doctoral Commencement (additional information available on the Graduation Website.)

ADDITIONAL DEADLINES FOR DEGREES TO BE CONFERRED IN MAY 2024

May 31	Friday	Last day to CLEAR for May 2024 graduation. (Applies **ONLY** to those students not clearing final degree evaluation on day of final degree audit.)

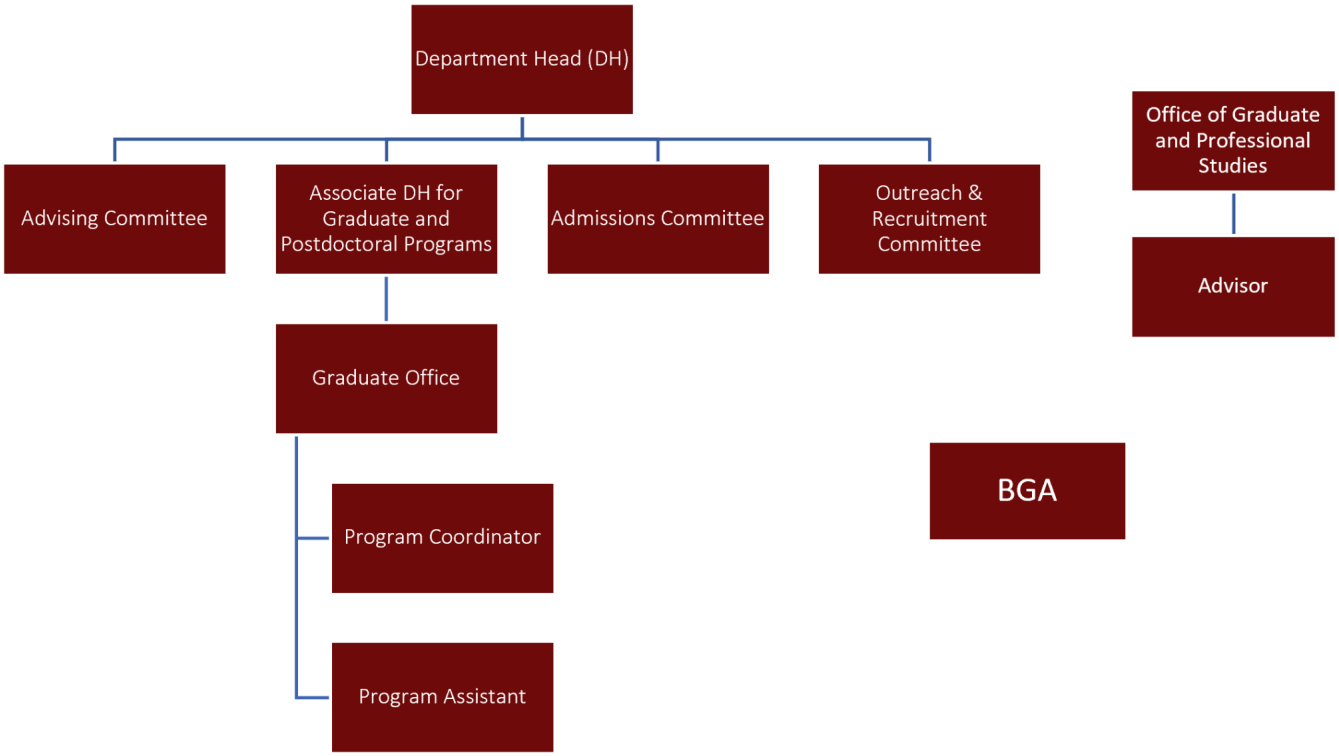
For relevant forms and processes, see the Graduate and Professional School Knowledge Center.

† NOTE: Meeting Thesis & Dissertation Services deadlines does not guarantee, but merely maintains, eligibility for graduation/clearance in a certain time frame.

NOTE: DPSS – A completed degree plan or petition in DPSS must have all of the required department and committee signatures to arrive

BCBP Resources

Organization | Overview



Who do I contact if I have a question?

The first point of contact is typically the Graduate Office (bcbpgradoffice@ag.tamu.edu). The Program Assistant will either provide the answer or direct your query to the appropriate individual. Examples of who handles specific issues are shown in the Table below.

WHAT	WHO (Title)	NAME/CONTACT
Who makes the rotation and final lab assignments?	Associate Department Head for Graduate Programs, together with the Advising Committee	Michael Polymenis, BCBP 333A (Michael.polymenis@ag.tamu.edu)
Who makes the TA assignments?	Associate Department Head for Graduate Programs	Michael Polymenis, BCBP 333A (Michael.polymenis@ag.tamu.edu)
Who will help me with filing procedures related to the Preliminary Exam or the Thesis Defense?	Advisor	David Wellman, KLCT 114 david.wellman@tamu.edu
Who handles travel awards and forms?	Program Coordinator	Praveena Kanchupati , BICH 104C praveena.kanchupati@ag.tamu.edu
What if I have a conflict or complaint that needs to be reported and resolved?	Associate Department Head for Graduate Programs	Michael Polymenis, BCBP 333A (Michael.polymenis@ag.tamu.edu)

Who provides information about student loans?	Advisor	David Wellman, KLCT 114 david.wellman@tamu.edu
Who will help me with TA training, and English proficiency exams?	Program Coordinator	Praveena Kanchupati , BICH 104C praveena.kanchupati@ag.tamu.edu
Who coordinates Thesis Committee meetings?	Program Assistant	Tera McAdoo, BICH 104 tera.mcadoo@tamu.edu

Roles and Responsibilities

Department Head: Our College states that "the Department Head acts as a catalyst. Working with faculty, students, staff, external groups, and the campus administration, the department head should endeavor to continually improve the quality of the people and programs associated with the department."

Associate Head: This individual plays multiple roles in our graduate program, overseeing event coordination, providing student support, and managing rotation and TA assignments. They are a critical liaison between the department and other university offices, and they advocate for the welfare of graduate students.

Program Coordinator: This person provides support with various concerns, including event organization, travel awards, forms, and more. They also help students with onboarding, TA training, and English proficiency exams. Additionally, they serve as a liaison between our program and the graduate and professional school, and they can connect students with other campus resources.

Advisor: This specialist assists students with various forms associated with their degree plans, including filing procedures, the Preliminary Exam, and the Thesis Defense. They are a crucial resource for navigating the intricacies of the graduate and professional school forms. They guide ARCS and facilitate the seamless registration process for each semester. They also provide invaluable assistance with the DPSS petition website and serve as a point of contact for students needing financial assistance.

Program Assistant: The Program Assistant provides comprehensive support to our graduate student community. They coordinate events, track student progress, and serve as a point of contact for inquiries. They also organize travel arrangements, prepare program materials, coordinate Thesis committee meetings, and disseminate important news. Their dedication and multifaceted role contribute significantly to the success of our graduate students and the program.

Graduate Office | The *Graduate Office* serves as your primary source of information and assistance.

Program Coordinator - Dr. Praveena Kanchupati
BICH 104C
praveena.kanchupati@ag.tamu.edu

Program Assistant – Tera McAdoo
BICH 104
tera.mcadoo@tamu.edu

Advisory Committee | The *Advisory Committee* guides pre-candidacy students in the rotation process, choice of elective coursework and journal club, and formation of a thesis committee.

Chair – Prof. Lanying Zeng
BICH 419A
lzeng@tamu.edu

Prof. Margy Glasner
BICH 237A
margy.glasner@ag.tamu.edu

Prof. Cecilia Tommos
BICH N315B
tommos@tamu.edu

Prof. Vishal Gohil
ILSB 2146A
vishal.gohil@ag.tamu.edu

Admissions Committee | The *Admissions Committee* evaluates prospective graduate student applications, nominates incoming students for internal awards, and hosts Recruitment Weekend.

Outreach & Recruitment Committee | The *Outreach & Recruiting Committee* seeks to attract quality graduate students to our program through scientific community engagement and partnership with regional institutions.

Biochemistry Graduate Association

Established in 1992, the Biochemistry Graduate Association (BGA) seeks to improve the welfare and educational experience of BCBP graduate students. Elected BGA representatives sit on the *Admissions* and *Outreach & Recruitment* committees to enhance communication between students and faculty. Similarly, a faculty member (selected by the BGA) is appointed to the BGA in a non-voting advisory capacity.
The BGA sponsors various activities, including research and professional development seminars, the annual vendor show, and research competition. The organization also offers travel grants and dissertation expense relief. Inquiries should be directed to the BGA President.

BGA Officers | 2023–2024

President – Amelia Brave
Straight Lab
braveamelia@tamu.edu

Vice President – Nate Williams
Pellois Lab
nrwilliams@tamu.edu

Secretary – Jooyoung Shin
J. Zhang Lab
bioshin94@tamu.edu

Treasurer – Addison Freese
Zeng Lab
addizero@tamu.edu

Professional Development Chair – Morgan Powers
Rye Lab
mepowers@tamu.edu

GPSC Representative – Jason Snowden
Pellois Lab
jason_snow58@tamu.edu

Outreach Representative – Brianna Martin
Rye Lab
brm126@tamu.edu

Faculty Advisor – Prof. Hays Rye
BICH 239A
hays.rye@ag.tamu.edu

GPC Representative – Andrew Rademacher
Meek Lab
arademacher@tamu.edu

Former Interim President – Staci Hammer
Polymenis Lab
sehammer@tamu.edu

Graduate Recruiting and Admissions Chair - Zach Hoover
J. Zhang Lab
zachhoov@tamu.edu

General Information

Website: bcbp.tamu.edu

Main Office: 979-845-1012 | 800-482-6246

Address: 300 Olsen Blvd. | 2128 TAMU

Directory | Select Office Staff

For the full directory of office staff, please visit our website.

Betty Cotton
Senior Administrative Coordinator II
BICH 103D | 979-458-0630
blcotton@tamu.edu

Sherry Coronado
Business Administrator III
BICH 103GA | 979-845-8852
s-coronado@tamu.edu

Dana McMahon
Senior Business Administrator II
BICH 103H | 979-845-6848
dana.mcmahon@ag.tamu.edu

Janice Johnson
Technical Stockroom Supervisor
BICH 112 | 845-1524
Janice.johnson@ag.tamu.edu |
https://stockroom.tamu.edu/

Terry Lovingshimer
Manager Operations
BICH 209 | 979-845-3785
terryll@tamu.edu

University and College Resources

Graduate and Professional School (GPS)

Website: grad.tamu.edu

Main Office: 979-845-3631 | grad@tamu.edu

Address: 204 Nagle Hall | 1113 TAMU

The Graduate and Professional School "serves Texas A&M graduate students as an advocate for their graduate education and houses the Ombudsperson for Graduate Education." Please refer to the GPS website for academic calendars, forms, rules, and regulations.

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences | Advising Office

The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (COALS) has a centralized advising structure. They have "assembled a diverse and knowledgeable advisor community dedicated to providing our students with high-quality graduate advising services." **David Wellman** (david.wellman@tamu.edu) is the graduate advisor assigned to BCBP. He can assist with all bureaucratic requirements and most interdepartmental (i.e., Office of Admissions, International Student Services, etc.) communications.

Student Loans

Website: financialaid.tamu.edu

Main Office: 979-845-3236 | financialaid@tamu.edu

Address: Pavilion 2nd Floor | 1252 TAMU

TAMU offers emergency loans for tuition / fees and short-term loans for other expenses.

Student Health Insurance

Students classified as Graduate Assistant – Teaching (GAT) or Graduate Assistant – Research (GAR) are considered TAMU employees and are eligible for all associated benefits. GATs and GARs will receive benefits information during orientation. ***International students require additional insurance for evacuation and repatriation. Please contact International Student Services for more information.***

Students who are supported by individual fellowships and/or training grants are not considered TAMU employees and must acquire their own health insurance. The TAMU Student Health Plan is available for purchase. Please speak with Sherry Coronado for more information.

Information about Graduate Student Employee Benefits is available through TAMU Human Resources.

Division of Student Affairs

Website: studentaffairs.tamu.edu

Main Office: 979-845-4728 | vpsa@tamu.edu

Address: John J. Koldus Building, Suite 117 | 1256 TAMU

The Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) houses a wealth of resources, including:

Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS)

Disability Resources

Multicultural Services

Student Health Services

Veteran Resources and Support Center

Student Assistance Services

Student Legal Services

VSPA can also provide **emergency funds for unexpected medical expenses** on a case-by-case basis. Please contact the Director of Business Operations, Cari Tawney, for more information.

Equal Opportunity

The TAMU System and BCBP are committed to equal employment opportunity, without regard to race, color, sex, religion, or age.

Title IX Office

As outlined in Texas A&M System Policy 08.01.01, Texas A&M University does not tolerate acts of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation based on a protected class. The Department of Civil Rights and Equity Investigations is committed to protecting equal access to University programs, activities, and services by conducting fair, equitable, and thorough investigations and by supporting Texas A&M's commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion.

Website: titleix.tamu.edu

Main Office: Medical Sciences Library | 202 Olsen Blvd, Suite 007

Phone Number: (979) 458-8407

Email: civilrights@tamu.edu

International Students

International Student Services

International Student Services (ISS) serves as an information resource for all partners in the international education process. In addition to issuing documents used to obtain non-immigrant student visas, the office works with BCBP to ensure that our international students remain educated on Department of Homeland Security requirements. ISS also offers counseling on immigration, employment, financial issues, medical insurance, adjustment to the U.S., and income taxes.

English Language Proficiency Certification

The state of Texas requires that all non-native English speakers attain English proficiency certification before serving as a teaching assistant. International graduate students can be certified *prior to enrollment* by achieving requisite scores on the oral component of the TOEFL or IELTS standardized tests. International graduate students who have not been certified prior to enrollment must take the English Language Proficiency Exam (ELPE) offered by TAMU Testing Services.

Eligibility Levels for International Students to Service in Teaching Positions	**Global Standardized Tests**		**Locally Administered Exam (on Texas A&M Campus)**
Level	TOEFL Essentials Speaking Section	TOEFL Speaking Section	IELTS Speaking Section	ELPE Oral Examination
1. Eligible	≥ 11	26-30	≥ 8.0	≥ 80
2. Conditionally Eligible	9-10	23-25	7.0-7.5	≥ 75
3. Ineligible	≤ 8	< 23	< 7.0	< 75

Level 1	Eligible for teaching assignments
Level 2	Conditionally eligible for teaching assignments *for one semester only*; must participate in the Center for Teaching Excellence English Language Proficiency (CTE-ELP) instruction and achieve a Level 1 scores by the end of the semester
Level 3	Not eligible for teaching assignment; must participate in the Center for Teaching Excellence English Language Proficiency (CTE-ELP) instruction

Doctor of Philosophy Degree

The Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics seeks to foster an inquisitive and diverse community of scholars with a common interest in the chemical and physicochemical processes within living systems. Upon completing the program, our Ph.D. students are equipped to address pressing scientific challenges through the cohesive application of empirical and theoretical methods. We are committed to training students who will contribute to advancing knowledge in the fields of biochemistry, biophysics, and genetics and work to improve the health and welfare of society at large.

Incoming graduate students should have a solid foundational knowledge of biology, chemistry, mathematics, and physics. **Recommended** prerequisite coursework includes:

- Two semesters of Biochemistry (equivalent to BICH 410/411)
- One semester of Physical Chemistry (equivalent to CHEM 328)
- One semester of Molecular Genetics (equivalent to BICH/GENE 431)
- Two semesters of Organic Chemistry (equivalent to CHEM 227/228)
- One semester of Physics
- One semester of Calculus

Typically, our Ph.D. students must complete at least 96 credit hours accumulated through traditional coursework, journal clubs, and dissertation research.

Accredited universities offering the Ph.D. degree must examine students for suitability to be admitted as candidates for the degree. This divides your graduate experience into “pre-candidacy” and “candidacy.” The goal of the pre-candidacy phase is to prepare you for dissertation research. This is achieved through didactic coursework, laboratory rotations, and other activities. After approximately eighteen months in the program, students sit the “preliminary examination,” one of the formal requirements for ascension to Ph.D. candidacy.

Orientation

All incoming graduate students are required to attend Orientation Event, which is typically held in the weeks preceding the first day of Fall classes. During Orientation, you will learn about TAMU policies, BCBP procedures, student resources, safety requirements, and the terms/conditions of your employment. You will also receive a list of PI’s that are interested in taking rotation students along with videos/brief description of their research. You are advised to start reaching out to them. *If a faculty member is not listed, they will not accept rotation students unless alternative arrangements have been made.*

Research Project Presentations

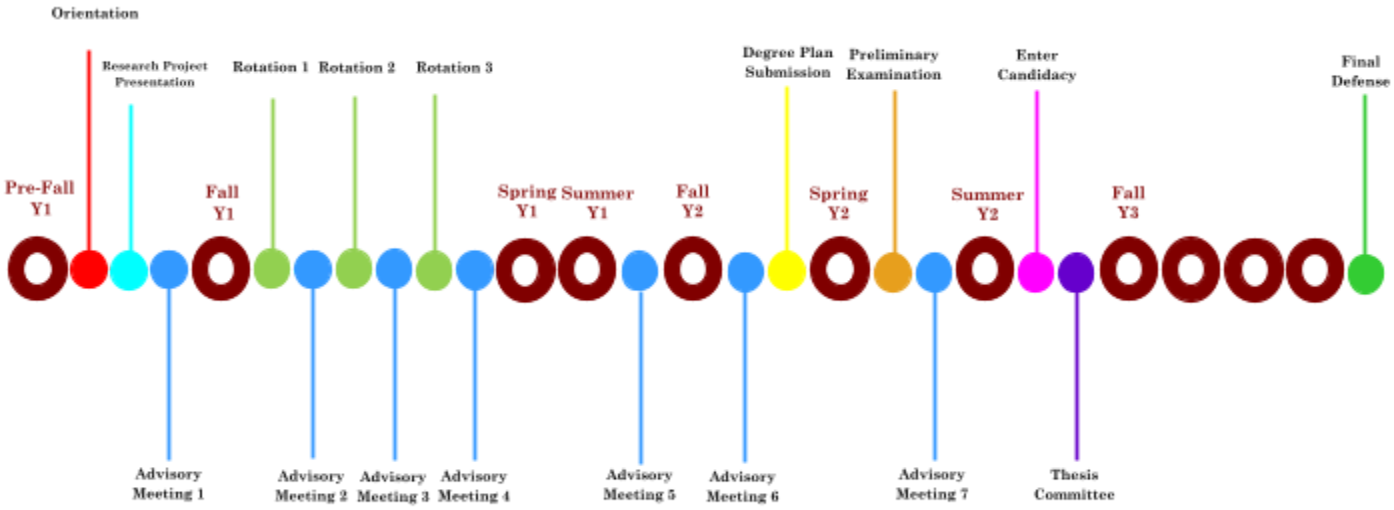
Many of the PI’s on the list you received during Graduate Student Orientation will present their work during this week.

The Advisory Committee Meetings

The *Advisory Committee* is a team of four faculty members who will guide you through the first phase of your Ph.D. studies. They will help you get familiar with the program, explain the rotation process, and develop a

course plan that addresses your weaknesses, builds on your strengths, and exposes you to advanced study and research opportunities in biochemistry and biophysics. You will meet with the Advisory Committee several times during this first phase; a typical schedule is shown below. **Please come prepared to help guide the discussion; your updated Individual Development Plan can be used as a meeting outline**. As you get closer to your preliminary examination, the committee will also provide guidance on selecting your thesis committee.

Degree Roadmap



Rotations and Lab Selection

Prior to joining a research group, you will participate in three laboratory rotations during your first semester.

The following answers to frequently-asked questions should guide you in this process.

Q: *Do I need to do a rotation if I have already decided which lab I am interested in and the PI wants to take me?*
A: Yes, you do. Rotations are an integral part of your 1st year, exposing you to different fields of research and ways to do science, before you embark on your thesis project.

Q: *What are the expectations of the PIs during a rotation?*
A: While generating lots of data for a publication is not generally expected, the PI would likely expect you to show interest and excitement for the research in the lab. The PI would also gauge your work ethic and the overall fit for the lab. You should discuss additional expectations with the PI, before and during the rotation.

Q: *How do I pick a lab for a rotation?*
A: You have to look at multiple parameters.

- Do you find the research interesting and exciting?
- Does the lab publish regularly?
- Are past students from that lab prominent authors in the lab's publications?
- Is the lab funded?
- How long does it take, on average, to graduate from that lab?
- What careers did past graduates of that lab follow?
- Consider the size of the lab, and what best fits your expectations and style.

Discuss with the PI your interest in a rotation and possible thesis and rotation projects. Also, talk to current members of that lab. If, after all this, you are interested, and the PI is willing to take you for a rotation, then add the lab to your list of choices.

Q: *The names of how many labs should I provide before <u>each</u> rotation?*
A: At least three names in a ranked list (names and priority score; top choice = 3, second choice = 2, third choice = 1). Sometimes, during the semester PIs may decide not to take any rotation students, due to limited time or changes in funding, effectively limiting your options. Therefore, you may want to add more names, to help ensure that you are successfully matched with a lab. List them in order of preference as described above (e.g., If you have 6 names; top choice = 6, second choice = 5, third choice = 4, and so on).

Q: *Can I rotate in a lab outside the Graduate Program of BCBP?*
A: No. Only faculty members with a primary or joint appointment with BCBP can accept rotation students. You will receive a list of faculty who will take rotation students during the orientation week. Later in the semester additional PIs may decide to take rotation students, depending on their funding, and you will be notified accordingly.

Q: *To whom do I send the list of names for rotation choices?*
A: Before each rotation (the Graduate Office will send you the date through email), you will receive an online form, which you should complete and return to the Graduate Office (bcbpgradoffice@ag.tamu.edu).

Q: *Can I rotate in a lab that has no funding?*
A: It is not recommended and essentially "No" because this PI will not be on the list you receive for rotation choices. A rotation is a "test drive" for a lab to complete your PhD thesis. Under current departmental policies, a lab must have active funding to accept a new graduate student. Therefore, rotating in a lab without funding will limit your chances of finding a permanent home for your thesis.

Q: *If I (the student) have secured independent support through a fellowship, can I pick as a permanent thesis home a lab without funding?*
A: This is a possibility, assuming that the duration of the support is long enough to ensure that you will complete your PhD within a reasonable timeframe without relying excessively on serving as a TA. Prolonged TA duties will limit your research performance and significantly increase the duration of your PhD. The Graduate program aims to have a time-to-degree as low as possible (<5 years). You should also ensure the lab has the necessary resources (e.g., functioning equipment and consumables) for your research. Usually, explicit permission from the Department Head would be needed if you wish to join a lab without funding.

Q: *How are the rotation assignments made?*
A: Before each rotation, the Program Assistant will tabulate the choices of all students and also make a separate table with the priority list of the PIs (if any PIs have expressed preferences for particular students). Then, the Program Assistant will communicate the two tables to the Associate Head for Graduate Programs and to all the members of the Advising Committee. The two tables will be entered as input to a computer program that implements a matching algorithm. For PIs who have expressed no rotation priority preferences (usually the vast majority), the software will randomize the PI priority input. For rotations, the software will make "student-optimal" matches (i.e., collectively optimizing the student priorities as much as possible).

Q: *How many students can a lab take for a rotation?*
A: No more than two. In very rare cases, exceptions may be made, for up to three slots in a rotation.

Q: *What happens when more than 6 students want to rotate to the same lab during the Fall rotations?*
A: While in very rare cases some labs may accept an extra rotation student, it is possible that not all rotation requests can be accommodated. Therefore, it is strongly advised that you expand your lab choices, to ensure that you will be successfully matched to a lab for each of your rotations.

Q: *What is the best strategy to ensure I get to rotate in a specific lab?*
A: Put that lab at the top of your priority list every rotation.

Q: *How are the permanent lab assignments made?*
A: In the same way as the rotation assignments, but also with priority lists from the PIs involved. For the permanent lab assignments, the software will make "PI-optimal" matches (i.e., collectively optimizing the PI priorities as much as possible). This is another reason to perform as well as you can during rotations.

Q: *How many students can a lab take for a permanent assignment?*
A: Faculty with a primary BCBP appointment can take up to 2 students each academic year. Faculty with a joint appointment can only take one student per year. Exceptions to the above are rare and require permission from the Department Head and the Associate Head for Graduate Programs.

Q: *What happens if after 3 rotations I do not match with a lab for my permanent assignment?*
A: After consultation with the Associate Head for Graduate Programs and the Advising Committee, efforts will be made to arrange for a 4th rotation. To avoid this problematic situation, you need to think thoroughly about all your rotation choices in advance, explore as many labs as you can, and perform well during your rotation in each lab.

Q: *Can I have co-advisors from outside the BCBP graduate program?*
A: No. The expectation is that most of the work for your thesis will be done in your BCBP (primary or joint) advisor's lab. Only faculty members with a primary or joint appointment with BCBP can serve as advisors.

Individual Development Plans

All graduate students are required to maintain Individual Development Plans (IDPs). IDPs are a collaborative tool used to guide the scientific, professional, and personal development of students. These "living documents" are expected to evolve over the course of your graduate studies. Incoming students will participate in an IDP workshop during Orientation and will be asked to review their Year 1 document with the Advisory Committee during their introductory meetings. After meeting 4, the student should complete their IDP; proof of submission should be sent to the Graduate Office. In August of Year 2, you will review your updated IDP with both the Advisory Committee and your Research Advisor. Following ascension to candidacy, you will be expected to update and review your IDP with your Thesis Advisor every August. A copy of all IDPs should be submitted to the Graduate Office. The departmental IDP forms can be found on the departmental website.

Degree Plan

Purpose: Formally establish a Degree Plan with the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies by December 1st.

Protocol: Students must submit a Degree Plan through https://ogsdpss.tamu.edu.

Ph.D. Degree Plan

FA – Year 1

BICH 603	Principles of Biochemistry and Biophysics	3 cr.
BICH 608	Critical Analysis of the Biochemistry Literature	2 cr.
BICH 631	Principles of Molecular Genetics	3 cr.

BICH 658	Application of Scientific Values	1 cr.

SP – Year 1

BICH 6XX	Advanced Modules*	6 cr.
BICH 690	Theory of Biochemistry Research	2 cr.
BICH 697	Teaching	1 cr.

**Students must take six 1-credit modules.*

SU – Year 1

BICH 691	Research	6 cr.

FA – Year 2

ELECTIVE	Elective (2)	6 cr.
BICH 6XX	Journal Club	1 cr.
BICH 691	Research	1 cr.
BICH 697	Teaching	1 cr.

SP – Year 2

BICH 689	Written Communication	2 cr.
BICH 689	Oral Communication	1 cr.
BICH 6XX	Journal Club	1 cr.
BICH 690	Theory of Biochemistry Research	2 cr.
BICH 691	Research	3 cr.

SU – Year 2 and Beyond

BICH 6XX	Journal Club	XX cr.
BICH 690	Theory of Biochemistry Research	XX cr.
BICH 691	Research	XX cr.

TOTAL = 96 credit hours (minimum)

Doctoral Research Proposal and Preliminary Examination

The Preliminary Examination will require that you initiate a form. This form can be found at:

https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/forms/preliminary-examination-checklist-and-report

The University will require you to establish a degree plan with a Thesis Committee in this checklist. In BCBP, your Thesis Committee will be your Advisory Committee before your Preliminary Exam. Your Thesis Committee will be formed after you progress to candidacy.

Written Doctoral Research Proposal

A well-written proposal is organized according to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Grant Guidelines and includes the following sections; all descriptions are adapted from "Detailed Guidelines for the NIH Proposal" (Main Medical Center Research Institute). The Spring Year 2 communication courses are designed to assist you in designing and describing your research proposal both in written and verbal form.

Specific Aims	1 page	Identifies the primary objectives the project, including the problem to be addressed, the current state of knowledge, and the potential contributions to the research field.

Research Strategy	5 pages	Comprises three sections: Significance, Innovation, and Approach. *Significance* | Provides a terse and scholarly background, including only literature review that pertains directly to the topic and demonstrates a modern understanding of the field. *Innovation* | Explains how the proposal challenges current research or seeks to establish novel concepts, approaches, or methods. Advantages over known methods should be detailed. *Approach* | Delineates the strategy, methodology, and analytical techniques to be used. Preliminary results should be included here.
Bibliography	No limit	All references should be formatted according to the NIH standards.

The proposal should not exceed six pages, single-spaced in Times New Roman 11-point font with uniform 0.5" margins. The bibliography does not count toward the total page count. Figures should be integrated as appropriate. Your final proposal should be submitted to the Graduate Office no more than 14 days after your preliminary examination.

Oral Preliminary Examination

Your Oral Preliminary Examination will be scheduled well in advance and evaluated by an *ad hoc* examination committee selected by the Graduate Office. Your Written Doctoral Research Proposal should be submitted to each committee member 14 days before the meeting. At the examination, the committee will first meet separately from the student for a preliminary discussion of the proposal. Should the written proposal be found lacking, the meeting will be rescheduled. The student will give an oral presentation aided by at most eight slides (approximately 15 minutes). The committee will refrain from interrupting the presentation. Following the presentation, the Chair will open the meeting to questions, which may range from proposal specifics to broader questions underlying the theme of the proposal. **The Preliminary Examination is not meant to be a comprehensive examination.** Following the conclusion of the question period, the Committee will meet in the absence of the student and vote pass or fail on the written proposal and on the presentation. A failing grade on the written proposal will require remediation within two weeks. A failing grade on the oral presentation will require a repeat oral examination within three months. During this period, the student is placed on academic probation and is subject to dismissal from the program if a passing grade is not achieved on a second attempt.

Evaluation forms for your Preliminary Examination can be found on the BCBP website. It is imperative that you carefully review and understand each point of evaluation. Where appropriate, your presentation should demonstrate mastery of each skill the form identifies.

You will advance to candidacy upon passing your preliminary exam. Failing your preliminary exam will result in dismissal from the program. In such instances, students can pursue obtaining a Master's degree.

The results of your Preliminary Examination expire after four calendar years. This means that graduation with a PhD degree should happen within this timeframe. Students requiring an extension may submit a *Petition for Extension of Time Limits* through DPSS.

Candidacy

Students must meet the following requirements before advancement to candidacy:

- Complete all graded coursework (S/U courses may remain) on the degree plan.
- Earn a GPR of at least 3.0. No grades on the degree plan may be lower than a C.
- Pass the Preliminary Examination.
- Submit an approved doctoral research proposal.
- Meet the residence requirement.*

*Students who enter the doctoral program with a baccalaureate degree must spend at least two academic years in resident study to meet the residence requirement. Students who enter with a master's degree must spend at least one academic year in resident study to meet the residence requirement.

Thesis Committee | Structure and Responsibilities

After advancing to candidacy, you will choose a Thesis Committee. Your Thesis Committee should be selected by you and your research advisor. Your Thesis Committee will need to be approved by the Associate Head. You and the Associate Head will also agree on the person who chairs the committee. **Before the end of SU 2**, email the Associate Head with your choices. Upon approval, submit your Thesis Committee and update your degree plan.

Your Thesis committees will consist of no fewer than four members of the graduate faculty. The chair or co-chair must be from BCBP, and at least one member must have a primary appointment outside of BCBP. Your committee should have a broad representation of departmental expertise, including at least one member who identifies as a biophysical researcher and one who identifies as biochemical or molecular genetics researcher.

Title	**Affiliation**	**Responsibilities**
Chair	BCBP	Moderate the committee meetings; complete all required paperwork (with input from members); ensure that the student is offered the opportunity to meet with the committee in the absence of the Thesis Advisor; serve in a scientific and professional development advisory capacity
Ex officio Member	BCBP | Thesis Advisor	Research mentorship
Member	BCBP	Serve in a scientific and professional development advisory capacity
Member	Non-BCBP	Serve in a scientific and professional development advisory capacity

Thesis Committee Meetings | Post-Candidacy

Students are required to hold at least one committee meeting every academic year. You are responsible for coordinating the meeting; rooms can be scheduled through the main office. Once you have settled on the date/time of the meeting, you should inform the Graduate Office (bcbpgradoffice@ag.tamu.edu) at least 14 days

ahead of time. The Graduate Office will email the link to the BCBP Thesis Committee Meeting Report to the Chair of your committee. The meetings are meant to be concise advisory sessions and will commence with a discussion between the committee and thesis advisor(s) in the student's absence. The goal is to have a frank conversation about the advisor's view of the student's progress and any issues that may impede progress toward completing dissertation work. The student must then present a concise overview of progress since the last meeting. This presentation should be at most 20 minutes; a draft of the presentation should be provided to the committee 14 days before the meeting. The Chair will then open the meeting for discussion, which should be restricted to no more than 40 minutes. The Thesis Advisor should then be excused so the committee and student can discuss any issues that impede progress toward dissertation research completion. The Chair will complete and submit the BCBP Thesis Committee Meeting Report to the Graduate Office. The form includes recommendations, the anticipated completion date of dissertation research, and whether there are sufficiently severe issues to warrant intervention by the Associate Head of the Graduate Program.

Ph.D. Dissertation and Thesis Defense

You may petition your Thesis Committee for permission to begin composing your dissertation at any time following advancement to candidacy. Note that the Thesis Committee, *not the Thesis Advisor*, is the primary warden and will assess your readiness collectively. In very rare cases, the Associate Head for the Graduate Program may overrule a denial by the Thesis Committee for permission to write and defend a dissertation. Once permission to write and defend has been granted, the defense must occur within three months, or the committee will need to be recanvased for permission. The timeline and forms required by OGAPS are delineated below. TAMU has extensive requirements for the preparation of your dissertation. You should review the guidelines carefully *before* you begin writing. As you begin to outline your dissertation, be sure to identify sources; science is an inherently collaborative endeavor, and all contributions (e.g., data, tables, figures, etc.) should be properly acknowledged.

Please consult the COALS Advising Office to coordinate the oral defense of your thesis. To initiate the process, you must first receive approval from OGAPS by filing the *Request and Announcement of the Final Examination*. All OGAPS protocols and deadlines should be carefully reviewed. Your written dissertation must be given to each committee member at least 14 days before the scheduled defense. You must also provide the Program Assistant with the date, time, location, and title at least 14 days before the scheduled defense. A detailed protocol for the public defense is provided at the end of this chapter.

If your only remaining requirement is the defense and you will not be on TAMU payroll for the entire semester, you may register for one credit hour (BICH 691) and be reclassified as a temporary research assistant. ***International students must consult ISS before moving forward with reclassification.***

Letter of Completion

It is not uncommon for students to accept a job offer in the period between completion of the degree requirements and formal issuance of the diploma. Many universities, companies, etc. will accept a Letter of Completion as sufficient proof of degree. Students must have completed **all** requirements for the degree before a Letter of Completion can be issued by OGAPS. This includes dissertation clearance, university debt resolution, and an approved graduation application. Please contact the COALS Advising Office if you wish to request a Letter of Completion.

BGA Town Halls

In the spirit of student involvement and open communication, the Graduate Office hosts a BGA Town Hall every semester to discuss program initiatives, changes, and concerns. Attendance is mandatory.

Teaching Assistantship

All graduate students are required to serve as Teaching Assistants (TAs) for two semesters, generally in the spring of their first year and the fall of their second year. To be a TA, students must be certified through the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) Teaching Assistant Institute (TAI) program – Details are sent before the start of each semester. BCBP graduate students are usually assigned to undergraduate lab courses or recitation sections. International students must demonstrate English language proficiency before receiving a TA assignment.

Conference Travel

Attendance at (inter)national conferences is critical to scientific development and is among the most formative elements of graduate training. As of Fall 2021, all matriculating students in good academic standing will attend **at least two conferences**, with the opportunity to request funding for **up to four conferences** throughout their academic career. This high-impact initiative has the potential to transform BCBP graduate education.

In the summer between **Years 1 and 2**, all new students will attend one conference of broad scientific interest together. To help maximize the experience, a faculty mentor will accompany the group. Attendance, travel, and lodging will be paid in full by the Department. Students are not required to present at the meeting but will be required to present a 10-minute conference highlights talk at the Thursday Seminar. *Eligibility: Must be in good academic standing; must attend at least 75% of the BCBP seminar series in Year 1.*

In the summer between **Years 2 and 3**, all students will attend a conference of their choosing. A 50/50 Department/Advisor match will pay for attendance, travel, and lodging. Students are required to present (poster or oral) at the conference. In preparation, students must present a practice talk at Thursday Seminar; after the conference, students must present a 10-minute conference highlights talk at the Thursday Seminar. *Eligibility: Must be in good academic standing; must attend at least 75% of the BCBP seminar series in Years 1 and 2. [Ineligible students will still be required to attend a conference at full cost to the Advisor.]*

Post-candidacy students (Years 3–6, inclusive) may request non-competitive funds to attend a national conference. A 50/50 Department/Advisor match will pay for attendance, travel, and lodging. Students are required to present (poster or oral) at the conference. In preparation, students must present a practice talk at the Thursday Seminar; after the conference, students must present a 10-minute conference highlights talk at the Thursday Seminar. *Eligibility: Must be in good academic standing; must be in Year 3, 4, 5, or 6; must attend at least 50% of the BCBP seminar series in the requested year. Only one award per student; the Department may limit the number of awards per group per year based on funding availability.*

Post-candidacy students (Years 3–6, inclusive) may apply for one of two competitive named awards to attend a national or international conference. Attendance, travel, and lodging will be paid for in full by the Department (up to $4,000). Students are required to present (poster or oral) at the conference. In preparation, students must present a practice talk at the Thursday Seminar; after the meeting, students must present a 10-minute conference highlights talk at the Thursday Seminar. The named awards include the **John Mack Prescott** (winner selected by Department) and the **James C. Hu Travel Award** (winner selected by BGA).

Eligibility: Must be in good academic standing; must be in Year 3, 4, 5, or 6; must attend at least 50% of the BCBP seminar series in the application year. Only one award per student.

To ensure the accurate processing of awarded funds, you must submit the Travel Awards Form to the graduate office before your booking to be approved.

Full Course Waiver

If your thesis defense and dissertation submission are the only remaining requirements, and you will not be on TAMU payroll for your final semester, you may register for 1 credit hour of BICH 691 and be reclassified as a Research Assistant on wages. This is a one-time appointment for 3.5 months. International students should contact ISS before changing employment classification.

Annual Leave

Graduate students are entitled to two weeks of paid vacation per year, in addition to the standard state employee holidays. Please seek permission from your Thesis Advisor for any period of absence longer than one full work day in advance. Refer to the TAMU Student Rules for class attendance policies.

Seminars

The Department hosts nationally and internationally renowned scientists across various disciplines for our regular seminar series. Graduate students are expected to attend these lectures throughout their time in the program. First-year graduate students must attend these seminars. Unless otherwise noted, seminars are held each Wednesday (Fall and Spring) at 4:00 pm in BICH 108. Please speak with the Graduate Office to receive notifications for out-of-department seminars.

Responsible Conduct of Research Training

In support of responsible and ethical conduct of research and scholarship, TAMU abides by the federal and state guidelines regarding Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR). All students are required to complete Core face-to-face training and CITI training. *BICH 658: Application of Scientific Values in Daily Research Practice* is an approved course equivalent that satisfies the Core face-to-face requirement. All students are responsible for completing the CITI training independently; **this training must be completed by the end of your first semester.** Please review the **CITI RCR Training Instructions** for more information.

Recruitment Week

Every year, the department organizes a recruitment week for potential graduate students. During this week, the recruits meet with several PIs, socialize with the faculty and the current graduate students, and attend the poster session and the banquet at the Life Sciences Research Symposium.

The graduate students are expected to volunteer with the different events during that week. The first-year graduates must participate.

Committee Meetings | Overview and Protocols

A summary of the required committee meetings / OGAPS action items is provided. **OGAPS requires that all forms be approved using ARCS. Please visit the OGAPS website for more information and form initiation links.**

Electronic versions of the department forms can be found on the BCBP website. You **must** inform the Graduate Office of your intent to hold a meeting *at least 14 days ahead of time*.

Years 1 and 2

	Advisory Committee Meeting	
Purpose:	Guide pre-candidacy students through their first- and second-year coursework, rotation, and thesis committee selections.	
Protocol:	Students will meet with a standing Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee will recommend elective coursework and offer suggestions for rotation selections based on student research interests. After meeting 4, the student should complete an Individual Development Plan; proof of submission should be sent to the Graduate Office.	
Forms:	**Individual Development Plan (IDP).**	

Fall | Year 2

	OGAPS – Degree Plan	
Purpose:	Formally establish a Degree Plan with the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies.	
Protocol:	Students must submit a Degree Plan through https://ogsdpss.tamu.edu. The deadline to submit the degree plan is by December 1st.	

	Preliminary Examination	
Purpose:	Assess student's readiness to ascend to PhD candidacy.	
Protocol:	Students will meet with Preliminary Examination Committee. Students should submit a written proposal 14 days before the meeting and prepare a concise research presentation of 8 slides (approx. 15 min) to be given during the meeting. After the presentation, the Chair will open the meeting to questions (approx. 45–60 min). The Chair of the Preliminary Examination Committee should complete the necessary forms with input from the other Committee Members. *Recommended duration: 1.5 hours.*	
Forms:	**Preliminary Examination Checklist** [OGAPS] **Report of the Preliminary Examination** [OGAPS] **Research Proposal Approval Form for Thesis, Dissertation, or Record of Study** [OGAPS]	

Years 3 and 4

	Annual Committee Meetings	
Purpose:	Assess research and professional development progress.	
Protocol:	Students will meet with the Thesis Committee. Once the date is set, the student should **update the BCBP Thesis Committee Meeting Calendar**. The Chair will receive an online form of the Committee Meeting Report, to be completed at the meeting. Students should prepare a concise research presentation of 8 slides (approx. 15 minutes) to be given during the meeting. After the presentation, the Chair will open the	

meeting to questions (approx. 30 min). The Committee should meet with the student in the absence of the Thesis Advisor, and with the Thesis Advisor in the absence of the student (approx. 5–10 min each). The Chair of the Thesis Committee should complete the Committee Meeting Report with input from the Thesis Advisor, Committee Members, and the Student. *Recommended duration: 1 hour. At least one Committee Meeting should be held per academic year.*

Forms: **Committee Meeting Report** [BCBP]

CV

Year 5 and Beyond

	Annual Committee Meetings	

Purpose: Establish an exit strategy.

Protocol: Students will meet with the Thesis Committee, as in previous years. After year 6, the student should hold at least two committee meetings per year and work diligently to complete their thesis.

Forms: **Thesis Outline** [template provided]

Committee Meeting Report [BCBP]

CV

	Thesis Defense	

Purpose: Defense of Ph.D. thesis.

Protocol: Students will meet with Thesis Committee. Students should prepare a research presentation (approx. 45 minutes) to be given at a public forum. After the presentation, the Chair will open the meeting to public questions. The Chair will then close the public session. The Chair will open the private session to Committee questions. The written thesis should be given to the Committee for review. Once approved, the student should submit the thesis to OGAPS. All OGAPS guidelines for thesis submissions should be carefully reviewed.

Forms: **Request and Announcement of the Final Examination** [OGAPS; should be submitted at least 10 working days prior to the defense date]

Written Dissertation (Ph.D., Dr. PH) or Record of Study (Ed.D, D.En.) Approval Form

Thesis, Dissertation, and Record of Study Copyright and Availability Form [OGAPS]

Report of the Final Examination [OGAPS, sent directly to PI; *the student should not handle the signed document at any time*]

Coursework | Overview

Year 1

During the Fall of your first year of graduate studies, you will take 4 courses and participate in three 5-week laboratory rotations. During Orientation, students will meet individually with the Advisory Committee to discuss procedures and recommendations for selecting laboratory rotations.

BICH 603	Principles of Biochemistry and Biophysics	3 cr.
BICH 608	Critical Analysis of the Biochemical Literature	2 cr.
BICH 631	Biochemical Genetics	3 cr.
BICH 658	Application of Scientific Values	1 cr.

Rotation 1	**Rotation 2**	**Rotation 3**

In the Spring, you will take our modular course series. Designed with flexibility in mind, you will select six 5-week courses to create a course schedule tailored to your research interests. Modular course offerings change every year; please refer to the Course Schedule for the current selection. Most students will select a laboratory in which to begin work toward their preliminary examination. ***Most students will pass the Preliminary Examination advance to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree.*** We commit a significant effort towards preparing each student. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that formal association with a Thesis Advisor becomes official only upon advancement candidacy. Finally, all first-year students must serve as Teaching Assistants. Expectations and requirements are detailed below.

BICH 6XX	Advanced Modules*	6 cr.
BICH 690	Theory of Biochemistry Research	2 cr.
BICH 697	Teaching	1 cr.

** Previous offerings include: Metabolism, Quantitative Analysis in Biochemistry and Biophysics, Quantitative Analysis in Genomics / Molecular Biology, Advanced Ligand Interactions, NMR Spectroscopy, and Biochemical Kinetics, among others.*

You will continue your lab work throughout the Summer, enrolling in 6 research credits hours to maintain full-time status. You will also meet with the *Advisory Committee* to ensure that you remain on track – They will offer suggestions for elective coursework and Journal Club selection.

BICH 691	Research	6 cr.

Year 2

You will take six elective course credits during your second year. A non-comprehensive list of electives can be found in the Appendix. Note that not all courses are offered every semester; be sure to confirm current offerings in the Course Schedule. Though you may spread the electives out over both semesters, it is strongly recommended that you take both in the Fall semester. If you opt to take only one elective in the Fall, your BICH 691 credits should be adjusted to ensure that you remain enrolled full time. You will also complete your final required semester of Teaching Assistantship.

ELECTIVE	Elective (2)	6 cr.
BICH 6XX	Journal Club	1 cr.
BICH 697	Teaching	1 cr.
BICH 691	Research	1 cr.

In the Spring, you will continue to take Journal Club and Research credits. In preparation for your upcoming Preliminary Examination, you will enroll in Oral and Written Scientific Communication courses. All Preliminary Examinations will be held in April. Immediately after your Preliminary Examination, you will submit your formal Degree Plan and select a Thesis Committee. Your Degree Plan formalizes your intent to earn a doctoral degree and establishes the required coursework. You must submit the plan through the OGAPS Document Processing Submission System. The Graduate Office is available to guide you through the process. More information on thesis committee selection can be found below.

BICH 689	Written Communication	2 cr.
BICH 689	Oral Communication	1 cr.
BICH 6XX	Journal Club	1 cr.
BICH 690	Theory of Biochemistry Research	2 cr.
BICH 691	Research	3 cr.

Year 3 and Beyond

Spring and Fall: Once all core coursework is complete, you should continue to enroll in Journal Club, Theory of Biochemistry Research, and Research credits, such that you maintain full-time registration status (9 credit hours).

Summer: You should continue to enroll in Research credits, such that you maintain full-time registration status (6 credit hours).

You will be required to hold at least one committee meeting every academic year. Meeting protocols are outlined at the end of this chapter.

BICH 6XX	Journal Club	XX cr.
BICH 691	Research	XX cr.

Grades

While research is the primary goal of your graduate studies, academic performance is also critical to your success. Per the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies, you must maintain a GPR of 3.0 and may not receive failing grades (D or F) in any BCBP core classes. If your GPR falls below 3.0, you may be placed on academic probation; you will receive written notice that you have one year to improve your grades, or risk loss of assistantship and funding. If you your GPR falls below a 3.0 **and** you receive at least one failing grade in a core class, you risk loss of assistantship and funding.

Master of Science Degree

Students may elect to pursue a thesis or non-thesis Master of Science (M.S.) degree in Biochemistry, pending approval of the research advisor and Thesis Committee. M.S. students are required to successfully complete all BICH core coursework and fulfill all OGAPS requirements.

Thesis Option

Students on the thesis track (MS-THO) are guaranteed full stipend support for the duration of thesis research. To fulfill departmental requirements, students must:

- Complete a minimum of 32 semester credit hours, including all core coursework and research hours.
- Submit a degree plan for approval by the thesis committee and OGAPS. Degree plans must be submitted to OGAPS the semester before the intended graduation date.
- Submit a thesis proposal for approval by the thesis advisory committee and Associate Head of the Graduate Program.
- Schedule and pass an oral defense of the thesis.
- Submit a written thesis for approval by the thesis advisory committee.
- Provide two copies of an approved written/signed thesis to the OGAPS Thesis Office.
- Receive thesis approval by the OGAPS Thesis Office.

Domestic Students: Degree level changes must be made no later than the 20th day of class (FA/SP) or the 4th day of class (SU).

International Students: Degree level changes must be made no later than the 12th day of class (FA/SP) or the 4th day of class (SU). International students must have all immigration documentation corrected with the International Student Services (ISS) office no later than the 15th day of class.

Non-Thesis Option

Neither a written thesis nor an oral defense is required for the non-thesis track (MS-NTO). Once the degree change petition has been approved, students may not enroll in BICH 691 (Research); credits previously earned for BICH 691 are not applied to the total credit hour requirement. Two credit hours of BICH 690 (Theory of Research) may be applied, though any combination of credits earned for BICH 684, BICH 685, BICH 690, and BICH 695 may not exceed 25% of the total credit hour requirement. To fulfill departmental requirements, students must:

- Complete a minimum of 36 semester credit hours, including all core coursework. The thesis committee must approve any elective coursework.
- Pass a final comprehensive exam. No examination may be held prior to the midpoint of the semester in which the student will complete all remaining coursework.

TAMU Policies

Petitions

All requests to change an approved Degree Plan – including thesis committee restructuring and coursework adjustments – must be submitted by electronic petition. Petitions must be approved electronically by all members of your thesis committee, the Associate Head of the Graduate Program, and the COALS Advising Office.

Continuous Registration Requirement

Per University policy, all full-time graduate students supported by an assistantship must register for 9 credit hours every Fall and Spring semesters, and 6 credit hours every Summer. You must also maintain a 3.0 GPR for the duration of study. If you fail to register for the required credit hours, **your graduate assistantship will be terminated, and your out-of-state tuition waiver will be revoked.** Please coordinate with the Graduate Office to ensure compliance.

Tuition and Fees

Graduate teaching assistants, research assistants, and non-teaching students who are employed at least one-half time at a Texas institution of higher education – with job duties that are related to teaching or research in an academic program associated with their field of study – are entitled to resident tuition and fees for themselves, their spouse, and their children. Biochemistry graduate students are limited to 7 years (or 130 doctoral hours) of resident tuition.

Paychecks

Paychecks for the preceding month are posted on the first weekday of the following month (e.g., your May paycheck will arrive on the first weekday in June). Note that your first paycheck will be posted the first weekday in October; please prepare your finances accordingly.

Right to Review Records

You have the right to review your education records, except those excluded by law (e.g., parents' financial statements, physician records). Various records are maintained by BCBP, the Admissions and Records Office, Student Financial Aid, the Career Center, and the Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

Code of Conduct

The Aggie Code of Honor affirms that ***an aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do.*** Academic dishonesty is any form, including cheating, plagiarism, deception of effort, or unauthorized assistance, may result in a failing grade and/or suspension or dismissal from the Graduate Program. Manipulation or falsification of data is grounds for immediate dismissal.

Ownership of Data

All data generated in the course of your study is the property of TAMU through the Principal Investigator. NIH guidelines require that data and lab notebooks remain with TAMU and the Principal Investigator. Final decisions on publication and authorship are made by the Principal Investigator.

Leave of Absence

Under unusual circumstances, a student may petition for a leave of absence through DPSS. The entire thesis committee (if formed) and the Department Head or the Chair of the Intercollegiate Faculty (if appropriate) must approve and route the petition to OGAPS. If the Associate Provost for Graduate and Professional Studies approves the petition, the registration requirement will be lifted during the period of leave. Leave will be granted only under conditions that require the suspension of all activities associated with pursuing the degree. For certain types of approved leave, such as medical, the time period for the completion of the degree will stop with the leave and begin when the student returns to the program. Other types of leave may not stop the time limit for the degree. Please refer to the OGAPS regulations for degree time limits. A leave of absence is granted for one year. In cases of extenuating circumstances, the leave of absence can be extended by the student's

committee and the Associate Provost for Graduate and Professional Studies. A student who returns to the University after an approved leave of absence will not be required to apply for readmission. International students should consult ISS to determine if/how a Leave of Absence may impact their stay or reentry into the U.S

Fellowships and Awards

While you are guaranteed funding for the duration of your studies, we encourage you to seek additional fellowships and awards. If you receive an external scholarship or fellowship, your departmental support may be renegotiated, and you may be eligible for an increased stipend.

External Fellowships

All fellowships have a U.S. citizen / permanent resident requirement, unless otherwise noted. Finally, the University of Illinois Graduate College Fellowship Finder offers a comprehensive database of graduate fellowships and awards.

Fellowship	Description	Deadline
DOE CSGF	The Department of Energy Computational Science Graduate Fellowship provides full tuition and fees, an annual $38,000 stipend, and an annual $1000 travel allowance for up to 4 years.	January
DoD SMART	The Department of Defense Science Mathematics and Research for Transformation includes full tuition and fees, an annual stipend of $25,000–$38,000, health insurance allowance of up to $1200, and an annual $1000 travel allowance for up to 5 years. It also includes employment by DoD upon graduation	December
Ford Foundation	The National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine on behalf of the Ford Foundation provides 3 years of support including an annual stipend of $27,000.	November
NSF – GRFP	NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program provides up to 3 years of support including $34,000 annual stipend, and $12,000 yearly tuition and fees allowance.	October
NDSEG	National Defense Science and Engineering Fellowship Program provides up to 3 years of support including a $3,200 monthly stipend and an annual health insurance allowance of $1,200.	December
Smithsonian Programs	Smithsonian offers program in Genomics and Medical Science. They also offer the Smithsonian Institution Fellowship Program, and Secretary's Distinguished Research Fellowship. See fellowship web pages for award amounts and durations.	Varies
Hertz Foundation Fellowship	Hertz Foundation provides up to 5 years of support, including a stipend of $34,000 / 9 months; this fellowship can be accepted in the same term as other fellowships.	October
AHA Fellowship	American Heart Association fellowship provides 1–2 years of support including an annual stipend of $24,816, $4,200 a year towards health insurance, and $2,000 a year of project support.	August
National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Science Policy Fellowship	National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Science Policy Fellowship for students who have finished or are finishing their PhD and want to transition into science policy. This fellowship includes an annual stipend of $55,000–$60,000, $5,000 towards	March

	professional development and additional funding to attend conferences.	
NIH Kirschstein Fellowship	The Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award Individual Predoctoral Fellowship to Promote Diversity in Health-Related Research (Parent F31 – Diversity) provides up to 5 years of support that includes an annual stipend of $24,324, tuition and fees, and project support of $3,100–$4,200.	April, August, December
NIH GPP	Graduate Professional Partnership program where part or all of dissertation research is conducted under PI at NIH. Funding must be provided by the PI you work under.	No deadline

Dissertation Fellowships

Fellowship	Description	Deadline
AAUW	AAUW American/International Dissertation fellowships for international and domestic women provide $20,000 for the year of dissertation writing.	November
Dissertation Fellowship	The TAMU Office of Graduate and Professional Studies provides $1,600 monthly stipend and up to $2,634 for health insurance in order to assist with the writing and organization of the dissertation	Nov 1

TAMU Awards and Fellowships

Fellowship	Description	Deadline
TAMU Distinguished Dissertation Award	The TAMU Distinguished Dissertation award provides $1000 to a recipient of TAMU doctoral degree whose dissertation made a significant and impactful contribution to their discipline.	March 2
Distinguished Grad Student Award	The Association of Former Students offers the Distinguished Graduate Student Award to a student that exemplifies excellence in research as well excellence in teaching. Recipients are awarded with an engraved watch and framed certificate.	February
U.S. Senator Phil Gramm Doctoral Fellowship	The U.S. Senator Phil Gramm Doctoral Fellowship is awarded to current grad students who exemplify the meaning of scholar/mentor through their demonstrated abilities in teaching and research.	
Montgomery Award	The Montgomery Award is given to a student leader whose service has impacted the TAMU grad student body at large and includes a personalized award plaque and $1000.	April
George W. Kunze Endowed Graduate Student Award	The George W. Kunze Endowed Graduate Student Award is given to doctoral students near completion of their degree.	

Travel Awards and Fellowships

Fellowship	Description	Deadline
ASM Capstone Fellowship	The American Society for Microbiology Research Capstone Fellowship is a professional development fellowship providing up to $2,000 for underrepresented minorities to attend the ASM Microbe Meeting and the ASM Microbe Academy for Professional Development.	March
ACS Women Chemist Committee and Eli Lilly Travel Award	The Women Chemists Committee/Eli Lilly Travel Award is given to female chemists to present their research at an ACS National Meeting.	March 1 or September 15
OGAPS Travel Awards	The Office of Graduate and Professional Studies Travel Awards are of varying amounts for both domestic and international travel	See website

Appendix | Recommended Electives and Journal Clubs

A non-comprehensive list of *recommended* elective courses is provided, based on choices by previous students; you may choose elective courses that are not listed, pending Advisory Committee approval. **Note that not all classes are taught every semester. A current and updated list of course offerings can be found on Howdy**. At least 3 of the 6 elective credits must be at the 600 level. In preparation for your Advisory Meetings, be sure to review the course description, prerequisite requirements, and current offerings for each elective that you are considering.

BIOCHEMISTRY		
BICH 464	Bacteriophage Genomics	3 cr.
BICH 628	Computational Biology	3 cr.
BICH 650	Genomics	3 cr.
BICH 654	Structural Biochemistry	3 cr.
BICH 655	Crystallography Methods	3 cr.
BICH 656	RNA Biology	3 cr.
BICH 657	Introduction to Structural Biology	1 cr.
BICH 661	Advanced Genome Annotation with Ontologies	1 cr.
BICH 662	Eukaryotic Transcription	1 cr.
BICH 664	Fluorescence Spectroscopy	1 cr.
BICH 665	Biochemical Kinetics	1 cr.
BICH 667	Molecular Probes	1 cr.
BICH 689	Special Topics	X cr.

BIOLOGY		
BIOL 601	Biological Clocks	3 cr.
BIOL 602	Transmission Electron Microscopy	3 cr.
BIOL 603	Advanced TEM Methodologies in Life and Material Sciences	3 cr.
BIOL 604	Fundamentals of Scanning Electron Microscopy	2 cr.
BIOL 606	Microbial Genetics	3 cr.
BIOL 608	Light Microscopy	3 cr.
BICH 611	Developmental Genetics	3 cr.
BIOL 613	Cell Biology	3 cr.
BIOL 635	Plant Molecular Biology	3 cr.
BIOL 636	Plant Cell Biology	3 cr.
BIOL 644	Neural Development	3 cr.
BIOL 647	Digital Biology	4 cr.
BIOL 651	Bioinformatics	3 cr.
BIOL 689	Special Topics	X cr.

CHEMISTRY		
CHEM 446	Organic Chemistry III	X cr.
CHEM 603	Modern Chromatographic Separation Methods	3 cr.
CHEM 610	Organic Reactions	3 cr.
CHEM 615	Organic Synthesis	3 cr.
CHEM 618	NMR Spectroscopy	3 cr.

CHEM 619	Analytical Spectroscopy	3 cr.
CHEM 621	Chemical Kinetics	3 cr.
CHEM 627	Principles of Biological Chemistry	3 cr.
CHEM 628	Coordination and Bioinorganic Chemistry	3 cr.
CHEM 633	Principles of Inorganic Chemistry	3 cr.
CHEM 635	Introduction to X-ray Diffraction Methods	3 cr.
CHEM 641	Structural Inorganic Chemistry	3 cr.
CHEM 646	Physical Organic Chemistry	3 cr.
CHEM 658	Molecular Modeling	3 cr.
CHEM 672	Bioorganic Reaction Mechanisms	3 cr.
CHEM 689	Special Topics	X cr.

GENETICS		
GENE 603	Genetics	4 cr.
GENE 626	Analysis of Gene Expression	2 cr.
GENE 631	Biochemical Genetics	3 cr.
GENE 654	Analysis of Complex Genomes	3 cr.
GENE 689	Special Topics	X cr.

PHYSICS		
PHYS 408	Thermodynamics and State Mechanics	4 cr.
PHYS 412	Quantum Mechanics I	3 cr.
PHYS 689	Special Topics	X cr.

STATISTICS		
STAT 645	Applied Biostatistics and Data Analysis	3 cr.
STAT 651	Statistics in Research I	3 cr.
STAT 652	Statistics in Research II	3 cr.
STAT 661	Statistical Genetics	3 cr.

VETERINARY MICROBIOLOGY		
VTMI 601	Pathobiology	5 cr.
VTMI 663	Molecular Biology of Viruses	3 cr.

VETERINARY PHYSIOLOGY & PHARMACOLOGY		
VTPP 676	Genetic and Molecular Toxicology	3 cr.
VTPP 677	Fluorescence Detection: Steady State, Time Resolved, and Imaging	4 cr.

Recommended Journal Clubs are listed below. You are required to take Journal Club every Fall/Spring semester from your second year on.

JOURNAL CLUBS		
BICH 625	Nucleic Acids–Protein Interactions	1 cr.

BICH 671	Macromolecular Folding and Design	1 cr.
BICH 672	Biological Membranes	1 cr.
BICH 673	Gene Expression	1 cr.
BICH 674	Protein Folding and Stability	1 cr.
BICH 675	Plant Biochemistry and Genomics	1 cr.
BICH 676	Bacteriophage Biology	1 cr.
BICH 677	Chemical Genetics and Drug Discovery	1 cr.
BICH 678	Metal Ions	1 cr.