

CELLULAR & INTEGRATIVE PHYSIOLOGY

GRADUATE PROGRAM HANDBOOK



ACADEMIC YEAR 2024-2025

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NOTE: The University and our Program will communicate with you throughout your training via your WVU MIX email address. We will not use other email addresses. You must activate this account. If you do not plan on exclusively using this account, then you need to forward it to an account that you prefer to use. Periodic checking of the MIX account will not suffice and you will be accountable for any missed communications.

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY - CELLULAR AND INTEGRATIVE PHYSIOLOGY

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

This handbook governs your activities while enrolled as a student in the Cellular & Integrative Physiology Graduate Program. If this information needs to be amended, you will be informed in writing of the change and will be governed by the new information. The information in this handbook is a supplement to the information posted online in our Graduate Catalog (<http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/schoolofmedicine/cellularandintegrativephysiology/>) as well as the policies at the WVU Health Sciences Center (<https://www.hsc.wvu.edu/resoff/graduate-education/student-success/student-resources/>). You are responsible for knowing this information. In some cases, the Health Sciences Center/Program standards are more specific than those listed in the WVU Graduate Catalog. When these standards are different, you will be governed and evaluated based on the Program-specific information in this Handbook.

B. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the Cellular & Integrative Physiology Graduate Program is to engage students in developing a creative approach to the life sciences, with the aim of explaining how the higher-level properties of complex systems arise from the interactions amongst their parts. Students will leave our program better able to identify important unsolved scientific problems and with an appreciation of how to select problems for which applying quantitative and theoretical approaches will be most informative.

The student learning and programmatic outcomes are similar to those put forth by the Human Anatomy and Physiology Society (HAPS) and the American Physiological Society (APS):

Fundamental Content & Process Goals:

1. Recognize and explain the principle of homeostasis and the use of feedback loops to control physiological systems.
2. Use anatomical knowledge to predict physiological consequences, and use knowledge of function to predict the features of anatomical structures.
3. Recognize and explain the interrelationships within and between anatomical and physiological systems of the human body.
4. Synthesize ideas to make a connection between knowledge of anatomy and physiology and real-world situations, including healthy lifestyle decisions and homeostatic imbalances.

Broader Process Goals:

1. Approach and examine issues related to physiology from an evidence-based perspective.
2. Communicate clearly and in a way that reflects knowledge and understanding of physiology and demonstrates the ability to adapt information to different audiences and applications.

Adapted from material copyrighted by HAPS and APS.

C. HONOR CODE

The Honor Code is based upon a spirit of trust and intellectual honesty, manifesting itself as a foundation of standards shared amongst all of its members. It is designed to convey the importance and meaning of intellectual honesty, as well as provide a structure that allows students to maintain these values. One should be aware that this Honor Code relies on the belief that students appreciate the trust placed in them to maintain the highest principles of the discipline.

Violations are confined to acts directly pertaining to academic and research activities; personal affairs unrelated to the university are not considered. If an individual does not uphold these high standards, it reflects poorly on the individual, the Program, and the discipline as a whole. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the student to make a conscious effort to comply with all provisions set forth in this document. However, if an infraction does occur, it is the duty of all students and faculty of the Program to report any misconduct to the Graduate Director and to demand just reconciliation to ensure that the infraction will not be repeated. The Graduate Director and the Graduate Affairs Committee (GAC) will enforce the Honor Code and provide a fair hearing for each individual.

All students will also be expected to uphold the WVU Student Conduct and Discipline Policy. This can be found at: <https://studentconduct.wvu.edu>.

D. PROGRAM CURRICULUM

Optimally, five (5) years of study or less are necessary for completion of a Doctor of Philosophy in Cellular & Integrative Physiology. **Students must register for and maintain a minimum of nine (9) credits in the Fall and Spring terms, as well as a minimum of three (3) credits in the Summer** to receive full tuition coverage and stipend.

Core Course Requirements:

The program-specific required courses are:

Course	Code	Credits
Graduate Physiology & Pharmacology 1 (Fall Term Only)	PSIO 750	3
Graduate Physiology & Pharmacology 2 (Spring Term Only)	PSIO 751	3

In each of the Fall and Spring terms, students must also register for:

Course	Code	Credits
Graduate Seminar*	PSIO 796 or 744	1
Research	PSIO 797	1-15

Journal Club	PSIO745	1
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*Students must present one seminar per academic year and register only if presenting a seminar.

Advanced Topic/Elective Course Requirements:

Students must take at least six (6) credit hours of Advanced Topics/Electives. These will be selected from those offered by the Department of Physiology, Pharmacology and Toxicology or by another department as approved by the student's dissertation committee and/or advisor and the Graduate Director. Additional electives, if required to complete the student's individual training, may be taken at the discretion of the student and advisor. Students may also petition the Graduate Director to waive a course requirement if the course under consideration is equivalent and at a graduate level. Examples of available courses are below:

PSIO 790 Teaching Practicum I & II (1-4 Hr.) – Dr. Paternostro

Teaching techniques and supervised practice in college teaching of physiology.

Note: This course is intended to ensure that graduate assistants are adequately prepared and supervised when they are given college teaching responsibility.

PSIO 793 Special Topics (1-6 Hr.)

These courses are developed by individual instructors or teams of instructors to meet the individual needs of their students. At this time there are three courses available immediately:

- Advanced Microvascular Physiology (3 credits) – Dr. Nurkiewicz
- Advanced Reproductive Physiology (3 credits) – Dr. Hileman
- Advanced Cardiac Physiology/Pathology (1 credit) – Dr. Levick

Other courses that have been given in the past include:

- Physiology of Vascular Inflammation
- Pulmonary Physiology
- Advanced Toxicology

BIOC791 Free Radical Biomedicine (3Hr.) – Dr. Kelley

The role and influence of free radicals in various physiological systems and pathophysiology

History of Physiology (PSIO793 Special Topics Course; 1 Hr.) – Dr. Stauber

Seminal papers in physiology are discussed

Systems Toxicology Predoctoral Training Program

The **Predoctoral Training in Systems Toxicology Program** (NIH T32 ES032920) is directed by Dr. Nurkiewicz within the Department of Physiology, Pharmacology and Toxicology and formalizes already strong training programs in the biomedical sciences and inhalation toxicology research. Several innovative aspects of this training program are semester-long didactic courses in “*Toxicology*” and the “*Inhalation & Aerosol Sciences*”, a unique

“Environmental Immersion” in community outreach/engagement via air sampling downwind of mountaintop/surface mines and fracking platforms, the *“Paracelsus Society”* colloquium and journal club (PSIO777), an Associate Scholars Program, and leadership training. This rigorous training program selects from the applicants the best doctoral students from the participating Biomedical Sciences Ph.D. and Clinical & Translational Sciences Ph.D. training programs at the Health Sciences Center and prepares them with the skills, knowledge and acumen needed for a successful career in the diverse field of toxicology. The specific training for each mentee is tailored based on their annually updated Individualized Development Plan (IDP), and a *“Career Options”* Program helps prepare them for their chosen career in diverse fields. Program training lasts 2-to-3 years. This pre-doctoral training program is creating a new generation of young scholars who can directly address the need for innovative toxicology research for the citizens of West Virginia, Appalachia, and the nation.

E. GRADES

Students enrolled in the Cellular & Integrative Physiology Graduate Program are required to maintain a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.00 or better, and must obtain the grade of B or better in ALL Program courses taken. Students who fulfill the above requirements will be in good standing. If a student has less than a 3.00 cumulative GPA on ten (10) or more credit hours applicable to the Doctor of Philosophy in Cellular and Integrative Physiology degree, the student will be placed on probation. If his/her cumulative GPA is not raised to 3.00 or higher during the next ten (10) credit hours, the student will be considered for dismissal from the Program. If the student improves his/her cumulative GPA to 3.00 or better, he/she will be promoted to good standing.

A student who receives a grade of C or worse in any course will be reviewed by the Graduate Director and the Graduate Affairs Committee, who will recommend whether the student should repeat the course or be dismissed from the Program. If the student is allowed to continue in the Program, the student will be placed on probation until the course in which the student earned the unsatisfactory grade has been repeated. If a grade of B or better is not earned when the course is repeated, the student will be dismissed from the Program. Courses that are graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U) are not counted for the calculation of the GPA. The first unsatisfactory (U) grade results in placement on probation; a second “U” grade is grounds for dismissal from the Program.

F. DISSERTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The student’s Dissertation Advisory Committee should be formed as soon as practical, but no later than the Fall Term of the 2nd Year. These individuals are required to meet with the student as a committee at least once annually to provide feedback on their research and evaluate their progress toward degree completion. This is the committee that administers both the Dissertation Proposal Defense if necessary (a component of the qualifying examination, see below) and the Dissertation Defense.

Together with the student’s dissertation advisor, members of the Graduate Faculty need to be selected to function as the Dissertation Advisory Committee. At the time the Committee is selected, notification of its membership must be forwarded to, and approved by, the Graduate

Director. The composition of the Committee will include no fewer than five (5) Graduate Faculty members, including: the student's advisor, a minimum of three (3) Graduate Faculty members of the Cellular & Integrative Physiology Graduate Program, and at least one (1) Graduate Faculty whose primary appointment is not in the Cellular & Integrative Physiology Graduate Program. The majority of the members must be REGULAR members of the Graduate Faculty. The Chair of the committee cannot be the student's advisor and must be a full-time WVU employee. If the major advisor is from NIOSH, additional requirements must be met, and are discussed below.

Once the Dissertation Advisory Committee has been formed, the student is required to meet with them at least once each year to inform them of research progress and problems that have arisen since the last meeting. The annual meeting requirement is designed to ensure adequate student progress and to keep open lines of communication between the student and their committee. **It is the student's responsibility to fill out a progress report and give it to the committee at least 3 days ahead of the meeting.** It is the responsibility of the Dissertation Advisory Committee Chair to submit a report to the Graduate Director that records the date and time of the meeting, attendees, and any concerns that were raised. Forms for these purposes can be found at <https://www.hsc.wvu.edu/resoff/graduate-education/student-success/student-resources/>. The student will also meet with the Graduate Director/ Graduate Affairs Committee annually to review the student's progress.

How to set up a Dissertation Advisory Committee:

- Try to keep the Committee to five (5) members – the use of more may make it difficult to arrange meetings.
- The majority of your committee must be REGULAR graduate faculty membership status – the list for the HSC faculty can be found at the following link:

<https://hsc.wvu.edu/research-and-graduate-education/graduate-education/faculty-resources/graduate-faculty/>

- And for those at WVU outside of the HSC at this link:
<https://graduateeducation.wvu.edu/faculty-and-staff/graduate-faculty>
- The Graduate Faculty status that a faculty member has in their home department (i.e., they do not need to be cross-listed) is recognized by the HSC.
- One member must be from a Program outside of Cellular & Integrative Physiology.
- The Chair of the Committee cannot be the student's advisor and must have REGULAR Graduate Faculty status. Co-Chairs are permitted - only one (1) must have REGULAR status.
- Once the Committee is formed, if a faculty member's Graduate Faculty status is downgraded, the composition of the Committee does not need to be changed.

Special note for students at NIOSH:

- NIOSH investigators cannot have REGULAR graduate faculty status because they are not full-time WVU employees (being an adjunct does not count).

- Your NIOSH advisor cannot be the sole chair of your committee but can be a co-chair provided the other co-chair is a REGULAR member of the graduate faculty. Note that being a co-chair does not change the position of the NIOSH advisor as your primary advisor/advisor.
- Be careful when adding additional investigators from NIOSH to your committee so that you can still meet the metrics regarding the number of regular graduate faculty members.
- If you really want to include the input of someone at your committee meetings, but their status doesn't allow them to serve as an official committee member, they can be invited to attend as an ad hoc member.

ALWAYS ASK THE GRADUATE DIRECTOR BEFORE GETTING ALL THE SIGNATURES.

G. CHANGING ADVISORS

Occasionally students need to change advisors in the course of completing their dissertation research. The protocol to be followed varies depending on the reason, but regardless, the student is not to pursue talking with potential advisors until they have spoken to the Assistant Vice President for Graduate Education to determine who would be available to take a student into their laboratory and cover their stipend.

Please use the following as a guide for dealing with the loss of an advisor:

- Advisor has left the University and student remains at WVU. In this situation, student should immediately meet with Graduate Director and begin to formulate a plan based on whether or not student will continue on the same project and/or if the advisor will remain involved after leaving. Regardless, student should expect to have another faculty member as an on-site advisor and expect to be moved into the laboratory of the on-site advisor or another faculty member conducting similar research. The Assistant Vice President for Graduate Education, the Graduate Director and student will then meet to finalize the plan.
- Student is unsatisfied with her/his advisor or nature of the research. Unhappiness in a chosen laboratory or with an advisor does not mean that the student will definitely need to leave the laboratory. The key to handling these situations effectively is to communicate openly and act as soon as a problem arises.
 - First, discuss any issues with the advisor. The advisor may not realize that there are issues and may be willing to work on a solution.
 - Second, if talking with your advisor does not work, immediately involve the graduate director. He or she can try to help you resolve the issue. He or she may also enlist the help of the Department Chair most associated with Program or the Assistant Vice President for Graduate Education.
 - Third, if remaining in the advisor's laboratory eventually ceases to be an option, the student needs to work with the Graduate Director and the Assistant Vice President for Graduate Education to identify candidate advisors.
 - Fourth, candidate advisors will need to be interviewed as to their willingness to accept a new student and a trial period established to determine if the laboratory is a good fit. The trial period is generally at least 2 weeks, but should not extend beyond 4 weeks.

- Fifth, once a new advisor is found, the student will need to re-establish a dissertation committee and resubmit the Committee approval form to the Graduate Education office. This will both indicate the new advisor and ensure that the committee is appropriate for the new project. If the student will be deleting Committee members, please inform them in writing that they will no longer be a part of the Committee and thank them for their service or willingness to serve. If the timing is such that the student may be delayed in completing the candidacy exam, the student must receive permission from the Graduate Director and the Assistant Vice President for Graduate Education for an extension and a firm date for the exam will be determined.
- Finally, you must refrain from any negative comments about the previous advisors. Advisor/mentee relationships fail and it may not be the fault of any one individual. Fortunately, this does not occur often but in each case it may reflect mutual problems that could not be overcome. Maintaining a professional approach will result in a smooth transition.

H. CANDIDACY EXAMINATION

To qualify as a Doctoral Candidate in Cellular and Integrative Physiology, a student must first pass the Cellular and Integrative Physiology Graduate Program Candidacy Examination. Admission to the Program and enrollment in graduate level courses does not guarantee acceptance of the student as a Doctoral Candidate. The purpose of the Candidacy Examination is to test the student's knowledge in cellular and integrative physiology (and related areas), as well as evaluate the student's analytical and critical thinking, his/her familiarity with the pertinent basic science literature, and whether he/she possesses the qualities of intellect for a scientific/scholarly career. The Candidacy Examination should, to the extent possible, be scheduled during the second year in the Program (by the end of the Summer Term) when most of their course work is completed. The student will first notify the Graduate Director, in writing, of their intent to begin the Candidacy Examination process. The Candidacy Examination consists of two (2) components: an Oral Qualifying Exam and a Research Proposal Defense. An Oral Qualifying Exam Committee (a minimum of 4 faculty from inside the Program) will be assigned by the Graduate Director. The Dissertation Committee (described above) will evaluate the Research Proposal Defense. The Graduate Director and/or a member of the Graduate Advisory Committee will sit as Chair for each of these exam committees to help ensure continuity between all committees and examinations. In special cases, the student and the advisor can petition the Graduate Director and/or the Graduate Advisory Committee for an extension on the deadline of the Oral Qualifying Exam. The Director or GAC group will render a final decision.

***Note:** The advisor is expected to help the student prepare for the Candidacy Examination in any way that is seen fit. This includes allowing the student time away from the lab to study and prepare.*

i. Oral Qualifying Exam:

The Oral Qualifying Exam will be interdisciplinary in nature and can cover the entire scope of cellular and integrative physiology. It will not exceed two and a half (2.5) hours in length. It is not a discussion of the student's research project/interests or advisor's research program. It is the student's responsibility to meet with each member of his/her Oral Qualifying Exam Committee individually to get input on expectations and to schedule the Examination. *The student's advisor is not to be present during the administration of this exam. The student and*

advisor will be informed of his/her grade in writing, including a defined list of strengths and weaknesses, by the Chair of the Oral Exam Committee. A designation of PASS or FAIL will be assigned upon completion (<https://www.hsc.wvu.edu/resoff/graduate-education/student-success/student-resources/>). If a student does not PASS, he/she shall retake the Oral Qualifying Exam, with the approval of the Graduate Advisory Committee, no later than six (6) months after notification of FAILURE. If a student receives a grade of FAIL upon retaking the Oral Qualifying Exam, he/she will not be admitted into candidacy for the Doctor of Philosophy in Cellular and Integrative Physiology degree, and will be dismissed from the Program by the Graduate Affairs Committee.

ii. Research Proposal Defense:

The student has two options for the completion of this requirement. One, if the student completes and submits an F31 or equivalent research proposal to an appropriate funding entity and has the proposal reviewed with comments, then that will fulfill this requirement. For international students, the HSC Graduate Research Office currently has in place a F31-like application process for internally funding predoctoral proposals. Submission of an application to this funding mechanism is acceptable in fulfilling this requirement. It is then hoped that the first official meeting of the dissertation committee would be to address the comments in preparation for a resubmission and/or strengthening the research plan for their dissertation. Two, if submission of an F31 or equivalent research proposal is not possible, then the Defense will be administered by the dissertation committee. The Research Proposal Defense will consist of a written proposal, using the F-series application format, of the student's anticipated dissertation research followed by an oral defense of that proposal that will not exceed two and a half (2.5) hours in length. It is understood that the student is the author of this submission. The proposal must be submitted to the Graduate Director and Dissertation Committee at least two (2) weeks prior to the scheduled Research Proposal Defense with a written disclosure of contributions from others included. The student's advisor may be present for introduction of the student and initial preamble with the Dissertation Committee regarding the student. However, the advisor shall not to be present during the administration of the Research Proposal Defense. Upon conclusion of the Research Proposal Defense, the student and advisor are immediately invited back to meet with the Committee to discuss his/her performance. At this time, they will be provided with a detailed list of strengths and weaknesses to be addressed in a subsequent meeting (to be held within two (2) weeks of the Defense and will be considered as a Dissertation Committee meeting). A grade of PASS or FAIL will be assigned to the student's performance by the Dissertation Committee immediately following the oral defense (<https://www.hsc.wvu.edu/resoff/graduate-education/student-success/student-resources/>). To receive a grade of PASS, at least seventy-five percent (75%) of the members of the Committee must vote to PASS. If a student earns a grade of FAIL on the Research Proposal Defense, he/she will be given clear guidelines as to the necessary changes and may redo the Defense no later than six (6) months after the FAILURE was declared. If a student receives a grade of FAIL upon redoing the Defense, he/she will not be allowed entry into candidacy, and will be dismissed from the Program.

Because the Candidacy Examination attests to the academic competence of the student, the Examination cannot precede the conferring of the degree by an overly extended period. As per WVU Health Sciences policy, doctoral candidates are allowed no more than seven (7) years in total

in which to complete degree requirements. Given the desire to have the admission to candidacy completed by the summer of year 2, this provides approximately 5 additional years to complete their degree. In the event a student fails to complete his/her doctoral requirements within the total of seven years, an extension may be obtained only by petitioning the Graduate Research Office. A request for an extension of time to complete degree requirements should include i) a statement documenting the circumstances that justify the request and the impact the proposed extension would have on the validity of the student's work and program and ii) endorsement of the request from the Dissertation Committee and the CIP Graduate Director.

I. APPLICATION TO GRADUATE AND SHUTTLE SHEET

The Office of Research and Graduate Education is responsible for maintaining all the records necessary to certify for graduation. The Graduate Director must be informed of the student's departure date. The membership of the Dissertation Committee cannot be modified for the Final Examination unless under extenuating circumstances and first obtaining approval by the Graduate Director and Graduate Affairs Committee.

Three (3) weeks prior to the date of the Final Examination (Dissertation Defense), Doctoral Candidates, along with their Advisor must complete and have all the Dissertation Committee members sign a Shuttle Sheet Request form and submit to the Graduate Director. Forms for various student requirements can be found on the SOLE site (<https://sole.hsc.wvu.edu/>) under the Health Sciences Center Graduate Programs tab. Students must be registered during the term he/she is to graduate. **A student is required to have at least one first-author manuscript based on his/her dissertation research that is published or accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal before the Final Exam can be scheduled.** Once the shuttle sheet form is approved, a shuttle sheet will be issued to the student for use at the Dissertation defense. **No examinations are to be given without all Dissertation Committee members present.** After a successful defense, the shuttle sheet is signed by the committee members and returned to the Assistant Vice President for Graduate Education.

An application to graduate must also be submitted to the University Registrar (<https://registrar.wvu.edu/graduation-diploma>)

J. EXTERNAL EXAMINER

Each student/advisor has the option of having an External Examiner for his or her Final Examination. The External Examiner is an expert in the dissertation content who is not affiliated with West Virginia University, but is appointed as a voting member of the Final Examination committee only. Ideally, this individual participates in the final examination in person. However, if he/she cannot be present in person, it is permissible to arrange participation and evaluation by alternate means.

The External Examiner must be able to judge objectively whether the dissertation would be acceptable at a university with a respected doctoral program in the same or a similar field. As a general guideline, an External Examiner should hold a professor or associate professor rank at an institution of higher learning.

K. FINAL EXAMINATION (Dissertation Defense)

A copy of the Dissertation to be defended must be provided to the Dissertation Committee a minimum of two (2) weeks prior to the date of the Final Examination. The student's Dissertation Committee is responsible for approval of the Dissertation. Upon completion of the written

Dissertation, the student's Advisor will inform the Graduate Director in writing (no later than two (2) weeks prior to the Final Examination) of the date, time and location of the Final Examination. The departmental office shall also be informed so that the defense can be announced and publicized. The Final Examination is comprised of a public seminar, followed by an oral examination conducted by the student's Dissertation Committee and, if applicable, the External Examiner. The student will receive a grade of PASS or FAIL. To receive a grade of PASS, at least eighty percent (80%) of the members of the Dissertation Committee must vote to PASS. The student will be notified immediately of the outcome. If less than 80% of the members of the Dissertation Committee vote for a PASS, the student will be assigned a grade of FAIL. Should this be the case, he/she will be dismissed from the Program and will be informed of this in writing by the Graduate Director.

L. SUBMISSION OF THE APPROVED DISSERTATION

Upon receiving a PASS on the Final Examination, it is the responsibility of the student to prepare and submit final copies of the Dissertation to the appropriate West Virginia University personnel for final approval. Currently, West Virginia University requires the electronic submission of all dissertations (<https://etd.lib.wvu.edu/>). In addition, consultants in the West Virginia University computer centers are prepared to help students and faculty in the process of preparing their ETD.

M. APPEALS

A student has the right to appeal any decision by the Graduate Director and/or Graduate Affairs Committee. If a student feels that a decision of the Graduate Director and/or Graduate Affairs Committee decision is biased or inappropriate, the student can appeal the decision to the WVU School of Medicine Assistant Vice-President for Graduate Education. At this time, the Assistant Vice-President will render a decision. A student who wishes to appeal the decision of the Assistant Vice-President must follow West Virginia University Grievance Procedures.