



PHARMACOLOGY

UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON

GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK 2026-2027

John Scott, PhD
Pharmacology Chair

Edith Wang, PhD
Graduate Program Director

Debbie Bale
Graduate Program Academic Specialist

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Pharmacology utilizes cellular and molecular biology, biochemistry, structural biology, biophysics, genetics, physiology, and neurobiology as tools to design and discover new therapeutics and to better understand what happens when the human body is in a disease state. The technical and problem-solving skills developed in our graduate program have prepared students for diverse and fulfilling careers in science and medicine that encompass academia, industry, scientific communications, public health, and beyond.

MESSAGE FROM CHAIR

Our mission is to explore the action of drugs and their role in the treatment of disease. Consequently, faculty research interests encompass drug discovery, biophysics, biochemistry, structural biology, cell biology, neurobiology, and pharmacogenetics. My role as Chair is to enable innovative research by UW Pharmacology scientists, and encourage the translation of these ideas from the lab to the clinic.

GRADUATE PROGRAM MISSION

The Ph.D. program at the Department of Pharmacology is designed to advance scientific excellence and promote equity, diversity and inclusion. Our mission is to support graduate students and trainees at every phase of their careers with a focus on education, research, and community outreach.



GENERAL INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

UNION CONTRACT

Academic Student Employees (ASEs) are represented by United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 4121. For complete details, refer to the [ASE Contract](#).

PAYDAYS

Payday is the 10th and 25th of each month. However, if payday is on a Saturday, you will be paid Friday before. If payday is on a Sunday, you will be paid on Monday. For detailed information visit the UW ISC Payday webpage: <https://employeehelp.workday.uw.edu/workday-payroll-calendar/>

Please sign up for direct deposit: <https://employeehelp.workday.uw.edu/support-resources/workday-training/workday-basics-for-employees/>

A note from UW ISC:

Your payment election in Workday only directs the deposit of your UW paycheck. If you also receive financial aid or refunds for tuition and fees, and would like any balance transferred directly to your bank account, you will need to enroll in the Direct Deposit Transfer program by selecting the Direct Deposit icon found on the Student Fiscal Services homepage.

TUITION and STUDENT FEES

Your ASE appointment provides a tuition and fees waiver for each quarter. The waiver covers the operating fee, building fee, and technology fee. The waiver should be applied to your student account by the third week of each quarter. If you notice that you have a tuition balance at the beginning of the third week, please contact Sarah Robinson (sr25@uw.edu) and copy Debbie Bale (db29@uw.edu).

Students are responsible for paying the following required student fees each quarter: Facilities Renovation fee, IMA Bond fee, and Services and Activities fee. Fees are typically adjusted in July of each year.

Fees are due on the third Friday of each quarter. For more information on what is covered, please visit the Student Fiscal Services: <https://finance.uw.edu/sfs/tuition-fees/pay-tuition-fees/academic-student-employees-ase>

RESIDENCY STATUS CHANGE

Students who are eligible to establish Washington state residency for tuition purposes are strongly encouraged to do so. Residency requirements can take time to complete, so students should review the requirements and begin planning early. The UW Residency Classification Office can help students understand the requirements and application process. Current students and residency applicants may contact the Residency Team or schedule an advising appointment through the UW Residency website: <https://registrar.washington.edu/residency/>

TIME OFF POLICIES

Please review the time off policies for Academic Student Employees (ASEs): <https://hr.uw.edu/studentemployment/time-off-and-leave-policies/time-off-policies/>

Salaried ASEs request and track time off in Workday. Current instructions and frequently asked questions are available on the ASE Time Off Policies webpage above.

UW GRADUATE STUDENT INSURANCE

Graduate Appointee Insurance Program (GAIP):

GAIP covers medical, vision, and dental care for teaching assistants, research assistants, tutors, predoctoral researchers, and other Academic Student Employees. Benefits are negotiated between the union and the university. The program is administered by LifeWise.

<https://hr.uw.edu/benefits/insurance/health/graduate-appointees-options/gaip-eligibility-coverage-overview/>

UW HUSKY CARD

To obtain your Husky Card visit the Husky Card Account & ID Center located in Odegaard Undergraduate Library, ground level.

Your Husky Card gives you access to the Health Sciences buildings, restricted research labs, regional and transit (U-PASS). It can be used to purchase food and beverages on campus by depositing funds into your account. Check out what you can do with your Husky Card:

<https://huskycardprogram.uw.edu/>

UW TRANSPORTATION

For U-PASS and parking information, visit the UW Transportation Services website:

<https://transportation.uw.edu/>

UW CAMPUS RESOURCES

Well-Being Resources:

[Husky Health Center](#) provides medical and mental health care to students and Gender Affirming Care. (206) 685-1011

[UW LiveWell](#) is a center for student advocacy and training. Programs and services include Alcohol and Drug Education, Peer Health Educator, Student Care, Suicide Intervention Program, Survivor Support and Advocacy. (206) 543-6085

We support everyone seeking mental health support and encourage anyone in need to visit the [Mental Health | Husky Health & Well-Being](#)

[Husky HelpLine](#) provides same-day mental health support for UW students. Call (206) 616-7777 or visit the Husky HelpLine webpage for current access options and hours.

Graduate students, faculty, and staff who seek mental health support through external medical providers are also supported through their health insurance. Graduate students also have access to the [Samuel E. Kelly Ethnic Cultural Center](#) serenity space.

[UW Well-Being](#) offers resources and services that support student health and well-being, including counseling, health promotion, and medical services.

[UW Food Pantry](#) provides food for students, staff, and faculty facing short-term food shortages. The pantry is located in Poplar Hall, 210.

[The Q Center](#)– provides programs, resources, mentoring, and community support for queer and trans students. The Q Center works to create an affirming and inclusive campus environment while connecting students with resources that support their well-being, success, and community.

[Disability Resources for Students](#) – Coordinates academic and housing accommodations for enrolled students with disabilities or temporary health conditions.

[Foundation for International Understanding through Students](#) – A nonprofit organization founded on campus at the University of Washington and focused on promoting international understanding and community.

[Alene Moris Women's Center](#) – Offers transitional support and free advising for those returning to work after time away.

Parental and Family Resources:

[The Washington State Paid Family and Medical Leave](#) program provides salary support during leave following childbirth, adoption, or to care for a sick family member, for up to 12 weeks (16 weeks for a birth parent).

Graduate students in need of childcare can apply for financial help from the [UW Childcare Assistance Program](#). Additional resources on childcare can be found [here](#), including information on [emergency backup childcare](#).

Lactation rooms are available in the T wing of the Health Sciences Building. Apply for access [here](#).

Trainee Resources:

The [UW Allies](#) program serves graduate students and postdoctoral scholars in basic science labs at UW. Allies are faculty who provide trainees with support during conflict with mentors and lab mates, assistance in navigating institutional barriers to success, and connection with institutional and community services. Allies stand in solidarity with trainees, so they don't have to face challenges alone.

[UW Graduate School's Resources](#) page is aimed to help Graduate Students and Postdoctoral Trainees.

[UW School of Medicine Office of Research & Graduate Education \(RGE\)](#) offers education, training, career development, and other resources for biomedical graduate students and postdoctoral scholars.

[UW Career and Internship Center](#) has many opportunities to explore from career planning to career coaching.

[UW Office of Postdoctoral Affairs](#) provides resources and guidance for postdoctoral scholars at UW.

[UW SafeCampus](#) is the University's violence prevention and response program. Call 206-685-7233 or visit the SafeCampus webpage for current hours and after-hours resources.

[SafeZone app](#) is a free UW safety app that can connect users with UW Police on the Seattle campus and with local emergency services when off campus. It also includes options to request help, report a medical issue, and voluntarily share your location or use a safety timer.

[UW GSEE](#) supports graduate students of color with professional development, funding opportunities, advocacy, and outreach.

UW Office of Minority Affairs & Diversity

The Office of Minority Affairs & Diversity (OMAD) mission statement “We create pathways for diverse populations to access postsecondary opportunities, nurture and support their academic success, and cultivate a campus climate that enriches the educational experience for all.”

Reporting Misconduct:

UW Medicine Bias Reporting Tool: <https://equity.uwmedicine.org/bias-reporting-tool/>

Upper Campus Bias Reporting Tool: <https://www.washington.edu/bias/>

These tools are intended to formally report any “bias incident” which is any form of discrimination, bullying, microaggression, or harassment against a member of the university community based on perception of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, citizenship, sex, pregnancy, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetic information, disability or veteran status. You can report if you experienced or witnessed the bias incident.

DIRECTORY INFORMATION AND PHOTO RELEASE

Graduate students may choose whether their directory information can be released by the University. Students can review or change their Directory Release setting in MyUW under Profile → Student Directory Information → Change your release settings. More information about FERPA and directory information is available through the UW Office of the University Registrar.

The Department of Pharmacology may take photographs at department events for use in newsletters, the department website, social media, or other communications. Students who do not wish to be photographed or have their image used should notify the department. UW generally requires a photo release when an individual's image, video, or voice will be used for marketing or promotional purposes. Please indicate your preference: [Annual Program-Specific Directory Release Permissions – Fill out form](#)

DEPARTMENTAL RESOURCES

Department resource information can be found at <https://pharmacology.uw.edu/department-resources/>



GRADUATE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

UW GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

In order to qualify for the doctoral degree, it is the responsibility of the student to meet the following Graduate School minimum requirements:

1. Completion of a program of study and research as planned by the graduate program coordinator in the student's major department or college and the Supervisory Committee. At least 18 credits of course work at the 500 level and above must be completed prior to scheduling the General Examination.
2. Presentation of 90 credits, 60 of which must be taken at the University of Washington. With the approval of the degree-granting unit, an appropriate master's degree from an accredited institution may substitute for 30 credits of enrollment.
3. Numerical grades must be received in at least 18 quarter credits of course work taken at the UW prior to scheduling the General Examination. The Graduate School accepts numerical grades in department approved 400-level courses accepted as part of the major and in 500-level courses. This excludes 499 credits. A minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00 is required for a graduate degree at the University.
4. Creditable passage of the General Examination. Registration as a graduate student is required the quarter the exam is taken and candidacy is conferred.
5. Preparation of and acceptance by the Dean of the Graduate School of a dissertation that is a significant contribution to knowledge and clearly indicates training in research. Credit for the dissertation ordinarily should be at least one-third of the total credit. The Candidate must register for a minimum of 27 credits of dissertation over a period of at least three quarters. At least one quarter must come after the student passes the General Examination. With the exception of summer quarter, students are limited to a maximum of 10 credits per quarter of dissertation (800).
6. Creditable passage of a Final Examination, which is usually devoted to the defense of the dissertation and the field with which it is concerned. The General and Final Examinations cannot be scheduled during the same quarter. Registration as a graduate student is required the quarter the exam is taken and the degree is conferred.
7. Completion of all work for the doctoral degree within ten years. This includes quarters spent On-Leave or out of status as well as applicable work from the master's degree from the UW or a master's degree from another institution, if applied toward one year of resident study.
8. Registration maintained as a full- or part-time graduate student at the University for the quarter in which the degree is conferred (see detailed information under Final Quarter Registration).
9. A student must satisfy the requirements that are in force at the time the degree is to be awarded.

UW GRADUATE SCHOOL POLICIES AND STUDENT CONDUCT CODE

Graduate students are responsible for following Graduate School and University policies. The policies below are especially relevant to Pharmacology doctoral students. These summaries highlight key requirements but do not replace the full policies.

Academic Performance and Progress (Graduate School Policy 3.7)

Students must maintain satisfactory academic performance and make timely progress toward degree milestones. Pharmacology communicates program expectations and reviews student progress regularly. When a student is not meeting documented expectations, the Graduate School uses Academic Notification, Academic Alert, Final Academic Alert, and Academic Drop processes, as applicable. [Graduate School Policy 3.7](#)

Academic Grievance Procedure (Graduate School Policy 3.8)

Graduate students who believe that academic policies or procedures have been applied unfairly must follow the academic grievance procedure established by their school, college, or campus. The Graduate School policy also explains the appeal process and identifies concerns that are handled under other University procedures. [Graduate School Policy 3.8](#)

Doctoral Supervisory Committees (Graduate School Policy 4.2)

The Graduate School establishes minimum requirements for doctoral supervisory committees, and graduate programs may establish additional program-specific expectations. Pharmacology requirements for committee formation and composition are described in the “Choosing Your Doctoral Supervisory Committee” section of this handbook. [Graduate School Policy 4.2](#)

Dissertation Defense / Final Examination and Public Presentation

NEW FOR 2026–27: Beginning Autumn 2026, Graduate School policy requires programs to state their expectations for public presentations, how defenses are advertised, and how students may request a more limited audience. Pharmacology dissertation defenses are normally open to the public. Students who wish to request a more limited audience should contact Debbie Bale; Debbie will follow up with the student’s thesis advisor. Defense advertising, including flyers and announcement emails, is separate from whether the defense itself is public and must comply with FERPA. Students may also contact Debbie if they wish to limit or opt out of broader advertising of their defense. Full procedures are provided in the Final Examination section of this handbook.

Additional Policies and Student Conduct

For the complete set of Graduate School policies, visit: [Graduate School Policies](#)

For University conduct expectations and procedures, visit: [Community Standards & Student Conduct](#)

UW PHARMACOLOGY GRADUATE PROGRAM ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

A baccalaureate degree with a major in any of the sciences, such as biochemistry, chemistry, pharmacy, physics, physiology, psychology, or zoology, is strongly advised. Students are selected from the applicant pool based on several criteria, including academic performance, letters of recommendation, and previous research experience. GRE scores are not required.

UW PHARMACOLOGY GRADUATE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Course Requirements:

NOTE: A minimum grade of 2.7 is required for each course that is counted toward a graduate degree.

1. Enrollment in PHCOL 501 (Drug Discovery and Emerging Therapeutics), PHCOL 502/CONJ 532 (Signal Transduction from the Cell Membrane to the Nucleus), PHCOL 503 (Autonomic/Cardiovascular Pharmacology), PHCOL 504 (Neuropharmacology), PHCOL 505 (Endocrine Pharmacology) and PHCOL 506 (Immunopharmacology and Chemotherapeutics).
2. Enrollment in PHCOL 507 (Pharmacology Seminar Series) throughout graduate school. Enrolled students will be expected to attend >70% to receive a passing grade in the course.
3. Enrollment in PHCOL 514 (Current Topic in Pharmacology) - 1st and 2nd year only.
4. Enrollment in PHCOL 519 (lab rotations) during Autumn, Winter, and Spring quarters of your first year; an additional fourth rotation in Summer quarter is an option if necessary. Students entering the program with a M.S. degree or equivalent may petition to be allowed to enroll in less than three full quarters of Pharmacology 519 before selecting a lab.
5. Enrollment in CONJ 531 (Signaling Mechanisms in Excitable Cells)
6. Enrollment in 3 graded Advanced Elective courses (500-level). Minimum of ONE course must be offered by the Pharmacology department. Contact Graduate Program Director, Edith Wang (ehwang@uw.edu) for approval of 500-level courses outside of Pharmacology.
7. Enrollment in ONE Quantitative Analysis course
8. Optional course work: Additional courses should be selected with the advice of the Graduate Program Coordinator, preceptor and/or Thesis advisor.

Teaching Responsibilities:

Students serve as Teaching Assistants for one quarter of PHCOL 500 series/PharmD MEDCH courses or may choose to participate in a community outreach teaching experience during their second year. TA experience for courses includes attending all sessions; preparing and delivering lectures; management of discussion/review sections; preparation and grading of quizzes/exams.

First Year

Students engage in three different laboratory rotations and take classes in different aspects of pharmacology. The rotations provide students the opportunity to work in different lab environments, one of which will ultimately become their dissertation laboratory.

Fall Quarter:

PHCOL 501 – Drug Discovery and Emerging Therapeutics (2 credits)
PHCOL 502 – Signal Transduction from the Cell Membrane to the Nucleus (2 credits)
PHCOL 507 – Pharmacology Seminar (1 credit)
PHCOL 514 – Current Topics in Pharmacology (1 credit)
PHCOL 519 – Introduction to Laboratory Research in Pharmacology (4 credits)
PHCOL 550 – Overview of Faculty Research (1 credit)
CONJ 531 – Signaling Mechanisms in Excitable Cells (1.5 credits)

Additional Courses:

Students can take one Advanced Pharmacology course and/or additional graded approved courses. Students should not register for more than 18 total credits.

Winter Quarter:

PHCOL 503 – Autonomic/Cardiovascular Pharmacology (2 credits)
PHCOL 504 – Neuropharmacology (2 credits)
PHCOL 507 – Pharmacology Seminar (1 credit)
PHCOL 514 – Current Topics in Pharmacology (1 credit)
PHCOL 519 – Introduction to Laboratory Research in Pharmacology (4 credits)

Additional Courses:

Students can take one Advanced Pharmacology course and/or additional graded approved courses. Students should not register for more than 18 total credits.

Spring Quarter:

PHCOL 505 – Endocrine Pharmacology (2 credits)
PHCOL 506 – Immunopharmacology and Chemotherapeutics (2 credits)
PHCOL 507 – Pharmacology Seminar (1 credit)
PHCOL 514 – Current Topics in Pharmacology (1 credit)
PHCOL 519 – Introduction to Laboratory Research in Pharmacology (4 credits)

Additional Courses:

Students can take one Advanced Pharmacology course and/or additional graded approved courses. Students should not register for more than 18 total credits.

Summer Quarter:

Register for UCONJ 510 (2 credits) OR PHCOL 600 – Research (2 credits)
(UCONJ 510 space is limited, register early!)
Students should register for 2 credits MAX.

[Biomedical Research Integrity Training](#): To be completed before the beginning of your second year, must retake in 4 years.

Student Advising and Evaluation

Dr. Edith Wang, Graduate Program Director, meets with incoming students during orientation and provides program-level academic oversight. She reviews requests to take courses outside the program's established requirements or approved course options and oversees the written component of the General Examination.

Debbie Bale serves as the primary contact for first-year graduate students and assists with graduate program coordination, course registration, laboratory rotations, program requirements, scheduling, forms, and other day-to-day graduate program activities. Students should contact Debbie with questions about program procedures or requirements and for assistance navigating the graduate program.

Student progress is reviewed regularly based on coursework, laboratory rotations, research progress, and other program milestones.

Satisfactory Academic Performance and Progress

Throughout the Ph.D. program, students are expected to meet academic and research requirements, complete program milestones within the expected timeframes, and make steady progress toward the degree. Progress may be evaluated through coursework, laboratory rotations, research, faculty reviews, supervisory committee meetings, examinations, and annual dissertation progress reviews. Graduate School standards also require students to maintain a cumulative and quarterly GPA of at least 3.0. Student progress is reviewed at least annually and may be reviewed more often when concerns arise.

If a student is not meeting a documented expectation or milestone, Pharmacology will communicate the concern in writing and identify what needs to improve, how improvement will be evaluated, an appropriate timeframe, and the possible consequences if the concern is not resolved. The goal is to give the student clear expectations and a reasonable path back to satisfactory progress.

Depending on the nature of the concern and the student's prior progress, the process may include an Academic Notification, Academic Alert, or Final Academic Alert. An Academic Notification is an internal program-level step intended to address concerns early. Academic Alert and Final Academic Alert are formal statuses that involve the Graduate School. Academic Drop may occur when required improvement is not achieved, or in limited circumstances specifically allowed under Graduate School policy. These terms are defined in Graduate School Policy 3.7.

Students are encouraged to discuss questions or concerns about their progress with their thesis advisor, Graduate Program Director, Graduate Program Advisor, and/or supervisory committee, as appropriate. Appeals of academic decisions follow the Graduate School Academic Grievance Procedure (Policy 3.8). See [Graduate School Policy 3.7](#) for the full University policy.

Laboratory Rotations

Laboratory rotations are designed to provide first-year students with an opportunity to gain hands-on experience with the theoretical and technical approaches to research that are practiced in different laboratories. This experience helps students to select a permanent lab in which to conduct their thesis research. Students complete three 10-week rotations in the labs of their choice during the Autumn, Winter, and Spring quarters of their first year.

At the completion of each laboratory rotation, students provide a title and abstract describing the objectives, results, and conclusions of their research project and present a short research talk to fellow students and faculty in the Pharmacology Department. The rotation advisor provides a

numerical grade and written evaluation of the student's performance in the lab and the rotation talk. The student receives a copy of the evaluation, which becomes a part of the student's academic file.

Students with a Master's degree and significant research experience may petition the Pharmacology Graduate Program Committee to reduce the number of laboratory rotations required before selecting a thesis advisor.

Selection of Dissertation Advisor

By the end of the eighth week of Spring quarter (mid-May), each student must notify Dr. John Scott (Pharmacology's Chair) of their first and second choices for a thesis advisor. Finding a mentor who agrees to accept the student into his/her lab is a qualifying step for continuation in the Pharmacology graduate program and a successful graduate career.

With the approval of the Department Chair and completion of their Spring Quarter rotation, the student moves to their thesis advisor laboratory for the remainder of their graduate studies.

Biomedical Research Integrity

The Biomedical Research Integrity (BRI) was developed by the UW School of Medicine in response to a directive from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) requiring that all graduate students supported by NIH training grants be provided with training in the ethics of research. Additionally, the Medical School Executive Committee recommends that all trainees, regardless of funding source, participate in the BRI Training during their training.

The Department of Pharmacology requires all Pharmacology graduate students to complete the course in research ethics during their study in the department. It is a requirement for graduation, whether or not you may be supported on an NIH training grant. The Department office will receive an attendance sheet; the fulfillment of the requirement is documented.

If you are supported by a training grant, it is essential to check with the administrators of the training grant program every year to ensure compliance with specific requirements.

Second Year

Students begin work on their dissertation research project, select their Doctoral Supervisory Committee, and prepare for the written portion of the General Exam.

Fall Quarter:

PHCOL 507 – Pharmacology Seminar (1 credit)

PHCOL 514 – Current Topics in Pharmacology (1 credit)

PHCOL 560-583 (1 credit) Register for your Thesis Advisor's laboratory meeting course.

PHCOL 600 – Research (10 credits)

Additional Courses:

Students can take one Advanced Pharmacology course and/or additional graded approved courses.

Students should not register for more than 18 total credits.

Winter Quarter:

PHCOL 507 – Pharmacology Seminar (1 credit)

PHCOL 514 – Current Topics in Pharmacology (1 credit)

PHCOL 560-583 (1 credit) Register for your Thesis Advisor's lab meeting course.

PHCOL 600 – Research (10 credits)

Additional Courses:

Students can take one Advanced Pharmacology course and/or additional graded approved courses.

Students should not register for more than 18 total credits.

Spring Quarter:

PHCOL507 – Pharmacology Seminar (1 credit)

PHCOL 514 – Current Topics in Pharmacology (1 credit)

PHCOL 560-583 (1 credit) Register for your Thesis Advisor's laboratory meeting course.

PHCOL 600 – Research (10 credits)

Additional Courses:

Students can take one Advanced Pharmacology course and/or additional graded approved courses.

Students should not register for more than 18 total credits.

Summer Quarter:

PHCOL 600 – Research (1 credit)

PHCOL 560-583 (1 credit)

Students register for their Thesis Advisor's laboratory meeting course. Students should not register for more than 2 total credits during Summer quarter.

Teaching Requirement

Teaching experience is considered an important aspect of training in the Pharmacology graduate program. Students serve as Teaching Assistants for one quarter of the Pharmacology 500 series during their second year or may choose to participate in a community outreach teaching experience. The TA experience begins with participation in the TA workshop on Teaching & Learning offered by UW in September. TA responsibilities for courses include attending all sessions, supporting 1st year graduate students, preparing and delivering lectures, management of class discussion and grading of student presentations.

If you prefer to participate in a community outreach TA experience, please contact Dr. Stan McKnight (mcknight@uw.edu) for more details.

University of Washington Resources for Teaching: <https://teaching.washington.edu/>

Choosing Your Doctoral Supervisory Committee

During Autumn Quarter of the second year, students work with their Thesis Advisor and the Graduate Program Committee to select faculty members for their Doctoral Thesis Supervisory Committee. The committee provides academic and research guidance, conducts the General Examination, and supports the student through completion of the dissertation.

Graduate School Minimum Requirements

Under Graduate School Policy 4.2, a doctoral supervisory committee must include at least four members. At least three members, including the Committee Chair and Graduate School Representative (GSR), must be members of the Graduate Faculty with Doctoral Endorsement, and a majority of the committee must be Graduate Faculty.

Pharmacology Program Expectations

Pharmacology recommends a committee of five to seven members. The majority of committee members should have a primary appointment in the Department of Pharmacology. At least one, but no more than three members (including the GSR), should hold primary appointments outside Pharmacology. These are Pharmacology program expectations in addition to the Graduate School minimum requirements.

The Thesis Advisor/Committee Chair and the GSR must be present for the General Examination and Final Examination. Pharmacology also expects at least two additional committee members to attend the General Examination.

Graduate School Representative (GSR)

The GSR represents the Graduate School and is a voting member of the committee. The GSR must be a Graduate Faculty member with Doctoral Endorsement and must not have an actual or perceived conflict of interest with the student or Committee Chair. Faculty with a primary, joint, or affiliate appointment in Pharmacology or in the Committee Chair's department are not eligible to serve as GSR. An adjunct appointment alone does not make a faculty member ineligible.

Current GSR eligibility guidance: <https://grad.uw.edu/policies/graduate-school-representative-gsr-eligibility/>

Committee Formation and Changes – New for 2026–27

Graduate School Policy 4.2 was revised in May 2026 to add program responsibilities for committee formation and maintenance. Students remain responsible for forming and maintaining their committee, but the program must provide clear written expectations, advising, and timely support. Students must have a faculty point of contact at all times. Once a committee is established, the Committee Chair serves in this role. If a student has not yet established a Committee Chair, or loses their Committee Chair, the Graduate Program Coordinator must serve as or designate an Interim Faculty Point of Contact to provide academic guidance and help the student navigate committee formation or re-formation. Graduate School Policy 4.2: <https://grad.uw.edu/policies/4-2-supervisory-committee-for-graduate-students/>

If a student is having difficulty forming or maintaining a viable committee, they should contact the Graduate Program Director and Debbie Bale as soon as possible. Falling behind the program's expected committee-formation timeline does not result in automatic dismissal; the program must provide written expectations and an opportunity to address the issue through the Graduate School's satisfactory-progress process (Policy 3.7).

Once your committee members have been selected, submit their names to Debbie Bale. Debbie will enter the committee information in MyGrad on behalf of the Graduate Program Director.

Individual Development Plan (IDP) Preliminary Review

Pharmacology graduate students in their second year of graduate school are required to create an IDP and schedule a preliminary review that will prepare them for a successful future career. Please see the following guidelines for details about "[Creating an IDP](#)".

Preliminary Review

For the preliminary review, you should plan to present the general area/ideas of your thesis project. The primary purpose is to allow committee members to provide feedback on your potential thesis project and to help you formulate the actual specific aims of your future General Exam research proposal. This meeting also will allow you to get to know your committee members before your General Exam.

Students are required to convene a preliminary review meeting with their committee members before the end of Winter quarter of their second year.

Written Component of General Examination

The written portion of the General Examination is scheduled by Dr. Wang during the month of June or July for graduate students to take at the end of their second year. The purpose of this examination is to evaluate the student's knowledge and understanding of basic pharmacology and the medical sciences (e.g., biochemistry, physiology, molecular/cellular biology, etc.) and their ability to apply this knowledge. The exam is take-home and consists of questions written by members of the Pharmacology faculty.

Questions will be graded by the authoring faculty members and an evaluation of overall performance on the exam will be provided to each student. Areas of perceived weakness will be noted and may be reexamined during the oral portion of the General Examination. Results of the Written General Examination will be included as a permanent part of the student's record.

Third Year

The student continues on dissertation work and takes the oral General Examination.

Third Year Courses

Fall Quarter:

PHCOL 507 – Pharmacology Seminar (1 credit)

PHCOL 560-583 (1 credit)

Students register for their Thesis Advisor's laboratory meeting course.

PHCOL 600 – Research (Variable credits)

Additional Courses:

Students can take one Advanced Pharmacology course and/or additional approved graded course.

Students should not register for more than 18 total credits.

Winter Quarter:

PHCOL 507 – Pharmacology Seminar (1 credit)

PHCOL 560-583 (1 credit)

Students register for their Thesis Advisor's laboratory meeting course.

PHCOL 800 – Doctoral Dissertation (Variable credits)

For students who have passed the Pharmacology written and oral General Examinations. The number of credits to register for will vary. Students must be registered for a minimum of 10 total credits and no more than 18 total credits each Quarter (except Summer Quarter).

Additional Courses:

Students can take one Advanced Pharmacology course and/or additional approved graded course.

Students should not register for more than 18 total credits.

Spring Quarter:

PHCOL 507 – Pharmacology Seminar (1 credit)

PHCOL 560-583 (1 credit)

Students register for Thesis Advisor's laboratory meeting course.

PHCOL 800 – Doctoral Dissertation (Variable credits)

Additional Courses:

Students can take one Advanced Pharmacology course and/or additional approved graded course.

Students should not register for more than 18 total credits.

Summer Quarter:

PHCOL 560-583 (1 credit)

Students register for their Thesis Advisor's laboratory meeting course.

PHCOL 800 – Doctoral Dissertation (1 credit)

**Students supported by a training grant may need to attend required Biomedical Research Integrity Lecture Series lectures and discussions. Check with your training grant administrator for specific details.*

Oral Component of General Examination

Students schedule the oral General Examination, which is administered by the Doctoral Thesis Supervisory Committee, during the Fall Quarter of their third year of graduate studies. The oral General Examination is chaired by a departmental faculty member who is not the Thesis Advisor. The chairing faculty member will be designated by the Thesis Advisor prior to the exam with the concurrence of the Graduate Program Committee. The examination is based, in part, on an evaluation of the student's proposed research for the dissertation and on their knowledge of the disciplines important to the research.

A short thesis research proposal (in the style of an NIH F31 NRSA proposal) will be provided by the student to their Doctoral Thesis Supervisory Committee members at least two weeks prior to the oral General Examination. During the oral examination, the student will present the background for the proposed research, thesis proposal, and dissertation research progress. This will be followed by questions from the Doctoral Thesis Supervisory Committee on issues related to the background and thesis proposal.

- 20-minute uninterrupted talk on background
- 20-minute faculty questions on foundational knowledge of their fields
- 20-minute uninterrupted talk on proposed research
- Up to 60 minutes of faculty questions on the proposed research, general knowledge of pharmacology, and related disciplines

The duration may be influenced by the student's previous performance on the written general examination and in-class work. Each Committee member will be invited to ask a series of questions on general knowledge.

On the basis of an evaluation of student performance on all portions of the general examination (written general examination, oral presentation, and defense of the thesis proposal), the committee recommends one of the following: 1) approval of candidacy toward the Ph.D. degree, 2) further work and subsequent reexamination (over specific areas or in total), or 3) termination from the program.

After successful completion of the oral General Examination, graduate students enroll in PHCOL 800 rather than PHCOL 600. This reflects the change in status from a pre-candidate to a candidate for the doctoral degree.

Steps To Your Oral General Examination

1. Contact your Thesis Advisor and committee members to find a suitable date. Your Graduate School Representative (GSR), Thesis Advisor, and two other committee members must be in attendance. When you have confirmed the date and time with your committee, notify Debbie Bale (db29@uw.edu) and a suitable location will be scheduled.
2. After you have a room reservation, date, and time for your oral General Examination, you will need to submit your request for a General Examination online through MyGrad: <https://grad.uw.edu/mygrad-program/> at least three weeks in advance of the exam date. Notify Debbie after you have submitted your request so that she can approve the date and time of your exam.
3. At least two weeks before the oral General Examination, a written description of your thesis proposal must be circulated to your supervisory committee for them to review. A copy should be given to Debbie for your file. Specific guidelines for the written thesis research proposal will be provided to students at the beginning of the Fall quarter in their 3rd year.
4. Prior to the oral General Examination, Debbie will provide the necessary warrant that will be given to your Advisor. Each member of your supervisory committee who is present must sign the document.

If it is not possible to schedule your oral General Examination by the stated deadline, please contact Dr. Edith Wang (ehwang@uw.edu).

Fourth and Subsequent Years

The student continues with their dissertation research and prepares for their dissertation defense.

Courses

Fall/Winter/Spring Quarter:

PHCOL 507 – Pharmacology Seminar (1 credit)

PHCOL 560-583 (1 credit)

Students register for their Thesis Advisor's laboratory meeting course.

PHCOL 800 – Doctoral Dissertation (Variable credits)

Additional Courses:

Students can take one Advanced Pharmacology course and/or additional approved graded course.

Students should not register for more than 18 total credits.

Summer Quarter:

PHCOL 560-583 (1 credit)

Students register for their Thesis Advisor's laboratory meeting course.

PHCOL 800 – Doctoral Dissertation (1 credit)

Additional Courses:

Students can take one Advanced Pharmacology course and/or additional approved graded course.

Students should not register for more than 18 total credits.

Annual Review of Dissertation Progress

In Winter quarter of your fourth year and each subsequent year until the doctoral defense, the student will be reviewed annually by their Doctoral Thesis Supervisory Committee regarding their dissertation progress. The student prepares a two-page status report, circulates it to the Doctoral Thesis Supervisory Committee, and meets with the Committee to discuss dissertation research progress and future plans. The annual review must be completed by the end of the Winter Quarter each year.

Laura Sheard Graduate Lecture

Fourth year students will select the lecture speaker and will consult with the department's seminar co-chairs prior to inviting the speaker. Students will also host a lunch and dinner with the speaker. Full details will be shared before the beginning of your fourth year. To learn more about the lecture, please visit: <https://pharmacology.uw.edu/seminars/laura-sheard-lecture/>

BRI Training Refresher

[Biomedical Research Integrity Training](#)

Final Examination

When you and your supervisory committee have agreed you are ready to graduate, you will select a Reading Committee, a subgroup of at least three members of your Supervisory Committee, who will be appointed to read and approve your dissertation. The Reading Committee is responsible for (a) determining whether the dissertation makes a significant contribution to knowledge and is an acceptable piece of scholarly writing; (b) determining whether the dissertation is ready to serve as the basis for the Final Examination; and (c) approving the dissertation.

Once you have selected the Reading Committee, contact Debbie Bale (db29@uw.edu) with the names of your choice, Debbie will enter the Reading Committee member names into MyGrad to inform the Dean of the Graduate School. Your Reading Committee will approve your dissertation online through the MyGrad Committee View portal. Instructions will be given to them by email from the Graduate School.

Next, you will need to select a date for the thesis defense that is acceptable to your Supervisory Committee members and you. After a date has been selected, contact Debbie to reserve a room for your defense. After a room has been reserved, log in to MyGrad: <https://grad.uw.edu/mygrad-program/> to schedule your doctoral final exam. Contact Debbie after you have entered the information in MyGrad for approval.

Additional requirements and steps for final dissertation submission are available on the Graduate School Graduation Requirements webpage: <https://grad.uw.edu/current-students/enrollment-through-graduation/graduation-requirements/>

Public Attendance and Defense Announcements (New for 2026–27)

Pharmacology dissertation defenses are normally open to the public. Under Graduate School policy effective for Autumn 2026, programs must clearly state their expectations for public presentations and provide a process for students to request a more limited audience. A student who would like to request a limited or private audience should contact Debbie Bale. Debbie will follow up with the student's thesis advisor regarding the request.

Defense advertising is a separate issue from whether the defense itself is open to the public. Pharmacology may advertise a defense through a department flyer, announcement email, website posting, or similar communication. Students who do not want their defense advertised broadly should contact Debbie before the announcement or flyer is distributed. This request may be made even if the defense itself will remain open to the public.

Defense announcements must comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). If a student has opted out of UW Directory Information, the University may not publish the student's defense information to audiences beyond departmental faculty without the student's documented written or digital permission. The Graduate School also recommends obtaining documented permission from all students before advertising a defense.

If you have any questions, please contact Debbie.

UW Pharmacology Requirements

	Autumn Quarter	Winter Quarter	Spring Quarter	Summer Quarter
Year 1	PHCOL 501 (2 CR) - Drug Discovery/EMRG Therapy PHCOL 502/CONJ 532 (2 CR) - Signal Transduction PHCOL 507 (1 CR) - Pharmacology Seminar PHCOL 514 (1 CR) - Current Topics in Pharm PHCOL 519 (4 CR) - Lab Rotation PHCOL 550 (1 CR) - Faculty Research CONJ 531 (1.5 CR) - Signaling Mechanisms Advanced Courses***	PHCOL 503 (2 CR) - Autonomic/Cardio Pharm PHCOL 504 (2 CR) - Neuropharmacology PHCOL 507 (1 CR) - Pharmacology Seminar PHCOL 514 (1 CR) - Current Topics in Pharm PHCOL 519 (4 CR) - Lab Rotation Advanced Courses***	PHCOL 505 (2 CR) - Endocrine Pharm PHCOL 506 (2 CR) Immunopharm & Chemo PHCOL 507 (1 CR) - Pharmacology Seminar PHCOL 514 (1 CR) - Current Topics in Pharm PHCOL 519 (4 CR) - Lab Rotation Advanced Courses***	UCONJ 510 (2 CR) Introductory Laboratory Based Biostatistics Biomedical Research Integrity Training,
Task	<i>Rotation Talk</i>	<i>Rotation Talk</i>	<i>Rotation Talk</i> <i>Select first and second choices for a thesis advisor.</i>	<i>Coordinate TA-ship with Dr. Stan McKnight</i>
Year 2	PHCOL 507 (1 CR) - Pharmacology Seminar PHCOL 514 (1 CR) - Current Topics in Pharm PHCOL 560-583** PHCOL 600 Research (10 credits) Advanced Courses***	PHCOL 507 (1 CR) - Pharmacology Seminar PHCOL 514 (1 CR) - Current Topics in Pharm PHCOL 560-583** PHCOL 600 Research (10 credits) Advanced Courses***	PHCOL 507 (1 CR) - Pharmacology Seminar PHCOL 514 (1 CR) - Current Topics in Pharm PHCOL 560-583** PHCOL 600 Research (10 credits) Advanced Courses***	PHCOL 560-583** (1 CR) PHCOL 600 (1 CR)
Task	<i>Complete TA Training Program</i> <i>Selection of Doctoral Supervisory Committee Members</i>	<i>Schedule Committee meeting.</i>		<i>Complete Written Component of General Examination</i>
Year 3	PHCOL 507 (1 CR) - Pharmacology Seminar PHCOL 560-583** PHCOL 600 Research (10 credits) Advanced Courses***	PHCOL 507 (1 CR) - Pharmacology Seminar PHCOL 560-583** PHCOL 800 (10 CR) Advanced Courses***	PHCOL 507 (1 CR) - Pharmacology Seminar PHCOL 560-583** PHCOL 800 (10 CR) Advanced Courses***	PHCOL 560-583** (1 CR) PHCOL 800 (1 CR)
Task	<i>Complete Oral General Examination</i>			
Year 4 & Beyond	PHCOL 507 (1 CR) - Pharmacology Seminar PHCOL 560-583** PHCOL 800 (10 CR)	PHCOL 507 (1 CR) - Pharmacology Seminar PHCOL 560-583** PHCOL 800 (10 CR)	PHCOL 507 (1 CR) - Pharmacology Seminar PHCOL 560-583** PHCOL 800 (10 CR)	PHCOL 560-583** (1 CR) PHCOL 800 (1 CR) Biomedical Research Integrity Training
Task		<i>Schedule Committee meeting.</i>		
NOTES:	*Student should not register for more than 18 total credits in AUT, WIN, & SPR Quarters. 2 credits in SUM Quarter. **Students register for the appropriate lab meeting course (if offered) for the remainder of their graduate career. ***Students can take one Advanced Pharmacology course and/or additional graded course. For approval, please contact Dr Edith Wang.			