Guide to Graduate Studies in the Department of Chemistry

Excellence in graduate training is central to the research and teaching missions of our department. The success of our Ph.D. students is of paramount importance to us. This handbook, along with supplementary materials online, is intended to provide a clear guide to the steps leading to the Ph.D. All Ph.D. students are responsible for familiarity with the requirements that are in place when they enter the program and should retain this handbook as an important reference. Note that students are expected to complete the academic program requirements in place when they enter unless they elect to change to newer ones.

Our Ph.D. program, reviewed and redesigned with extensive student input in 2000, emphasizes research training and productivity, original and creative thinking, and developing excellent communication skills to support a successful scientific career. The handbook describes:

• orientation information to help first-year students get settled and off to a quick start,
• formal requirements for the Ph.D. Degree in Chemistry, as well as an M.S.,
• annual review procedures designed to ensure steady, timely progress toward the degree, and
• department policies affecting finances and other matters related to student welfare and concerns.

All of the requirements in this handbook apply to students entering the program beginning in Fall 2007. Policies such as those on program oversight and financial matters may be updated more frequently and apply to all current students. Note that recent updates in the sections on English language proficiency, research advisors, advisory committees, research progress reports and academic actions differ from those that apply to students entering in previous semesters. Please keep in mind that you can also find a copy of the Guide to Graduate Studies at http://www.chem.cmu.edu/grad/guide/. Be sure to review your requirements at the beginning of each semester and feel free to discuss additional questions with us or Valerie Bridge at any time.

Graduate Program Committee
Rea Freeland, Co-Chair
Linda Peteanu, Co-Chair
Catalina Achim
Bruce Armitage
Newell Washburn
David Yaron

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Summary of Timeline for Completion of Ph.D. Requirements
Getting Oriented

Logistics

**ID Cards:** You can get your Carnegie Mellon photo ID card at the HUB. Your card will also give you access to Mellon Institute (MI) and the MI library after 5:00 PM. These ID cards have recently added features and you will receive more information about this soon.

**Phones:** Most Carnegie Mellon phone numbers begin with 268. When you are on campus, you dial simply 8 and the last four numbers. For off campus calls, dial 9+1 and the ten-digit number. Long distance calls are billed to you individually.

**Parking and Transportation:** If you want to purchase a parking permit (prices vary according to location), you need to contact the Parking Office immediately (x82052) since student spaces may run out. The parking office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday-Friday. The university has an arrangement with the Pittsburgh bus system so that you can ride free in a large region with your Carnegie Mellon ID.

**Computer Accounts and Email:** You will have a computer account on the “Andrew” system when you arrive. Andrew accounts are automatically created on a nightly basis. Andrew account passwords are automatically set to the first 8 digits of your student ID. More information is at: [http://www.cmu.edu/computing/freshstart/account.html](http://www.cmu.edu/computing/freshstart/account.html). You may want or need to have accounts on multiple machines but we recommend that you have your email forwarded to a single address. You should plan to check your email at least twice a day. Many important announcements and requirements will be sent to you only by email.

**Mailboxes:** The Mellon Institute mailroom is on the third floor near the freight elevator. You will be assigned a mailbox, typically shared with several other students. Please see Jack Thorpe x8-3170 as soon as possible to get a mailbox. You should plan to check your mail at least 2-3 times per week.

**Mellon Institute Computer Cluster:** The cluster in MI 320A provides twenty-four hour access to Macs and PCs with university ID/access card. You will probably want to use the cluster until you have a temporary desk assignment and possibly as a supplement to the machines available in your research group.

**University Center:** The University Center houses a large variety of facilities, including recreational areas (pool, gymnasium, weight room, aerobics); dining options; the University Shoppe (textbooks, clothing, gifts), Entropy (a convenience store), and Skibo Coffeehouse (location of regular happy hours sponsored by the Graduate Student Assembly).

**Photocopiers:** The department photocopier in MI 400 may be used with the proper access code for your research group. You can also sign out journals for very brief periods (2 hours) to make copies on the department copier. Until you join a research group, please see Valerie about making copies. Danette Stromyer handles calls for maintenance of this copier. Jack Thorpe x8-3170, runs the Mellon Institute Copy Center located on the 3rd floor in the Mailroom. Teaching assistants will typically be responsible for course-related copying and should
make an effort to use the copier in the Doherty Hall undergraduate office for this purpose. The photocopier in MI 400 can also be used with a separate access code obtained from Danette Stromyer.

Fax: A fax machine (412/268-1061) is available for faculty, students, and staff with an account number located in MI 400. Please record all transmissions.

Key Contacts

Hyung Kim, Professor and Department Head
Mellon Institute 510, x8-6489, kim@chem.cmu.edu
Responsible for the overall leadership and administration of the department. For appointments, contact Brenda Chambers X8-1062.

Rea Freeland, Associate Head and Graduate Program Committee Co-Chair; Associate Dean for Special Projects
Mellon Institute 440B, x8-7981, rf51@andrew.cmu.edu
Assists with the overall administration of the department. Oversees graduate program, focusing especially on choice of advisor, attainment requirements, committee meetings, and fellowships. Serves as ombuds person for graduate students to assist with difficult academic or personal situations where a confidential sounding board or referrals to additional resources can be helpful. For appointments, call X8-1053.

Linda Peteanu, Associate Professor and Graduate Program Committee Co-Chair
Mellon Institute 825C, x8-1327, peteanu@andrew.cmu.edu
Oversees graduate program, focusing especially on the formal seminar, research progress report, and proposal.

Valerie Bridge, Graduate Program Specialist
Mellon Institute 404, x8-3150, vb0g@andrew.cmu.edu
Assists in the administration of graduate studies, including registration, enrollment, program requirements, stipend, etc. Coordinates graduate student recruitment efforts.

Karen Stump, Director of Undergraduate Studies and Laboratories; Teaching Professor
Doherty Hall 2120, x8-2340, ks01@andrew
Advises undergraduate students and oversees the undergraduate teaching curriculum. Responsible for the operation of the undergraduate laboratories and oversees the laboratory staff. Works closely with graduate students as Teaching Assistants by making TA assignments, providing training and overall supervision.

Georgene Wittig, Program Assistant for Undergraduate Studies
Doherty Hall 2114, x8-2318, gwittig@andrew.cmu.edu
Assists in administration of the undergraduate program. Handles scheduling undergraduate classes and reserving rooms for review sessions or office hours in Doherty.

Seth Miller, Principal Programmer/System Administrator
Mellon Institute 438, x8-8255, esmiller@cmu.edu
Administers the department’s computers and works with liaisons within each research group. Maintains helpful documentation for some common tasks at http://support.chem.cmu.edu/
**Timothy Sager**, Business Manager  
Mellon Institute 440, x8-3343, ts1c@andrew.cmu.edu  
Oversees the business functions of the Department, including personnel, payroll, and research contracts.

**Brenda Chambers**, Administrative Associate  
Mellon Institute 412, x8-1062, brendac@andrew.cmu.edu  
Coordinates key departmental activities such as faculty searches and reviews, as well as department social events.

**Patsey Haddock**, Fiscal Secretary  
Mellon Institute, Room 509B, x8-1064, pw17@andrew.cmu.edu  
Responsible for purchase orders, petty cash, work orders for building repairs, and property management.

**Leslie Shaver**, Administrative Coordinator (temporary)  
Mellon Institute 408, x8-1053, Ishaver@andrew.cmu.edu  
Coordinates Graduate Student seminars, schedules Writing Consultations, manages schedule for Introduction to Research. Assists with graduate recruiting and admissions. Handles conference room and other meeting room scheduling/reservations.

**Danette Stromyer**, Office Support Staff  
Mellon Institute 408, x8-3272, danettes@andrew.cmu.edu  
Distributes paychecks and office keys. Handles reservations for the Theory Suite Conference Room and provides support for the Departmental Seminar Series and Department Retreat. Handles problems with photocopier and fax. Orders for department coffee service.

**Committees on Graduate Affairs**

**Graduate Program Committee (GPC)**  
The Graduate Program Committee will advise first-year students about courses, selecting an advisor, and other matters during your first year. The GPC also provides general oversight regarding the graduate program policies and procedures, including the compilation of annual feedback for all graduate students. Current members of the GPC are:  
**Rea Freeland** (Co-Chair), **Linda Peteanu** (Co-Chair), **Catalina Achim, Bruce Armitage, Dave Yaron, and Newell Washburn**. General questions or concerns regarding registration, grades, and program requirements should be directed to Valerie Bridge. Detailed questions and concerns you may have about your academic progress or upcoming program requirements can also directed to Rea Freeland or Linda Peteanu. However, you should feel free to talk with any member of the committee about your questions or concerns. **Rea Freeland** also serves as graduate ombudsperson (page 31) to assist with delicate or confidential concerns.

**Chemistry Graduate Student Advisory Committee (GSAC)**  
The Graduate Student Advisory Committee provides input to the GPC on matters of concern to graduate students and the graduate program in general. For example, the GSAC has been involved in revisions to the graduate program requirements and in assessing the program. You can also talk with members of the GSAC to learn more about the graduate program and to share feedback about it. You can also address concerns to them and they can often help you determine how to get assistance. Membership of the committee is currently being updated and will be announced as soon as it is available.
MCS Graduate Student Advisory Committee (MCS GSAC)
Similar to the departmental GSAC above, the Mellon College of Science has a group of graduate students (two from each department) to provide input to the Associate Dean for Faculty and Graduate Affairs. The MCS GSAC also organizes events such as the annual MCS Graduate Student Poster Session and panel discussions on careers in science. Anya Zatsman and Jessica Cooper currently serve on the MCS GSAC.

Graduate Student Assembly (GSA)
The Graduate Student Assembly (GSA) serves as student governing body for graduate students at Carnegie Mellon. In addition to university services listed here, the GSA actively works on issues to improve the quality of life for graduate students and to provide varied social activities to enhance students’ experience of graduate school. Departmental happy hours and the department’s graduate student lounge are funded in large part by graduate students’ activities fees. Alper Nese, Josh Hayden, and Greg Drozd currently share the role of the department’s representative to GSA.

More resources in the university for graduate student concerns can be found at:

Introduction to Facilities and Resources

Center for Molecular Analysis (CMA)
The Center for Molecular Analysis provides training to faculty, graduate students and research staff in the operation of the various instruments there, including FTIR/NIR, UV/VIS/NIR, NMRs, MALDI/TOF mass spectrometer, Quadrupole field ion trap mass spectrometer, Diode Array UV-VIS, CD, and HPLC. Reservations for time on the instruments can be at http://www.chem.cmu.edu/cma/.

Location: Mellon Institute 853
Contacts:
Mark Bier, Director, CMA
Telephone: x8-3540
Roberto Gil, Director of NMR Facility (MI 302)
Telephone: x8-4313

Environmental Health & Safety (EH&S)
EH&S provides expert training and overall guidance in safe management of chemicals and biological agents in research and teaching labs. Their URL is http://www.cmu.edu/ehs/. The department also has asked each research group to appoint a safety officer so you will have someone nearby who is familiar with EPA expectations and safe lab practices. EH&S will provide the training you need for your research; please be sure to discuss with your advisor any specialized training you may need.

Mellon Institute Library
The MI Library has an excellent collection, particularly in journal holdings.
Location: Fourth floor of Mellon Institute
Contacts: Kathy Bossick, Carol Sanders
Telephone: x8-3172 and x8-3171
Mellon Institute Stores
This is the shipping and receiving area for MI and also stocks chemicals, electrical supplies, and hardware.
Location: Third floor, near the rear entrance/exit.
Telephone: x8-3212

Mellon Institute Post Office and Mellon Institute Copy Center
The MI Post Office handles U.S., international, and campus mail.
Copying facilities for use with departmental account number.
Location: Third floor, near the rear entrance/exit, by the freight elevator.
Contact: Jack Thorpe
Telephone: x8-3170

Undergraduate Program Office
Many instructors use this as a common location where TAs pick up student papers.
Location: Doherty Hall 1317
Contact: Georgene Wittig
Telephone: x8-2318

Undergraduate Computer Cluster
These Macs and PCs are for chemistry major use and can be a place for you to check email conveniently when you
are in Doherty.
Location: Doherty Hall 2300
Contact: Georgene Wittig
Telephone: x8-2318

Undergraduate Laboratories
The Doherty Hall labs are the location for the laboratory courses in which many graduate students work as TAs.
Locations: 1st, 2nd, and 3rd floors, enter at Doherty Hall south entrance
Contact: Karen Stump, Director of Undergraduate Laboratories
Telephone: x8-2340

University Student Services
The following brief summary of services will help you begin to get settled at Carnegie Mellon. For more detailed
information regarding student services, please consult the latest version of the Graduate Student Handbook at

Enrollment Services ("The Hub"): The Hub is the central location for obtaining your ID, course registration, and
other enrollment services. It is located in Warner Hall, Room 28A. Please see the Enrollment Services website for
http://www.cmu.edu/hub/ for additional information such as the schedule of classes.
**Housing Office:** Located in Morewood Gardens E-Tower, the Housing Office (x8-2139) will furnish you with listings of rentals in the vicinity. Their web site is [http://www.housing.cmu.edu/CommunityHousing/](http://www.housing.cmu.edu/CommunityHousing/). Additional information about housing is available on the Graduate Student Assembly website at [http://senate.web.cmu.edu/gsa/index.php?page=housing](http://senate.web.cmu.edu/gsa/index.php?page=housing).

**Payroll Office:** Detailed questions regarding your paycheck (income tax, etc.) should be directed to personnel in this office, located at 4516 Henry St. Note that Tim Sager, Business Manager for the Chemistry Department, (x8-3343) should be consulted first.

**Student Health Service:** Located in the first floor of Morewood Gardens E-101 (x8-2157), this office can provide information regarding health insurance and a variety of basic medical care. Open from 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday. Doctor’s hours are from 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

**Counseling and Psychological Services:** Morewood Gardens E-Tower (x8-2922) provides short-term counseling for stress, depression, anxiety, and other personal concerns and referrals to local psychologists and psychiatrists for continuing care.

**Campus Police (24 hr. service):** The number to call in case of emergency is x8-2323. Blue phones are also available in strategic locations around campus in case of emergency. This office also coordinates an escort service for students working late to ensure your safety on campus. Call the Escort Service at 8-RIDE or 412-268-7433.

**Graduate Programs Office:** The GPO (Warner 419) is responsible for support programs for graduate students including some small travel grants, professional development seminars, and networking events for women and students of color.

**Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence:** The Eberly Center (Cyert Hall 110) provides seminars and individual consultations to help graduate students who wish to improve their teaching or prepare for future careers as faculty members.

**Office of International Education:** The Foreign Student Advisors, on the third floor of Warner Hall, are important contacts to assist you with questions about visas. This office also organizes the International Student Orientation held during the second week of August. You can contact them by email at gfsadv@andrew.cmu.edu.

**Intercultural Communication Center (ICC):** The ICC, in Warner Hall 418, provides language training and testing for non-native speakers of English at Carnegie Mellon. Recommendations for training, where needed, are highly individualized and often combine short workshops, videotapes, and/or tutoring. More details about ICC programs and policies are available at [http://www.cmu.edu/icc/](http://www.cmu.edu/icc/).
**Important University Policies and Resources**

**Environmental Health and Safety**
http://ehs-alert.fms.bap.cmu.edu/
EH&S provides a broad range of services to the university to promote the protection of its community. Their web site includes biological, chemical and lab safety information and MSDS links.

**University Policies**
A University Policy is a rule that has been officially sanctioned by the president of Carnegie Mellon University and senior university leadership, and that generally has university-wide applicability. We list links here to several of these policies of which graduate students need to be aware. A more complete list of policies is available at:
http://www.cmu.edu/policies/

Carnegie Mellon University Doctoral Candidate Policies for All But Dissertation (ABD)
http://www.cmu.edu/policies/documents/ABD.html

Carnegie Mellon University Student Leave Policy
http://www.cmu.edu/policies/documents/StLeave.html

Carnegie Mellon University Academic Disciplinary Actions Overview for Graduate Students
http://www.cmu.edu/policies/documents/GradDisc.html

Carnegie Mellon University Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism
http://www.cmu.edu/policies/documents/Cheating.html

Carnegie Mellon University Computing Policy
http://www.cmu.edu/policies/documents/Computing.htm

Carnegie Mellon University Student Health Insurance Policy
http://www.cmu.edu/policies/documents/StudentInsurance.htm

Carnegie Mellon University Policy Against Sexual Harassment
http://www.cmu.edu/policies/documents/SexHarass.html

**College Policies**

MCS Doctoral Degree Policies
http://www.cmu.edu/mcs/handbook/doctoral.html

MCS Grievance Procedure for Graduate Students
http://www.cmu.edu/mcs/policies/grievance.html
Ph.D. Requirements

This section describes the formal requirements for the Ph.D. Degree in Chemistry at Carnegie Mellon as well as the review procedures designed to ensure steady progress toward that degree. It is intended to provide a clear guide to the steps leading to the Ph.D. Degree in Chemistry. The requirements for the Ph.D. Degree have been formulated to aid the graduate student to develop the proficiency expected of a research scientist in chemistry. In the interests of both the students and the faculty, the requirements for the Ph.D. degree carry a schedule for their completion. The schedule and review procedures are intended to speed the student’s progress toward Candidacy and provide consistent focus on the student’s research progress. Although possible, extensions will not be considered the norm. The Department will regularly inform students of their progress toward the degree (see Annual Reviews, page 25). Failure to satisfy any requirement on a timely basis is cause for a dismissal from the graduate program following the procedures outlined below under Academic Actions. Note that an academic year comprises two semesters, with the summer not being construed as a semester.

In the event that the requirements are changed, students may adopt the new requirements or remain under the requirements in effect on their matriculation, at their discretion.

**Attainment Examinations**

By the end of the third semester, entering graduate students must pass an attainment requirement in each of three areas of chemistry: Organic, Inorganic, and Physical. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure sufficient background for graduate coursework and further research.

**Expectations.** Students may meet this requirement by either:

- Passing an attainment examination in each area, or
- Passing graduate course work in the area, typically 12 units, as deemed appropriate by the Graduate Program Committee with a grade of at least a B in each course.

Normally, all students will take attainment examinations upon arrival in the department for the purpose of guiding advising on courses. Based on the results of the exam, the choice among the options above is determined by the Graduate Program Committee after consultation with the student and advisor (if one has been selected). Note that if a student does not have sufficient background to enter a graduate course in a given area, he/she will need to take (or audit) undergraduate coursework approved by the Graduate Program Committee, and then either retake and pass the attainment exam in that area or pass appropriate graduate course work by the end of the third semester in residence. Attainment requirements must be satisfied before a student may complete the research progress report requirement.

**Outcomes.** Students may retake the attainment exam when it is administered to new students in January and/or the following August. Failure to pass the attainment requirements by the end of the third semester will lead to probation. Failure to meet this requirement by the end of the second year will lead to a delay in completing the research progress report and is grounds for termination from the program.
Courses

At least four graduate level lecture or laboratory courses (48 units) in chemistry or closely related fields must be passed with an average grade of B (3.0) or better by the end of four semesters in residence. Students are encouraged to take at least one of these courses outside of their research area.

Courses may be taken in other departments or at the University of Pittsburgh (through cross-registration) with the approval of the Academic Advisor. The Department of Chemistry accepts the grading policy of other departments and the University of Pittsburgh for approved courses.

Students may request transfer of credit for up to two previous graduate courses from other institutions that are equivalent to courses offered at Carnegie Mellon. The student must provide a sufficient course description for such courses and obtain signatures from the Carnegie Mellon course instructor, his/her advisor, and the Graduate Program Committee. An approval form is available from the Graduate Program Assistant. A minimum grade of B is required to transfer credit for a course.

Expectations and Outcomes. The student must maintain an overall average of B for all courses taken (graduate and undergraduate courses, excluding research units). Any failure to comply with this requirement must be rectified by the end of the subsequent semester. Two semesters in which the cumulative coursework GPA, excluding research units, is less than 3.0 will be considered grounds for termination from the Ph.D. program.

SEE ONLINE GUIDE FOR: Form for Transfer of Graduate Course Credit

Graduate Teaching

Every student must teach for two semesters as a Teaching Assistant, either as a recitation TA, laboratory TA, or a grader/course assistant. The purpose of this requirement is to help students prepare for teaching and mentoring roles in academia and industry and to contribute to the quality and safety of instruction in the undergraduate program. This formal academic requirement is an important part of a graduate education and must be completed to the satisfaction of the instructor for that course. The duties of a Teaching Assistant require approximately 15–20 hours per week. Note that TA duties are one of the primary sources of financial support and that renewal of an appointment as a TA is contingent on satisfactory performance as a Teaching Assistant. Therefore, the expectations below are important for all TAs.

Expectations. The Department provides TA training each August specific to the roles of recitation TAs, lab TAs, and graders for which attendance is required for the first two semesters in which the student serves in a particular role. Teaching assistants are expected to fulfill all of the responsibilities of their role in a timely fashion and to make appropriate arrangements with the instructor at least 1-2 weeks in advance if they anticipate any difficulties in doing so. For example, instructors need to be consulted in advance if a TA would like to arrange for someone to teach a class for him or her. Barring unforeseen emergencies, travel arrangements must be made far enough in advance that they do not conflict with TA training and teaching responsibilities.

Outcomes. Instructors determine the expectations for each graduate TA assignment. If a TA appears to be having difficulties meeting these expectations, instructors are expected to provide timely written feedback to let the TA know what type of changes or improvements are needed. The feedback should be sent to the TA, cc ed to the Director of Undergraduate Studies, and the GPC Co-Chairs. If a student is informed of a significant deficiency, does not address the problem adequately, and cannot document
reasonable efforts to improve, that semester will not count toward the two semesters required for the doctoral degree. An additional semester as a TA or an appropriate Independent Study will be required until the graduate teaching requirement is fully satisfied. If no written feedback suggests the need for changes, the TA can interpret that as an indication of satisfactory performance.

**English Language Proficiency**

Each student for whom English is not a native language must demonstrate fluency in spoken English by the end of the first year in residence. The Intercultural Communication Center (ICC) has been established by Carnegie Mellon University to teach this skill, and administer the required fluency test. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure every student’s ability to communicate effectively with Department members and external colleagues about their research and to enhance their ability to contribute effectively to the Department’s educational programs.

**Expectations.** Students are generally expected to rate in Category 3 or better on the International Teaching Assistant Test by the beginning of the third semester in residence and to continue working toward Category 1 or 2. Starting in the first semester in residence, the Department expects a consistent effort in working with the ICC and in speaking English regularly in departmental activities to achieve these goals in a timely manner. While the ICC may recommend different workshops for different individual needs, a student’s total hours in workshops, tutoring and self-paced work at the ICC should be between 15-30 hours each semester until reaching Category 3 to be viewed as consistent effort. In addition, effort is required year-round, including 15-30 hours in the summer, until reaching Category 3. Students are expected to take the test at the earliest opportunity recommended by the ICC and the department.

Note that all students who are rated in Categories 2 and 3 who are working as TAs are required by Carnegie Mellon policy and Pennsylvania law to work concurrently with the ICC to improve their English fluency, typically through the workshops and/or individual tutoring.

In addition, the Department strongly encourages students to use English day-to-day in discussing their research since non-technical conversations in English often do not improve fluency on scientific topics. Advisors are also encouraged to talk directly with students when problems with English appear to interfere with communication about research and to inform the GPC as early as possible when they have concerns in this area.

**Outcomes.** Good standing in the department may be jeopardized if a student neglects to work sufficiently on their English fluency, based on the ITA Monitoring reports recording participation in ICC activities. However, because the Department recognizes that language learning rates can vary substantially, the deadline of reaching Category 3 by the beginning of the third semester may be adjusted for individual students’ needs as long as the student maintains appropriate, consistent efforts to improve. Failure to reach Category 3 by the beginning of the third semester may delay completion of the formal seminar requirement if the required effort at the ICC has not been made for one or more semesters or in the summer. Students are expected to make up the deficiency in hours of training as much as possible within the ICC’s offerings before they can schedule the formal seminar.

Failure to make sufficient efforts in line with recommendations from the ICC and the Department may lead to probation after one semester. Students who have not reached Category 3 by the beginning of the fourth semester in residence and have not sustained consistent efforts to improve English fluency may not be allowed to complete the research progress report and are at risk for termination from the program.

**SEE ONLINE GUIDE FOR:** ITA Test Category Descriptions
http://www.cmu.edu/icc/testing/ITA/ITAscoring.shtml

Ph.D. Requirements
Research Advisors

A Research Advisor is to be selected from the Chemistry faculty by mid-semester of the second semester in residence. This involves mutual agreement between the student and the faculty member, and requires approval by the Department Head. Selecting an advisor and joining a lab/group in the first semester is encouraged when the student is confident of his/her interests. The advisor (or co-advisors), the student and the department head must agree for a student to join a group officially.

Expectations. In general, students should actively seek out faculty during the first semester to discuss their research interests. In addition, students are encouraged to visit regular group meetings to learn more about the ongoing research and meet others in the group. A first-year student must join a research group prior to their first summer in the department in order to remain in the Ph.D. program. Students who have not secured an advisor by mid-semester of their first spring in the department are advised to consult the GPC Co-Chairs. More advanced students who lose an advisor may be eligible to change advisors (see Outcomes, below, and Changing Advisors, page 31).

Prior to selection of a Research Advisor, students are strongly encouraged to discuss their research interests with a minimum of three faculty members. Moreover, the students should get to know the faculty widely, get advice from students whose studies are further advanced, and visit with faculty in their offices. It must be understood that the chosen advisor will occasionally decline the relationship, either because of overload, lack of sufficient research support or lack of intellectual compatibility. A student without a Research Advisor may not be eligible for financial support in the summer.

The Research Advisor becomes de facto the Academic Advisor to the student. The primary responsibility of the Research Advisor is directing the research for the dissertation, but also includes guidance for meeting the other Ph.D. program requirements, general educational advice, career planning, and often job search assistance. The research advisor also has the responsibility to communicate in writing any deficiencies in an advisee’s research activities that are significant enough to jeopardize their continuation in the group and/or in the Ph.D. program.

Outcomes. While the advising relationship typically lasts the duration of a student’s Ph.D. studies, either the student or the Research Advisor may terminate their relationship according to the approved departmental procedures described under Academic Actions and Appeals (see page 26). A student otherwise in good standing in the department may then select a new Research Advisor on mutual agreement between the student and the faculty member, and approval by the Department Head. To be considered in good standing to change advisors, a student must have a cumulative coursework GPA of at least 3.0 and must be making timely progress on program requirements expected for their semester in the program, barring extenuating circumstances. When requested, the student will have a 1-2 month grace period to search for a new advisor and will have the opportunity to be considered for a teaching assistant or other position, should one be available, although financial support cannot be guaranteed. A student who is changing groups typically needs to join a new group prior to summer in order to continue in the Ph.D. program. Additional information about changing advisors is on page 31.

Advisory Committees

In consultation with the Graduate Program Committee and his/her advisor, a student will select a Research Advisory Committee by the beginning of the third semester in residence. The purpose of this Committee is to discuss the student’s progress annually and provide additional guidance on research and overall professional development. This committee will comprise the membership of the examination committee for the research progress report and original research proposal, although the Graduate Program Committee may add another member if additional expertise is needed in a specific area. In addition, after the student reaches ABD status, the Advisory Committee will meet with the
student annually in Dissertation Progress Meetings to support timely completion of their Ph.D. A typical Advisory Committee will consist of the Research Advisor and two other Chemistry faculty members, normally from the Tenure Track or Research Track. When it would be advantageous for the student’s research, one of these members may be from outside the department. Note that each faculty member may serve on a limited number of these Advisory Committees to ensure that he/she can provide the appropriate amount of attention to each student. Therefore, students are typically advised to have committees with three faculty members; students with co-advisors should have four members. Note that advisory committees may need to change when a student plans his/her dissertation defense in order to conform to MCS Policy on Dissertation Committees which requires a “visiting” member not affiliated with the department (see link below).

The student will also select a Chair of the committee, different from the Research Advisor, whose role is to oversee and provide feedback on the oral exams for the research progress report and original proposal, to provide general guidance regarding the original proposal, and to help in preparing for dissertation progress meetings.

SEE WEBSITE FOR:  MCS Policy on Dissertation Committees
http://www.cmu.edu/mcs/handbook/degree.html

**Formal Seminar**

Each student must present a formal seminar during the third semester of residence. The seminar may be given in an earlier semester if the student is ready.

The purpose of the seminar is to train students to speak to an audience of faculty and peers about chemistry and to read the research literature appropriately. Students will enroll in 09-911, Graduate Seminar for their first four semesters, and receive course credit for delivering their seminar and providing constructive feedback to other students on their presentations.

**Expectations.** The topic may be chosen by the student with the approval of the student’s advisor and the course instructor. Students may choose a seminar topic to serve as a foundation for the original proposal. An extension to present the seminar in the fourth semester in residence may be requested by petitioning the Graduate Program Committee, explaining what makes the circumstances exceptional and proposing an alternate deadline.

The seminar must be based on published work done in other laboratories. In general, seminars should draw on many articles from the literature and represent a synthesis of ideas that goes beyond summarizing individual pieces of research. An annotated bibliography should be submitted two weeks in advance of the presentation to the course instructor and student’s advisor. Presentations are expected to be approximately 30-40 minutes in length, with 10-20 minutes of questions and discussion with peers and faculty. Students are advised to arrange a practice talk with their advisor and others to prepare. Additional guidelines are available in the supplemental materials section and through the course instructor.

If a student who is a non-native speaker of English has not yet reached Category 3 on the ITA test, he/she must receive permission to proceed with the seminar from the advisor and GPC Co-Chairs based on a combination of his/her hours of training at the ICC, assessment in diagnostic interviews, and faculty observations in the department. The formal seminar presentation may be delayed based on fewer than 15 hours/semester effort at the ICC in any semester or summer.

**Outcomes.** Formal evaluation will be by the course instructor, the student’s advisor, and one other faculty member selected by the student (ideally a member of his/her Advisory Committee), and will include evaluation of responses to
questions. The student will receive detailed feedback and constructive suggestions on the seminar from at least two faculty members, along with written feedback from the audience.

Should the seminar be determined to be deficient (recorded as failure), the advisor may allow the student to repeat the requirement before their Advisory Committee or in the Graduate Seminar setting. In this case, the deficiencies must be communicated in writing by the course instructor and advisor to the student and the Graduate Program Committee, along with a new deadline for re-presenting the seminar. The student may not proceed to defend the research progress report without a satisfactory performance on the formal seminar.

**SEE WEBSITE FOR:** Sample Seminar Feedback Form

### Research Progress Report

Each student must write and present a detailed progress report on the proposed thesis project and present that to both the department and to the Advisory Committee in the fourth semester in residence. The purpose of the report is to demonstrate that the student has achieved a substantial level of understanding of the theoretical and/or experimental background of the thesis project, is making appropriate progress in obtaining results, and can discuss his/her ongoing work in a clear and professional manner. Passing the research progress report requirement leads to Ph.D. candidacy. The report requirement includes a poster presentation to the entire department, a written report, and an oral exam by the Advisory Committee.

**Poster Presentation.** The report is to be presented as a formal poster presentation, following ACS format, with an accompanying research overview paper (details described below). The presentation must include the scientific objectives in the thesis research, an overview of the necessary background material, the theoretical and experimental techniques used, and representative results obtained to date. Students should expect to present their research in approximately 5-10 minutes, repeated 3-4 times to different small groups, during the day of the poster session and to answer questions from a wide variety of faculty members and graduate students. Attendance at the poster session portion of the progress report may be by any of the Chemistry Faculty, graduate students, or other interested members of the department or university.

**Written Progress Report.** In addition, a 15-18 page research overview, must be presented to members of the Advisory Committee and the Graduate Program Committee at least one week before the scheduled poster session. The purpose of the paper is to summarize the student’s research progress to date and provide context for the work presented at the poster session and oral exam. Therefore, the report should include the following sections

- **Title page,** including title, author, advisor(s), committee members, date, and “In partial fulfillment of the Research Progress Report Requirement”
- **Abstract** of up to 200 words
- **Introduction** providing an overview of the relevant theoretical and/or experimental literature sufficient to demonstrate his/her mastery of the literature in the area of the intended thesis work (3-4 pages)
- **Experimental,** or **Theoretical Analysis**
- **Results and Discussion** for work-to-date for each major project (10-12 pages total, including tables and figures), and
- **Conclusions,** including a discussion of immediate next steps over the next 6-12 months and how they fit into the overall goals of the project and long-term implications of the work (approximately 2-3 pages), and
- **References.”
Reports must be in a 12 pt font with 1.5 spacing and should follow ACS Style. Note that students with multiple projects who wish to submit a progress report longer than 15-18 pages, excluding front matter and references, need permission from their advisory committee. If a student does not submit a written report that the advisor agrees should be presented to the committee, an advisor may either (1) delay a student’s oral exam until the end of that semester to allow for revisions, or (2) if the deficiencies are serious, place the student on probation in the group with the possibility of termination from the group at the end of that semester. Extensions beyond the end of the fourth semester require approval from the GPC.

**Oral Exam.** Within 2-6 weeks after the poster session, the student will meet with the Advisory Committee for a private oral exam on his/her research progress. The student should inform the Graduate Program Assistant as soon as the date is determined and if any changes are subsequently made. Note that members of the GPC may attend to assist with questions about requirements or procedure. The purpose of the oral exam is to ensure that the student has the necessary background knowledge to conduct his/her research. During this oral examination, the student is expected to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the literature and methods relevant to the research, including subject matter tangential to any material in the written report or oral presentation and fundamental theoretical or experimental concepts relevant to the work. The student should also be able to discuss possible future directions for the research. Attendance at the examination may be by any of the Chemistry Faculty, although they will be nonparticipating spectators. Students will typically not be eligible to take the oral exam if they either have not passed all attainment requirements or have not passed the English proficiency requirement.

**Timeline.** The written research progress report should be presented to the Advisory Committee at least one week before the scheduled poster session. When the paper is submitted, a date for the oral exam should be arranged that is acceptable to all committee members and falls within 2-6 weeks of the poster session. The student must receive oral feedback from the committee on the day of the exam and written feedback from the Advisory Committee Chair should follow in 1-3 days.

**Outcomes.** Note that a passing performance requires satisfactory performance on both the written report and oral exam. The poster presentation is required as preparation for the oral exam, but is not normally evaluated formally. There are four potential outcomes to the progress report requirement: pass, conditional pass, conditional pass with probation, or failure.

A. **Pass** indicates clearly satisfactory knowledge, along with satisfactory research progress, written report and oral exam.

B. **Conditional pass** indicates satisfactory research progress with minor deficiencies in knowledge, written report, and/or oral exam performance that the student should be able to address in 1-2 months of effort, including potentially re-defending the progress report to the committee and/or revising the report.

C. **Conditional pass with probation** indicates significant deficiencies in research progress, knowledge, written report, and/or oral exam performance for which the advisor and committee are willing to give 3-4 months of probation to address the deficiencies and re-defend the report.

D. **Failure** indicates grave concerns about a student’s research progress, knowledge, written report, and/or oral exam performance such that the advisor and committee question the student’s ability to complete a Ph.D. in this research area. The advisor may terminate the student from his/her group or, upon agreement of the advisor, advisory committee and GPC Co-Chairs, the student may be permitted to repeat the oral exam, including revisions to the written report, by no later than the end of the subsequent semester. If the student is terminated from the group and is not eligible to change advisors (see Research Advisors, page 14), he/she would be terminated from the Ph.D. program.
In cases B, C and D, the deficiencies must be communicated in writing by the Advisory Committee Chair to the student and the Graduate Program Committee, along with a new deadline for re-defending the progress report. Any requests for extensions beyond the agreed upon date must be made and approved in writing by the GPC co-chairs; otherwise, the student will be on probation until the requirement is satisfied. In case D, the Advisory Committee Chair should also give the student and GPC a written document describing the deficiencies that warranted failure. All students must pass the research progress report requirement by the end of the sixth semester in residence to remain in the Ph.D. program unless there are documented exceptional circumstances.

SEE WEBSITE FOR:  
Guidelines for Research Progress Report, Poster and Oral Exam  
Agenda for Progress Report Orals

Original Research Proposal

Each student is expected to write and defend an original research proposal during the sixth semester of residence. The purpose of the proposal is to demonstrate that the student has the ability to generate ideas for original research and to defend the methods and importance of the research.

Topics. To ensure sufficient originality and promote feasibility within the desired timeline, topics must be approved by the student’s Advisory Committee and at least one member of the Graduate Program Committee who is not on the student’s advisory committee to ensure the topic is distinct from the student’s thesis work (see Timeline below). The topic need not exclude the general field of the student’s research but should use some primary sources outside his/her specific dissertation topic. In general, topics should go at least one step beyond what has been published. In addition, to the student’s knowledge, work on the same hypothesis should not have been proposed before. In order to produce work distinct from the thesis topic and to facilitate an oral exam of appropriate scope, depth and rigor, students are encouraged to propose work that could conceivably be done in their lab or group (however not restricted to the instrumentation currently available). Students who wish to pursue work relatively distant from their field of interest are advised to ensure that faculty members with relevant expertise are available to consult and/or serve as an additional examiner.

Topic Approval. Descriptions of topics (approximately 1-2 pages) are due the third week in November for students who are due to complete proposals in the spring semester. The topic descriptions must include (1) a statement of the problem to be addressed and the proposed approach, (2) several key references to show that the approach is viable, and (3) a discussion of similarities and differences compared with the student’s thesis work to date and to related work reported in the literature. Written approval from the advisory committee and a member of the GPC who is not on the advisory committee is needed for final topic approval by December 15.

Each student should submit his/her proposed topics to the Advisory Committee and at least one member of the GPC at that time. If a student has not received his/her entire committee’s approval and the approval of one member of the GPC by February 15, the student will need to have an Advisory Committee meeting within the next 1-2 weeks. The purpose of this meeting is to allow faculty to resolve directly any concerns or differences of opinion about the topic, or to advise a student in focusing or choosing topic if needed. Note that typical reasons for rejecting a topic would include insufficient chemical content involved in addressing the question, lack of feasibility, or lack of sufficient distinction from the student’s dissertation research. The committee chair must clarify their concerns to the student and to the GPC in writing, at the end of the meeting. If the student is not able to address their Advisory Committee members’ concerns successfully by February 28, the student will be put on probation. Subsequent failure to write and adequately defend
the proposal by the end of the seventh semester would be grounds for termination from the program. Note that students entering in January will have their deadlines on third week of July for topic submissions and September 15 for final topic approval. All Advisory Committee members must agree that the proposed topic is acceptable. The GPC member will be a nonvoting participant present to anticipate potential concerns. Note that the GPC meeting to review petitions for extension will usually be held the 3rd week of the spring semester.

**Written proposal.** Like proposals submitted to a funding agency, students’ original proposals will be expected to:

1. include an abstract,
2. state the idea and motivating scientific hypothesis,
3. justify the importance of the scientific problem,
4. review the relevant theoretical and/or experimental background literature,
5. propose the specific research, including details about the theoretical and/or experimental techniques and an estimate of capital costs if nonstandard or specialized equipment is required,
6. predict results, including discussing possible outcomes and demonstrating that the approach is feasible by calculation or reference to previous literature, and
7. discuss the significance of the research.

The format should follow NSF proposal guidelines. Proposals should be 15 pages of text, including figures but excluding references, in a font no smaller than 12 point Times with 1.5 spacing. The student is free to consult with anyone, including the advisor, in developing the proposal, but the advisor’s role should be non-directive and the work should represent the student’s own creative thinking. A final version of the proposal must be distributed to Advisory Committee members at least one week before the scheduled examination date.

**Oral defense.** The defense comprises a public seminar (approximately 30–45 minutes in length) and a private oral examination by the student’s Advisory Committee. One more member may be added by the Graduate Program Committee if more expertise in a specific area is desirable. Attendance at the examination may be by any of the Chemistry Faculty, although they will be nonparticipating spectators. During this oral examination, the student is expected to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the literature and methods relevant to the proposal, including any material mentioned in the written proposal or oral presentation. While some of the questions may not have clear-cut answers, the Committee will evaluate the student’s ability to reason effectively and draw appropriately on a broad range of knowledge to do so.

**Pursuing guidance and feedback.** While the original proposal should be produced largely independently, students are expected to pursue sufficient feedback to complete the proposal in a timely way. The student is responsible for seeking feedback and guidance from his/her committee chair in week 6 after the topic is approved and for additional follow-up with his/her advisor and the GPC Co-Chairs by week 11 if progress is not on track for an oral exam within the next 3–4 weeks. A significant change in topic at any point must be approved by the student’s advisory committee and one member of the GPC. A student who does not submit a draft of a written proposal to his/her advisory by week 11 will typically be placed on probation until the proposal oral exam is completed, unless there are extenuating circumstances.

**Outcomes.** Should the research proposal be determined to be deficient, the outcome should be recorded as conditional pass, conditional pass with probation, or failure. In each case, the deficiencies must be communicated in writing by the Advisory Committee Chair to the student and the Graduate Program Committee, along with a new deadline for re-defending the proposal. If the deficiencies are considered significant or major, the student’s performance should be recorded as a conditional pass with probation. If the concerns are grave, the outcome should
be recorded as failure and the Advisory Committee may terminate the student from his/her group or, upon agreement of the advisor and GPC Co-Chairs, may allow the student to submit and defend a revised proposal. If the deficiencies are deemed minor, the student’s performance may be recorded as a conditional pass and the student required either to revise or re-defend, again with the deficiencies, conditions for passing, and a new deadline reported in writing by the Advisory Committee Chair to the student and the Graduate Program Committee by the next day. Approximately 1-2 months would be the typical time allotted for revising and re-defending after a conditional pass, with the goal of making the time as short as is reasonable for the required work. The student may not achieve ABD status without a satisfactory performance. Failure to defend an original proposal successfully by the end of the seventh semester in residence is grounds for termination from the Ph.D. program.

SEE APPENDIX FOR: Guidelines for Original Research Proposals
Agenda for Original Proposal Oral Exam

Advancement to Candidacy and All-But-Dissertation Status

Students’ status in the program will be reviewed each year (described below under Annual Reviews, page 25). During the first two years in the program, a student is referred to as a “Ph.D. student.” Upon successful completion of the research progress report and oral exam, a student advances to candidacy, which designates completing a major portion of the requirements for the Ph.D. The student may then refer to him/herself as a "Ph.D. candidate."

Completion of the following requirements will mark attainment of the status designated All But Dissertation (ABD) by Carnegie Mellon:
• Attainment examinations or approved coursework
• Selection of a Research Advisor
• Selection of an Advisory Committee
• At least four graduate courses in chemistry or related fields with an average grade of B (3.0 or better)
• Formal Seminar
• Research Progress Report
• Original Research Proposal
• Satisfactory teaching for two semesters as a Teaching Assistant
• English Language Proficiency at the level of Category 3 on the ITA test (if a non-native speaker of English).

In accordance with university policy, ABD students must complete the appropriate form to declare their intention to complete their dissertation in residence (on campus) or in absentia (off campus).

Students meeting the normally expected deadlines reach candidacy by the end of the second year and ABD status by the end of the third year. ABD students must complete their remaining degree requirement, namely produce and defend publicly an approved dissertation, within seven years of achieving ABD status. Extraordinary circumstances may necessitate the department to seek an extension of the candidacy status. An extension, however, requires approval by the Dean. Additional information about ABD policies, leaves of absence, and in absentia status is available in the Graduate Studies Office.

SEE WEBSITE FOR: Doctoral Candidate Policies for All But Dissertation (ABD)
http://www.cmu.edu/policies/documents/ABD.html

Ph.D. Requirements
Dissertation Progress Meetings

Expectations. To ensure annual discussion of the student’s progress after he/she reaches ABD status, the Advisory Committee Chair should work with the student to convene a meeting each year after the third year. In the fourth year, the meeting must be held by mid-semester of the seventh semester in residence unless an extension is granted by the GPC. The goal of the meeting (in most cases, though it may vary with the student’s research group) would be to review the scope of a preliminary dissertation outline and very rough timeline for completing the needed work. In the fall of the fifth year (and if needed, sixth year), the goal of the meeting would be to discuss progress on the earlier plan and to identify and deal constructively with obstacles to completing the plan within the year. In both cases, a written summary of the meeting should be prepared by the Committee Chair and shared with the student, Advisory Committee members, and the Graduate Program Committee, ideally with a copy of any thesis outline discussed during the meeting.

Outcomes. If, at any of these meetings, the Advisory Committee finds the student’s performance to be inadequate, the student’s Research Advisor and/or Committee Chair should communicate these concerns to the Graduate Program Committee within one week. The Graduate Program Committee will review the student’s standing in the program at the time of the last departmental review. In serious cases of little or no progress, the advisor, in consultation with the Advisory Committee and the GPC Co-Chairs, may also place a student on probation in the group if he/she is considering terminating the student from the group (see Academic Actions and Appeals, page 26). Probation in the group would normally last for 3-4 months during which the student would retain their level of financial support. The advisor is expected to notify the student in writing of the conditions for regaining good standing in the group and when those conditions have been satisfied. If an ABD student is on probation, he/she is strongly advised to consult the departmental ombudsperson regarding strategies to address the situation.

Residency

University regulations require one year of full-time residency.

SEE WEBSITE FOR: MCS Policies on Doctoral Degrees such as In Residence vs. In Absentia
http://www.cmu.edu/handbook/degree.html

Doctoral Dissertation

The student must write and publicly defend a Doctoral Dissertation. The University standard for the Ph.D. degree states that the thesis must embody the results of extended research, constitute an original contribution to knowledge, and include material worthy of publication. It must demonstrate the candidate’s ability to conduct an independent investigation, to abstract principles from which predictions can be made, and to interpret in a logical manner facts and phenomena revealed by the research. This requirement must be satisfied within seven years of the attainment of ABD status, by regulations of the Mellon College of Science.

SEE WEBSITE FOR: MCS Policies on Doctoral Degrees such as Guidelines on Doctoral Thesis Committees
http://www.cmu.edu/handbook/doctoral.html
**M.S. Requirements**

**M.S. in Chemistry**

Students may earn the M.S. in Chemistry in the normal course of pursuing the Ph.D. by fulfilling the requirements below. Note that students are not admitted for the purpose of earning the M.S. degree and the department does not offer financial support for students wishing to pursue the M.S. as a terminal degree.

Candidates for the M.S. in Chemistry are assigned to an Academic Advisor for the M.S. Degree, who coordinates with the Chair(s) of the Graduate Program Committee and the Department Head. The Academic Advisor for the M.S. Degree meets with the student to formulate a course of studies, and annually thereafter to assess the progress of the student.

Candidates must complete at least 96 units of work, distributed with some flexibility but subject to the following constraints:

1. A minimum of 48 units must be in graduate lecture courses in Chemistry.

2. No more than 18 units may be in undergraduate courses in Chemistry. These must be in upper-level courses (400 level or above) and may include no course equivalent to one previously required to complete a degree in any other college or university.

3. Relevant upper-level undergraduate or graduate courses in other departments or at the University of Pittsburgh (through cross-registration policies) may be taken for credit toward the 96 units, with the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies.

4. To be used for credit, no grade shall be lower than C. The average grade of 96 units, of the first 120 units attempted, must be at least B. Graduate Teaching, 09-931/2 may not be applied as course credit toward the M.S degree.

5. Graduate research credit — candidates who elect to apply units earned in graduate research toward the M.S degree must complete not fewer than 20 units of 09-861 (Graduate Research). If more than 25 units of graduate research are to be credited, substantial evidence of research accomplishment or proficiency must be presented. Such evidence can be in the form of a dissertation, or in the significant authorship of scientific publications, or the equivalent, and must be approved by the Research Advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies.

6. If no more than 25 units of graduate research are to be credited toward the M.S degree, evidence of research proficiency may be provided by the successful completion of the Formal Seminar requirement of the Ph.D Requirements.
**M.S. in Polymer Science**

Within the general requirements of the Master of Science in Chemistry, the Master of Science in Polymer Science provides the basic background for scientists and engineers to pursue technical careers in industries that manufacture, process and use polymeric materials. In consultation with an advisory committee, the student will arrange a course of studies designed to fit his or her background and career goals. Of the total 96 units, 36–48 units will be required in basic science. Students without prior research experience are encouraged to undertake a research project in collaboration with a faculty supervisor. Faculty members in this research area include Tomek Kowalewski, Krzysztof Matyjaszewski, Gary D. Patterson, and Newell Washburn.

**M.S. in Colloids, Polymers and Surfaces**

The Interdisciplinary M.S. in Colloids, Polymers and Surfaces (CPS) degree is a joint program with Chemical Engineering designed for professionals working in the polymer field. Participating faculty include Andrew Gellman, Tomek Kowalewski, Kris Matyjaszewski, Gary D. Patterson, and Lynn Walker.

The program is open to students with a bachelor’s degree in science or engineering. Courses are arranged to permit a part-time student to complete the degree work in two years by attending late afternoon and evening classes and by working on a research project during the summer.
Annual Reviews and Program Oversight

Role of the Graduate Program Committee

The Graduate Program Committee (GPC) serves the following functions:

• Advises first-year graduate students on course selection and other academic matters until a Research Advisor is selected,
• Works with students’ Advisory Committees to review and approve topics for original research proposals,
• Monitors students’ progress in annual reviews, based on input from the advisor, and provides written feedback to students,
• Reviews petitions for extensions on program requirements,
• Meets jointly with the Graduate Student Advisory Committee at least once per year to discuss student feedback and concerns about the program,
• Provides ongoing assessment and review of the graduate program, proposing changes as needed, and
• Approves formal academic actions, other than granting of degrees, such as placing a student on probation or terminating a student from the program.

When an immediate action is required, the Chair(s) of the Graduate Program Committee may act for the Committee. The Chairs are also available to advise students on matters that they may wish to bring to the GPC.

Annual Reviews

Each fall the Graduate Program Committee will solicit brief status reports from each student in the program, along with a written response from the student’s advisor, to serve as the basis for an annual review of students’ progress through the graduate program. The primary goals of the Annual Review are (1) to check for and address significant concerns of students and/or advisors that may significantly affect a student’s timely progress to the Ph.D. and (2) to facilitate advisor feedback on issues or skills important for students’ future career development, particularly those that may otherwise fall into the background during the year. The major components of the review process are:

• The status report, approximately 1-2 pages long, addressing specific questions distributed in advance.
• Advisors meet each student prior to submitting written feedback to both discuss the student’s status report and to enable the student to ask questions about the advisor’s written feedback.
• Upon agreement of the advisor, the brief status report, along with the advisor’s written feedback and other relevant data such as grades and ICC work, will serve as the basis for review by the Graduate Program Committee.
• The GPC provides brief written feedback including the student’s standing in the program, strengths, and suggestions for improvement.

Since students do not attend the annual review meeting, they are encouraged to meet with the GPC Co-Chairs prior to the review if they wish to share additional information with the committee relevant to the review. Advisors or students who have concerns that are difficult to express in the written status report or advisor feedback should consult with the GPC Co-Chairs to discuss how to best communicate their concerns.
SEE ONLINE GUIDE FOR:  
Sample Template for Student Status Report  
Checklist for Faculty Feedback to Students  
Descriptions of Standing in the Department

**Petitions for Extension**

An extension of any of the Department's program requirements above may be requested by petitioning the Graduate Program Committee, explaining what makes the circumstances exceptional and proposing an alternate deadline. For example, serious illness or a death in the family would be exceptional circumstances, and the desire to finish a paper for publication would not be exceptional. In general, petitions for extensions should be received 6-8 weeks before the expected completion of the requirement or as soon as possible, depending on the reason for the extension request. Note that extensions for the original research proposal will be granted only in rare cases.

If a potential extension is discussed with either of the GPC Co-Chairs in person, it is the student's responsibility to summarize any agreements made in writing for consideration by the GPC. Requests should not be considered approved until written approval comes from the GPC.

**Academic Actions and Appeals**

The department is committed to supporting students in meeting the standards set by their research advisors and to ensuring that all students maintain the high standards of performance that reflect Ph.D. quality work. The following procedures are designed to give students a reasonable opportunity to correct deficiencies in their work when needed and to make a transition to other future plans when some requirements by the advisor or department are not satisfied. For example, students who do not maintain a 3.0 coursework GPA or do not complete other requirements at the expected time will receive letters from the GPC indicating whether they are at risk for losing good standing in the Ph.D. program or for possible termination from the Ph.D. program.

**Advisors ending research-advisor relationship with a student.** Advisors may terminate a student from the group, for example, based on a student's inability to learn how to produce reliable results within a reasonable period of time and while using reasonable resources. Faculty members are strongly encouraged to consult the GPC when they observe early signs of concerns about a student's performance or progress. Difficulties that cause the advisor to consider terminating a student should be documented by the advisor in written feedback and discussed in person in a timely way, as discussed below. This is done formally each fall at the annual review and the GPC can assist advisors and students at other times when they may have concerns.

Faculty and departmental concerns will generally be expressed in two forms, warning letters or probation letters.

1. **Warning letter:** If an advisor is dissatisfied with one of his/her student's progress or efforts in research, he/she is strongly encouraged to provide both in person and in writing a warning to the student about the areas of concern and the criteria for continuing as a member of the group in good standing to assist in addressing the concerns promptly. Students may also receive a warning letter from the GPC for low grades or delays in working on program requirements. Normally, such a notice would specify a plan for monitoring the student's progress toward the desired performance or progress. If the concerns are serious enough that the student may be terminated from the group or Ph.D. program, the warning letter should provide, when possible, 6 months written notice of when financial support...
would be terminated if the concerns are not adequately addressed. The GPC Co-Chairs should receive a copy of any warning letters, ideally before they are sent.

2. **Probation letter**: If an advisor has serious concerns and may wish to terminate a student from his/her group, he/she should consult with the GPC Co-Chairs about the details of proceeding to put the student on probation in the group. In addition, failure to complete Ph.D. program requirements on the expected schedule can lead to probation. The minimum recommended probation is 3-4 months, during which time the student’s financial support as a TA or RA will continue, and will be typically maintained by the advisor if the probation occurs in the summer. Probation letters must include a written notice of when financial support would be terminated if the concerns are not addressed; these letters must be approved by the GPC Co-Chairs. Students on temporary visas are advised to consult with OIE at the start of any probation to discuss visa implications in the event of potential termination that semester.

Note that Annual Review feedback may serve the purpose of a probation or warning letter.

**Eligibility to change advisors.** If a student is on probation in one group but otherwise in good standing (as described under Research Advisors), he/she remains eligible to change advisors. If terminated from his/her group, a student may request a 1-2 month grace period to find another advisor before termination from the Ph.D. program, although financial support cannot be promised during this period. After this grace period, a student without an advisor cannot remain in the Ph.D. program. Where possible and appropriate, TA positions or other assignments may be offered, depending on availability of funds and positions. However, if a student is without an advisor, the department cannot guarantee funding.

**Termination from Ph.D. program.** If a student is not making adequate and timely progress through the program requirements or on dissertation research and no exceptional circumstances have been documented in petitions approved by the Graduate Program Committee, the GPC may place a student on probation and state the criteria or conditions to regain good standing. If a student does not adequately address the concerns on the timeline specified in the annual review memo or the probation letter, the GPC may require the student to withdraw from the Ph.D. program. With GPC and department head approval, the student may be eligible to transfer to the M.S. program if there is a means of financial support. Note that students who have completed the M.S. in Chemistry requirements will not be eligible to transfer to the M.S. program and typically are not eligible for TA support.

A student will not normally be terminated from the Ph.D. program without the warning of three months of probation, nor will financial support normally be terminated without three months warning, normally in a probation letter from either the advisor or the department. Six months notice will be given when possible. Limited exceptions with less notice may occur. For example, serious misconduct covered under university policies, such as scientific misconduct, violations of academic integrity, misuse of computing resources, and workplace threats or violence, all include dismissal as a potential sanction. In addition, extended, unapproved absences may lead to termination by the department without three months warning or probation.

**Possible Transition Support.** Depending on timing, qualifications and the department’s specific TA needs, a terminal semester with TA support may be offered to a student who has been terminated, but cannot be guaranteed. Previous TA performance can also be a factor. Note that full funding as a TA for a student who is not working toward the Ph.D. normally requires a double TA assignment and will typically require the ability to be a laboratory or recitation TA. If a termination is warranted in the spring, funding for the summer months may be possible but cannot be guaranteed.
**Appeals.** A student may appeal Graduate Program or advisor decisions in writing to the Department Head. If a resolution cannot be reached within the department, the student may consult with the MCS graduate ombudsperson (currently the Associate Dean for Special Projects) about preparing a formal written grievance to the Dean. The MCS grievance procedures for graduate students can be found at [http://www.cmu.edu/mcs/policies/grievance.htm](http://www.cmu.edu/mcs/policies/grievance.htm).
Financial Matters

Tax implications of stipend support

All stipends are federally taxable. Information about tax implications of funding can be obtained from Sharon McCarl, Associate Dean of MCS.

Summer funding

Graduate student stipends are for the academic year. Summer support normally is provided from research assistantships funded by grants, etc., awarded to the faculty or fellowships/awards received directly by the student from internal or external sources. Limited exceptions may be made for summer support from the Department under some circumstances by prior arrangement with the Department Head, dependent on the available resources. In all cases, a faculty member’s decision not to support one of their students during the summer must be approved by the Department Head.

Policies on outside employment

Employment outside of the research assistantship or teaching assistantship is prohibited for full-time graduate students in the Department of Chemistry during the academic year. Exceptions may be considered for very limited outside employment when deemed appropriate by the Research Advisor, the Graduate Program Committee, and the Associate Dean for Administrative and Financial Affairs.

Outside employment is prohibited if summer support is provided. If summer support is not available, the student may seek outside employment with permission of his/her Research Advisory Committee.

Written notice of changes in financial support

Every effort is made to provide continuous support to students in good standing, within the limits of the available resources. The Department places a high priority on maintaining continuous financial support for graduate students, and provides notice to students on changes in their financial support, with a 6 month written notification, where possible, in the event of a change in the funding. If a student’s funding is lost or reduced or reduced unexpectedly and continuous funding proves difficult to arrange, the student should first consult the Department Head and, if needed, the Associate Dean for Special Projects.

If a student is terminated from the Ph.D. Program, the student’s first notice of a possible change in financial support will be included when he/she is initially placed on probation. The probationary period will typically last 3–4 months. If conditions for reestablishing good standing are not met within that time, a student may, depending on departmental resources and available positions, receive a terminal semester in the department with funding through a TA position during the academic year or other employment during the summer.
**Additional Fellowships**

Students are strongly encouraged to pursue all fellowships for which they are eligible and competitive. For example, outstanding U.S. citizens are eligible for NSF Graduate Research Fellowships at the beginning of their first year of a Ph.D. program. In addition, generous gifts from alumni and friends have made possible three departmental fellowships. Announcements about these and additional opportunities are announced by email.

**Attendance at Conferences**

In most cases, decisions regarding the student’s attendance at conferences and funding availability is at the discretion of the Research Advisor. The University provides additional sources of funding to support small travel grants through the Graduate Program Office. The Mellon College of Science also provides a small annual graduate student travel award supplement.
Additional Policies Affecting Graduate Students

Ombudsperson and Grievances

Rea Freeland serves as ombudsperson for graduate students to assist with difficult academic or personal situations where a confidential sounding board and/or an intermediary can be helpful. Examples of situations where students are encouraged to seek advice or assistance include:

- Difficulty in communications with advisor, particularly when those difficulties may lead to potentially changing advisors or leaving the program
- Conflict with other group members that is difficult to resolve within the group
- Issues related to diversity or the departmental climate for those groups who are historically underrepresented in science
- Personal concerns that interfere significantly with the ability to make timely progress in research or program requirements. These might be due to health, family or financial challenges.

Upon the student’s request, conversations will be kept in confidence. If additional help should be enlisted, the student would be asked before sharing confidential information. More about departmental ombudspersons can be found on the MCS GSAC website at http://www.cmu.edu/mcs/handbook/ombud.html.

In the event that a difficulty cannot be resolved within the department, Rea Freeland in the capacity of ombudsperson for all MCS graduate students can also assist with following the MCS grievance procedures that enlist the Dean’s office in resolving difficult matters.

Changing advisors

A student may change research advisors at any time in the program. Typical reasons for such changes are shifts in research interests away from the advisor’s area or difficulties in advisor-student communication. The process of changing advisors will generally involve:

- soliciting a new advisor (typically done confidentially and with advice from the departmental ombudsperson),
- being accepted by that individual,
- determining how to discuss the desire for a change with the prior advisor,
- giving the prior advisor sufficient opportunity to discuss the situation (and potentially ways to address any concerns leading to the desire to change), and
- determining, with the prior advisor and the Department, what should be done to finish work in the former group and provide a smooth transition, similar to what would be expected leaving other types of jobs.

Students who are considering a change of advisors are encouraged to seek confidential advice on the details of these steps by consulting the Associate Head. Note that prospective advisors should generally keep discussions of change of advisor confidential until the student’s decision is final and the Department Head has approved of the change.
**Leaves of Absence**

In certain circumstances such as health problems or changes in family circumstances, students may wish to consider a brief leave of absence from graduate study. Details about whether and how to pursue this option are available by consulting Valerie Bridge or the GPC Co-Chairs.

**MCS Policy on Graduate Student Time Off**

Students with graduate assistantships are expected to continue with their research during academic breaks (including summer months) with the exception of official University holidays. Paid time off for personal business or vacations generally is not included as part of a graduate’s financial support. A supported graduate student who wants to take a short break (one or two weeks) must get approval for that break from his/her advisor and, if required by the terms of the student’s support package, must make up the work.

Supported graduate students wishing to take longer periods of personal time off must do so without financial support. The advisor will notify the Department’s Business Office of any such arrangements so that an appropriate adjustment in the student’s support can be processed.

The timing and length of any time off must be approved in advance by the advisor before travel commitments are made. Before absences, the student must discuss with the supervising faculty member(s) ways to ensure that his/her progress is satisfactory and that research and/or teaching responsibilities can be met satisfactorily. Students with TA responsibilities are expected to be on campus to attend any department required TA training and at the end of the semester to finish grading or other duties assigned by the department.
# Summary of Timeline for Completion of Ph.D. Requirements

This timeline is based on the typical time to complete the Ph.D. of 5-5.5 years, given timely completion of these requirements along with good progress in research. Variations occur in exceptional circumstances.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st SEMESTER</th>
<th>2nd SEMESTER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICC work for 15-30 hours to reach Category 3 and/or to satisfy ICC requirement of 15+ hours of training concurrent with a TA assignment for those in Category 2 or Category 3</td>
<td>ICC work for 15-30 hours to reach Category 3 or concurrent with TA assignment for Category 2 or 3 TA requirement typically completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commitment to research advisor by mid-semester</td>
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<tr>
<th>3rd SEMESTER</th>
<th>4th SEMESTER</th>
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<tr>
<td>English Language Proficiency completed by beginning of semester</td>
<td>Course requirement completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advisory Committee formed by mid-semester</td>
<td>Research progress report completed, including poster, written report, and oral exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formal seminar completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attainment requirement completed</td>
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<tr>
<th>5th SEMESTER</th>
<th>6th SEMESTER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Original proposal topics due</td>
<td>Original research proposal completed, including written report, presentation, and oral exam</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ABD status typically achieved</td>
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<tr>
<th>7th SEMESTER</th>
<th>8th SEMESTER</th>
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<tr>
<td>ABD committee meeting, usually to review progress since 4th semester</td>
<td>Dissertation research</td>
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<tr>
<th>9th SEMESTER</th>
<th>10th-11th SEMESTER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABD committee meeting, typically to review tentative thesis outline</td>
<td>Dissertation research and writing</td>
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