
# DOCTORAL STUDENT HANDBOOK

2024-2025

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# Welcome to UT Austin!

We are excited for you to join us in the Institute for Neuroscience (INS) graduate program at The University of Texas at Austin. You are now part of an outstanding neuroscience program at a world-class university in one of the best cities in America. We hope that you enjoy your time here and go on to do great things. As the UT motto says, *What Starts Here, Changes the World.* Hook 'em horns!

This handbook has been designed as a supplement to the Graduate Catalog and is meant to answer questions you may have during your studies. Please consult official UT webpages for more detailed information or contact the INS Graduate Coordinator and/or Graduate Advisors for further assistance.

***Useful Websites***

- Institute for Neuroscience
- Graduate School
- Academic & Registration Policies
- Office of the Registrar
- CNS Graduate Education

***Expected Time to Obtain Ph.D. Degree.*** Generally, it takes **5 years** from the first date enrolled to complete the doctoral degree. This may vary depending on student motivation, research progress, mentoring, funding for the research project, state of equipment and research materials needed.

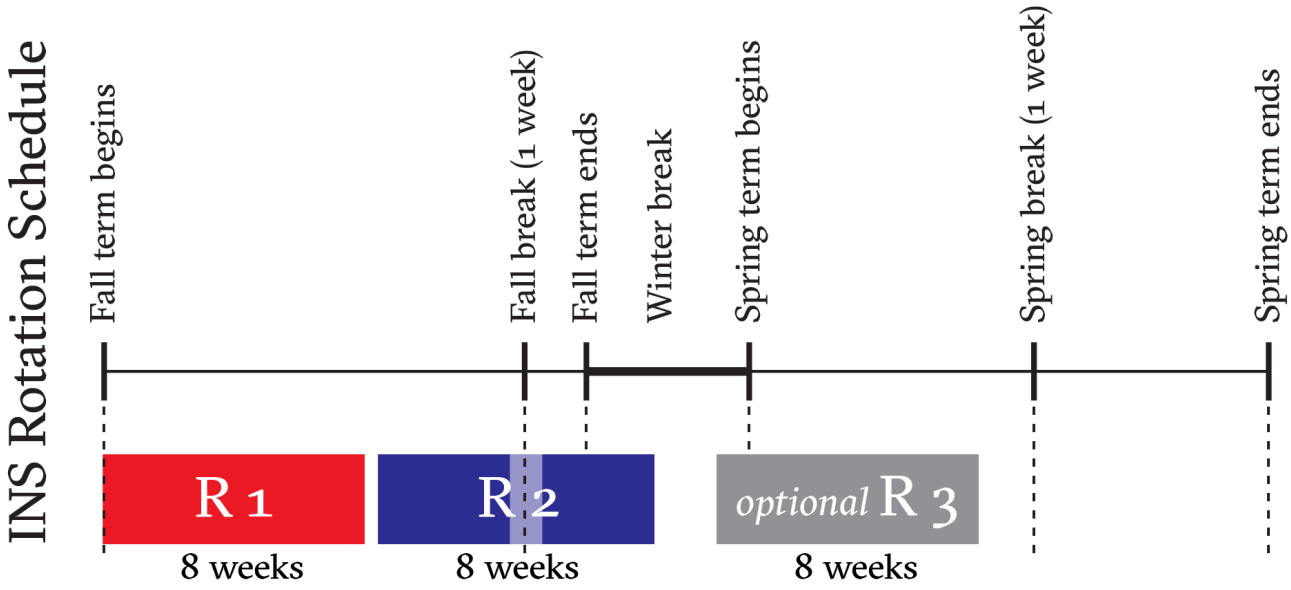
***Financial Support***. All neuroscience graduate students who are in good standing are guaranteed stipend support for **5 years** at the current level (contact the Graduate Coordinator for the current amount), plus student health insurance and tuition assistance, provided they abide by the policies of the INS and those of the Graduate School. Support at the current level is guaranteed regardless of the student TA status or whether the student has been awarded a predoctoral fellowship. However, the yearly stipend may be increased, funds for travel to scientific meetings may be granted, and/or funds for additional tuition assistance and/or additional health insurance may be provided with the award of certain fellowships or teaching assistantships.

## Program Structure and Milestones

The INS is a campus-wide organization responsible for research and teaching activities related to neurosciences at UT Austin. The program is multidisciplinary with more than 80 participating neuroscientists from 13 departments and is designed to promote interdisciplinary training and interaction. Research in the INS is diverse, with investigators covering all major disciplines and techniques in neuroscience and representing a broad range of research interests, from molecular neuroscience and genetics through physiology, cellular and systems research, to cognition and behavior and the neurobiology of disease. Because of the outstanding and diverse composition of the INS faculty, our graduate students are provided with unparalleled opportunities for research and are trained to become critical thinkers capable of understanding the full breadth of conceptual and technical approaches to neuroscience. The major components of the Ph.D. program are as follows:

***Boot Camp***. Students participate in an intensive two-week initiation prior to the start of their first year. INS Boot Camp consists of several hours of hands-on laboratory training each day, and informal faculty talks in the evenings. There are typically four lab modules: *Psychophysics*, *Molecular and Behavioral Neuroscience*, *Cellular Neurophysiology*, and *Neuroimaging*. During this time, students are also expected to contact faculty to coordinate their first research rotation.

***Rotations***. In the Fall semester of their first year, students participate in 2 laboratory research rotations. For those students needing extra time, an optional 3rd rotation would last for 8 weeks in the beginning of the Spring semester. Students choose rotations from among faculty members of the INS who are accepting students. (*If a student is supported by the INS training grant, then they should only choose labs from among members of the training grant*.) Students are encouraged to engage potential rotation faculty in conversations during the summer. There will also be opportunities for this at the evening faculty talks during the INS boot camp. For each rotation, the specific research project and methods will generally be given to the student by their supervising professor. During research rotations it is not unusual for students to spend greater than 20 hours/week in the laboratory. **The main goal of the rotations is for students to find a home lab in which to perform their dissertation research**. An overview of the guidelines for rotation timing is shown below. These are guidelines, not rules. There is wiggle room on start and end times of rotations depending on the needs of the students and their rotation labs. For labs whose work requires longer rotations, there is the possibility of extending the Spring rotation, but the lab would be responsible for funding the extra time.




**First rotation (R1)**

- Starts at the beginning of the Fall term
- Ends 8 weeks later on the 3rd Friday in October

**Second rotation (R2)**

- Starts on the Monday after the first rotation ends
- Ends 8 weeks later on the 3rd Friday in December

***optional* Third rotation (R3)**

- Starts on the 1st or 2nd Monday of January before the start of the Spring term
- Ends 8 weeks later on a Friday in late February or early March

**Winter break.** There is a long 6-week break in the academic calendar from early December to mid January. Students are still being paid by the INS program and/or their home lab during this time. It is expected that students will take time off from work (1 or 2 weeks) over the holidays. Students should coordinate with their faculty mentor to establish a reasonable expectation of work over the long break.

**Exiting a rotation early.** If, prior to the standard completion date during a rotation, students wish to

switch to another lab rotation, they may do so by first consulting the Graduate Advisor for advice and assistance.

**Choosing a home lab.** By the end of the Fall semester, or after an optional third rotation in the Spring semester, students focus their research interest by selecting their faculty supervisor's lab to begin dissertation research and preparation for the Qualifying Exam. If, after completing their first rotation, a student is ready to declare a home lab, they may forgo a second rotation to begin dissertation research in their home lab. The home lab is responsible for funding the student after rotations are completed.

***Course Requirements***. A minimum of 81 credit hours (graduate courses only) is required for the Ph.D. degree. Of this, 24 credits must come from the Major and Elective course requirements described below, with the remainder being research hours. The normal course load of 9 credit hours in Fall and Spring plus 3 in the Summer will fulfill this requirement in about 4 years. The curriculum is designed to allow maximum flexibility in choosing a course of study that matches the student's major area of interest. In choosing electives, students are strongly encouraged to select courses outside of their major area of research and to acquire a diverse neuroscience background for the following reasons: 1) neuroscience is a broad, interdisciplinary science that requires knowledge of diverse subject areas and scientific methodology, 2) a diverse neuroscience background will help the student prepare a more intelligent dissertation proposal, and 3) a diverse neuroscience background will position graduates to serve as scholarly teachers of neuroscience.

- Major requirements. Five courses are required of all neuroscience students. The two Principles of Neuroscience courses (Principles I: NEU 382T; and Principles II: NEU 383T) are taken in the first and second semesters during the first year of graduate studies. Three additional courses are required: an ethics of science course, a statistics course (of the student's choosing), and a grant writing course. Students also attend the weekly *Neuroscience Seminar Series*, and they join lunch meetings with the invited speakers when relevant.

- Elective requirements. Three elective courses are required. Electives are offered in all areas of neuroscience and students are encouraged to choose electives in consultation with the Graduate Advisor, the Progressions Committee, and his/her faculty supervisor. The Graduate Advisor must approve all elective courses prior to registration. At least 2 of the 3 electives must be taken for a grade; 1 elective can be taken Credit / No Credit, pending approval by the Graduate Advisor.

***Qualifying Exam***. In the summer after their first year, students complete the first part of their qualifying exam, consisting of an oral examination on general background material and literature covered in the Principles of Neuroscience courses. In the beginning of their second year, students complete the second part of the qualifying exam, consisting of a brief review paper, an oral presentation, and an oral examination on specialized knowledge relating to their area of research. The overall goal of the qualifying exam is to ensure that all INS doctoral students possess the following knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in the Ph.D. dissertation process, including: (1) a strong, basic understanding of neuroscience, (2) the ability to write a cogent review paper on a topic in their chosen area, and (3) the ability to defend orally this topic, with special emphasis on demonstrating mastery of both methodology and theory. The qualifying exam consists of two parts:

1. General Knowledge. In June following their first year, students will undergo a one-hour oral examination that involves a series of questions from a 3-member faculty committee in which the student is expected to demonstrate a general knowledge of the field of neuroscience. This exam covers the material taught in the Principles of Neuroscience I and II courses, including one reading (a book chapter) for each core topic covered. These readings will support and augment material that is covered in the lectures. The INS Director chooses

faculty to serve on these exam committees who provide diversity in areas across neuroscience and diversity in gender. It is preferred, though not required, that committee members have lectured in one of the Principles of Neuroscience courses with the current cohort of students. Prior to formation of the committees, students may request certain faculty members be excluded based on perceived or actual conflicts of interest. Committee membership will be disclosed to students when the exams are scheduled, however, students should not contact the committee members before the exam regarding the general topics or specific questions to be asked.

- An INS Graduate Advisor will attend and moderate the session. If the student desires, their faculty supervisor may also attend but cannot participate in the examination.

- Outcome will be **Pass** (answers met or exceeded expectations on >75% of topics discussed), **Conditional Pass** (>50%), or **Fail** (<50%), with potential remediation to be chosen by the committee as appropriate. If major deficiencies in the student's basic understanding of neuroscience become evident, the examiners are expected to identify topic areas in which the student needs review, instruction, or remediation. Any remediation should be resolved by the end of the Fall semester.

2. Specialized Knowledge. After the *General Knowledge Quals*, students will prepare for the second part of their qualifying exam consisting of a qualifying paper (2,500 words) on a gap in knowledge in the student's field, a 20-min oral presentation with slides about this paper, and a 30-min question-and-answer discussion with a 3-member faculty committee of the student's choosing. In this exam, the student is expected to defend their qualifying paper to the exam committee by answering questions related to the paper and the topic more broadly. A qualifying abstract (250 words) of this paper and the committee selection is due by **July 15**. The oral exam occurs in early Fall of the second year (between August 15 – October 1), with the date and time chosen by the students, their committees, and the Graduate Advisors. The qualifying paper is due to the committee **2 weeks before** the oral exam.

    - The paper must be written solely and in its entirety by the student and may not be a reproduction of any work completed prior to the summer after the 1st year, or prepared with co-authors. Violation of this statute will subject the student to disciplinary action that may include dismissal from the program.

    - Students are encouraged to discuss their paper with anyone, including their faculty supervisor, and members of their exam committee, in as much detail as they wish. However, at the oral exam, the student must be prepared to defend all content in the paper without assistance.

    - An INS Graduate Advisor will attend and moderate the session. If the student desires, their faculty supervisor may also attend and can participate in the exam by asking questions and providing context on the student's area and training.

    - Outcome will be **Pass** (Solid paper, answers met or exceeded expectations on >75% of topics discussed), **Conditional Pass** (Paper problems, >50%), or **Fail** (Paper problems, <50%), with potential remediation to be chosen by the committee as appropriate. If major deficiencies in the student's understanding of their specialized area of neuroscience become evident, the examiners are expected to identify specific topic areas in which the student needs review, instruction, or remediation.

Any remediation should be resolved by the end of Fall semester.

***Fellowship Application***. All students, including international students, are expected to submit a predoctoral fellowship application (NRSA, NSF or other applicable fellowships) preferably in their second year, and no later than the middle of their third year. Unless extenuating circumstances prevail or the student in question is non-traditional (having prior graduate degrees, for instance), students are strongly advised to pass the qualifying examination prior to applying for any external funding that requires an extensive research proposal application.

***Teaching***. Students must gain teaching experience by performing at least one semester as a teaching assistant (TA) in an undergraduate or graduate course in any course taught by an INS faculty member or, with permission from the Graduate Advisor, any relevant course taught by a non-INS faculty member. The expectation is that the TA will be performed in the Fall or Spring semester of the student's third year to reduce potential funding conflicts with any fellowship appointments in later years. Students may not TA for more than three semesters.

***Research***. A core part of the Ph.D. degree is extensive training in neuroscience research. The INS supports and encourages broad-based training and multidisciplinary research projects that may involve more than one laboratory. Each student's findings should be publishable in high-quality neuroscience journals and form the basis of a dissertation that can be successfully defended before the neuroscience community. The purpose of a rigorous training in research is to enable the successful student to (1) recognize and identify critical research questions in neuroscience, (2) design and carry out experiments to collect data necessary to answer the questions, and (3) analyze the data, organize the findings, and present the results and conclusions in a manner that makes a significant contribution to the field. All predoctoral students in "good standing" (defined below in this handbook) will be engaged in supervised research during every semester that they are enrolled in the program. It is important for each student to understand that appropriate progress toward their Ph.D. degree and good standing in the program are contingent upon research progress.

- First year. Students are expected to have a working knowledge of research methodology in more than one area of neuroscience. To accomplish this, students choose two research rotations during the Fall semester. These rotations also allow students to acquire the intellectual and experimental background necessary to make an informed choice of thesis mentor and home lab for their graduate training.

- Second year. All students should have chosen their faculty supervisor and spent the summer focused on passing their qualifying examination. Students are expected to aggressively immerse themselves in the relevant literature for their specific research area, and to make sure that they have a solid mastery of basic concepts related to their research area. These efforts should not preclude, of course, staying abreast of major new published findings in other neuroscience fields. Participation in the *Neuroscience Seminar Series* and journal clubs can enhance a student's understanding of the literature, but students are expected to read the literature independent of courses and/or seminars. By the end of the second year, the student should have a good grasp of the literature and begin to formulate research questions independent of the faculty supervisor.

- Third year and beyond. Students should have completed any remaining course requirements by the end of the Fall semester of the third year. Students should form their Ph.D. thesis committee by the end of the third year, or beginning of the fourth year, and then meet with them twice per year until graduation. At the first meeting, students present their proposed research with a written document, often styled as an NIH grant. Once the committee approves this document, the student enters candidacy and engages full time in dissertation research under the guidance

of their advisor and dissertation committee. The final meeting is an oral defense of the dissertation.

***Criteria for "Good Standing" in the Program***. When the handbook, Graduate Advisor, or INS Director refers to "good standing" of a student in the program, they are referring to the following criteria. Students not in good standing will be referred to the Director for a discussion of their status and to develop a course of action.

- Students must obtain satisfactory completion of coursework by maintaining at least a 3.0/4.0 GPA for all graduate courses taken each semester, with at least a 'B' in the two required Principles of Neuroscience courses.
- First year. Find a home lab after completing rotations. Students should obtain a statement of commitment from a PhD advisor by the end of the Fall semester or by the end of an optional third rotation in the Spring semester.
- Second year. Students should pass the Qualifying Exam by the end of the Fall semester.
- Third year and beyond. Students are expected to submit an extramural fellowship application (e.g., NIH NRSA) by the end of the third year. Students are expected to have formed their dissertation committee and entered candidacy by the end of the third year. Students must meet with their committee twice per year.

***Progressions Committee***. A committee of faculty advisors appointed by the INS Executive Committee (EC) will monitor student progress prior to admission to candidacy. During this time the committee meets with students twice a year, typically first in January of their first year and then again in June. Once a student has assembled a dissertation committee, the Progressions Committee no longer meets with the student unless requested, although they can provide input to assist the Graduate Advisor and the relevant faculty supervisor. The Progressions Committee assesses whether specific course, grade and research requirements are being met and provides recommendations to the EC for the continuation of each student in the program.

## Registration and Courses

Registration is done online each semester is the student's responsibility. Students should be sure and to confirm their registration or it may be canceled.

***Course Load***. The University recognizes 9 hours as a minimum full-time load during the long semester and 3 hours during the summer session. A full-time program involves taking the full-time course load, of which a portion may consist of courses relating to the student's teaching or research duties. The maximum course load for a graduate student is 15 semester hours (9 semester hours in a summer session). Registration in excess of these maxima must have the recommendation of the Graduate Advisor and approval of the Graduate Dean, and will be permitted only under exceptional circumstances. If the University employs the student as a teaching assistant, research assistant, or academic assistant, the course load must be reduced correspondingly. The student should consult their supervising professor or the Graduate Advisor about combined courses and workloads.

***Adds, Drops, and Changing Grade Status***. Once you have registered each semester, there is a time period in which you may change your courses. Specific dates and information are available in the Graduate Coordinator's office and in the official course schedule. In general, the Graduate School has put the following policies into effect:

- Whether a course is to be taken as Credit/No Credit should be decided at the time of registration. Any request for changes after the 12th class day requires a special petition from the Graduate Advisor to the Graduate Dean.

- Adds/Drops can be initiated by the Graduate Coordinator.

- Dropping a course at the end of the semester to prevent receiving a low grade will not be allowed. Assigning an X for the same reason will also not be allowed.

***Grades***. Course credit is given in the Graduate School for the grades 'A', 'B', and 'C' and for the symbol 'CR' (credit). Every semester hour of 'C', however, must be balanced by one of A, because the degree candidate is required to present an overall average of 'B' at the end of the program of study.

- Only upper-division and graduate-level courses taken while in graduate status, or courses reserved-for-graduate-credit taken in the last semester prior to graduation. Faculty are not required to use plus/minus grading, but many do.

- All courses are counted towards the grade point average, except for Thesis and Dissertation courses NEU 698AB and x99W, and courses taken on a Credit/No Credit basis. No more than 20 percent of the credit hours submitted for any Ph.D. degree may be taken for Credit/No Credit.

- The symbol 'X' may be reported in cases where the student has not completed all the work assigned in a course before its conclusion. Upon completion of the required work, the instructor, with the approval of the Graduate Dean's Office may convert the 'X' into a letter grade, if such conversion is made within one long semester after the filing of the 'X'. If no such change is made within this time, the symbol 'X' will be converted to an 'I' and it will remain on the student's record as a permanent incomplete. An incomplete can include 'X's, 'I's or any combination.

***99-Hour Rule***. Graduate students at The University of Texas at Austin with more than 99 doctoral hours may be required to pay nonresident tuition—a provision known as the "99-Hour Rule." Most students who qualify for resident tuition will not be affected by the 99-Hour Rule. A student can study at the university full-time for seven academic years before earning enough credit to be subject to the rule. Even students enrolled for more than seven years may be eligible for a programmatic or individual exemption from the rule.

## Doctoral Dissertation

Upon successful completion of the qualifying exam, the student prepares for admission into Ph.D. candidacy. While the qualifying exam assesses the student's basic skills, the Dissertation Proposal formulates the basis and foundation of the doctoral student's dissertation research. The proposal and its oral defense are meant to assess whether the student has formulated a logical and rigorous research plan, has an in-depth knowledge of their chosen field of neuroscience, and has the ability to carry out their dissertation research project.

***Dissertation Committee***. The student, in consultation with their faculty supervisor, must form a Dissertation Committee after passing the qualifying exam. The committee must consist of at least four members, three of whom must be INS Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) faculty, including the faculty supervisor, with at least one member of the committee from outside the student's major area of

neuroscience. Gender diversity is strongly encouraged. The Progressions Committee must approve the proposed committee. To request approval for their committee, students should complete this form (https://utexas.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5mvEGwujF7FvKbY). As part of the Admission to Candidacy, the Dean of the Office of Graduate Studies officially appoints the committee to advise and guide the student in pursuit of their research program and writing of the final dissertation.

***Dissertation Proposal***. The Dissertation Proposal must follow the format and guidelines set forth for the Specific Aims and Research Strategy (and Bibliography/Referenced Cited) sections of predoctoral National Research Service Awards from the National Institutes of Health. At the time of writing, the Specific Aims were 1 page, and the Research Strategy was 6 pages. Please see the links below for additional details, and consult the Graduate Advisor for additional detail

- https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/forms-d/fellowship-forms-d.pdf
- https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/format-and-write/page-limits.htm

It is wholly expected and encouraged that the development of the Dissertation Proposal will overlap or synergize with other writing efforts, including the preparation of an external fellowship application and/or work on such documents during a grant-writing course. The student is expected to consult closely with their faculty supervisor to design their research project and compose the written proposal. With the agreement of their faculty supervisor, a student may adapt any part of their qualifying exam proposal in their initial proposal submission to their committee. The proposal must be submitted to each member of the dissertation committee at least **two weeks prior** to the committee meeting.

***Oral Presentation***. The format, length, and detail of the oral presentation of the dissertation proposal is at the discretion of the student's faculty supervisor, in consultation with the Dissertation Committee.

***Admission to Candidacy***. Admission to candidacy requires that the student has passed the qualifying exam, submitted and successfully defended their dissertation proposal to the Dissertation Committee, and submitted the electronic Application for Doctoral Candidacy to the Office of Graduate Studies. This application requires the official nomination of a Dissertation Committee and a one-page, written dissertation abstract submitted to the Graduate School. After doctoral candidacy admission, the student must be continuously enrolled in the appropriate dissertation course, NEU X99W, until the date of graduation (note: the "X" signifies either 3, 6, or 9 credit hours, depending on the student's registration requirements).

***Doctoral Dissertation***. When research is sufficiently advanced, the student begins writing the dissertation in conformity with the regulations of the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS) and in the format stipulated by the INS. Visit the OGS Electronic Dissertation website http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/etd/_index.html for their policies regarding this requirement, and consult with the Graduate Advisor about the INS format. Students should discuss with their Dissertation Committees the implications for publication and intellectual property issues in light of the electronic dissertation version requirement. The dissertation must result from independent investigation by the student and be an original contribution of scholarship and knowledge in the candidate's major area, approved by the Dissertation Committee. If disagreement occurs, the committee may request that the Dean of the OGS appoint a sub-committee to evaluate the dissertation. The student must submit an unbound copy of the dissertation in final form to the faculty supervisor and members of the Dissertation Committee at least **two weeks before** the date of the final dissertation defense.

***Final Oral Examination (Dissertation Defense)***. The student must submit to the Office of Graduate Studies the Request for Final Oral Examination **at least two weeks prior** to the scheduled date of the

defense. The request must be signed by each member of the Dissertation Committee and be filed in the Graduate School along with the vita, abstract, and a copy of the Committee Certification signature and title pages for a format check at least two weeks in advance of the defense. The OGS then publishes the time and place for the defense. At their dissertation defense, a student presents a one-hour seminar that is open to all members of the public and university community. During the seminar, the student explains the background and hypotheses they proposed to test in their research, detail their experimental methodology and data analysis and discuss the results and conclusions they reached. After questioning from the general audience has concluded, the student meets privately with their Dissertation Committee during which time the student may be questioned on any aspect of the dissertation and general research area related to the dissertation. At the conclusion of the questioning the student is asked to leave the room and the committee discusses the dissertation and performance of the student in the seminar and during the closed question and answer portion of the exam.

- Outcome can be a **Pass** (indicating that both the defense and dissertation are acceptable); **Reconsideration** (indicating that extensive revision of the dissertation, and/or additional experiments, are necessary, but that the committee is willing to re-evaluate the revised document without requiring another oral examination); **Not Pass** (indicating that the dissertation must be re-written, perhaps with additional experiments, and another oral defense scheduled) or **Fail** (indicating that at least one member of the committee has decided that the dissertation is unsatisfactory and may not be rewritten). If the student passes, the committee members sign their approval on the Committee Certification signature page and the student applies for graduation.

***Digital Submission Requirement***. Graduating students are required to publish their thesis, report, dissertation or treatise digitally by uploading a single PDF to the Texas Digital Library (TDL). Because electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs) must be published, if any material contained in your document might require permission from another party for publication, all such permissions must be obtained prior to the submission of the ETD. Click here to begin your submission. It is critical that your submission be complete and correct. After submission, no revisions or corrections will be allowed except for those required by the graduate dean. The TDL provides students with an option to request the supplemental submission of their ETD to ProQuest. Students selecting this option must approve the ProQuest license agreement in the TDL, in addition to approving the TDL license agreement. Approved ETDs will be sent electronically to ProQuest once the degree is certified, or after approved embargoes have expired. There are no additional fees associated with ProQuest publication.

***Completion of Required Graduate School Forms***. The student is responsible for completing all required forms and applications by their specified deadlines. For questions about these procedures, consult the Graduate Coordinator or the Graduate Advisor.

***Commencement Exercises and Diploma.*** The doctorate is awarded at the Commencement exercises following the successful completion of all requirements of the degree. The diploma is sent within three to six months after graduation. Degrees are awarded at the end of the fall and spring semesters and the summer session. Formal Commencement exercises are held only at the end of the spring semester.

## Additional Important Information

***Access to Building and Laboratories***. Upon arrival, the student's advisor/Graduate Coordinator will issue students access cards and keys to the appropriate buildings. You should not let anyone into the buildings, or bring friends in with you. Unauthorized people who are in the building after building hours should be reported immediately to the UT Police at (512) 471-4441. Do not prop any doors open,

because this may cause an alarm to activate and makes the buildings vulnerable to thieves.

***Research Laboratories and Related Facilities***. The neuroscience graduate student has access to the laboratory where the research work is to be done. With the approval of the faculty supervisor (and approval of other laboratory supervisors as applicable), the student may be able to use equipment in other research and teaching laboratories. It is necessary for the student to check with the faculty member in charge and familiarize themselves (or be taught) the proper use of any equipment to be used. Check with your supervising professor in advance of using any apparatus, if at all in doubt.

***Safety***. Safety is of paramount concern in laboratories. Students are required to receive all necessary training and certifications as necessary by the Environmental Health and Safety office. Students working with radioactive or biohazardous materials should attend the appropriate classes offered by the Safety Office to become familiar with the regulations regarding their use at The University of Texas at Austin. Laboratory coats can be obtained through your supervising professor and should be worn. Closed shoes are recommended. The UT Safety office does not approve sandals as appropriate footwear for the laboratory. No eating or drinking is allowed in laboratories that have been cleared for use of radioactivity or biohazardous materials. **Proper professional conduct is required in the laboratory at all times.** If a graduate student is injured while working in the research laboratory, the student should report to the Student Health Center for treatment. A written report should be made within 24 hours to both the supervising professor and the Dean's Office. This report should detail the time, date, place, and circumstances of the accident.

***Outside Employment***. Outside employment is prohibited by internal and external funding agencies.

***Training in Ethics and the Responsible Conduct of Research***. Students are expected to participate in three steps of ethics training: (1) attendance at the INS Boot Camp's "Ethics" module; (2) taking an approved Ethics course in the first or second year (preferably first); and (3) participating in an Ethics "refresher" in their fourth year in the program (typically, playing a senior role in the Boot Camp Ethics module, but other arrangements can be made to suit individual students).

***Copyright & Plagiarism Tutorials.*** Graduate degree candidates must review the university's Copyright Tutorial and the library's Plagiarism Tutorial. Students are encouraged to complete the tutorials before they begin to write, as the tutorials are designed to educate the student on frequently confusing and changing copyright laws, as well as issues related to plagiarism.

***Graduate Student Organizations***. The Neuroscience Graduate Students Association (NGSA) is a student organization for those graduate students interested in Neuroscience. If you wish to serve as a representative, please contact the NGSA President.

***Visual Aids and Data Presentations***. Students should become familiar with specific recommendations made by the Graduate School, the editors of journals, and the faculty supervisor before preparation of graphs, tables, photographs, etc. A good working knowledge of word processing, graphic design, statistical, and presentation programs are necessary to produce professional looking publications and presentations.

***Grievance Procedure for Graduate Students***. The Graduate Guide Information Handbook of the University of Texas describes grievance procedures. Ordinarily, grievances between students and instructors are resolved informally. If such efforts fail, the Graduate Advisor and/or Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee in Neuroscience, will consider the matter.

## Responsibility for Humane Research

Each student should read the expanded form of this statement here: SfN on humane research.

> *"The Society for Neuroscience, as a professional society for basic and clinical researchers in neuroscience, endorses and supports the appropriate and responsible use of animals as experimental subjects. Knowledge generated by neuroscience research on animals has led to important advances in the understanding of diseases and disorders that affect the nervous system and in the development of better treatments that reduce suffering in humans and animals. This knowledge also makes a critical contribution to our understanding of ourselves, the complexities of our brains and what makes us human. Continued progress in understanding how the brain works and further advances in treating and curing disorders of the nervous system require investigation of complex functions at all levels in the living nervous system. Because no adequate alternatives exist, much of this research must be done on animal subjects. The Society takes the position that neuroscientists have an obligation to contribute to this progress through responsible and humane research on animals."*

The following principles, based largely on the PHS Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, are a useful guide to designing and implementing experiments involving laboratory animals.

- Proper use of animals, including the avoidance or minimization of discomfort, distress and pain, is imperative. Procedures with animals that may cause more than momentary or slight pain or distress should be performed with appropriate sedation, analgesia or anesthesia. Surgical or other painful procedures should not be performed on anesthetized animals paralyzed by chemical agents. Postoperative care of animals should minimize discomfort and pain and, in any case, should be equivalent to accepted practices in schools of veterinary medicine.

- Animals that would otherwise suffer severe or chronic pain or distress that cannot be relieved should be painlessly killed at the end of the procedure or, if appropriate, during the procedure. If the study requires the death of the animal, the animal must be killed in a humane manner.

- Living conditions should be appropriate for the species and contribute to the animals' well-being. Normally, the housing, feeding and care of all animals used for biomedical purposes must be directed by a veterinarian or other scientist trained and experienced in the proper care, handling and use of the species being maintained or studied. In any case, appropriate veterinary care should be provided.

- Exceptions to these principles require careful consideration and should only be made by an appropriate review group such as an institutional animal care and use committee.

## Frequently Asked Questions

***For which classes should I register?*** As part of the INS Boot Camp, there is a separate advising session. You will be advised on which general classes to take and also given a list of related courses. After choosing your home lab, you should discuss with your faculty mentor which courses would best fit with your individual area of study. The semi-annual Progressions Committee meetings are also a good time to discuss course choices.

***May I take an undergraduate course?*** Yes, but it will not count towards your required number of

graduate hours. You must receive prior approval from the Graduate Advisor.

***How do I apply for a grant or fellowship?*** Neuroscience graduate students are required to submit a predoctoral grant or fellowship application in their second or third year. The Office of Graduate Studies publishes a book on available funding sources; they also hold a workshop in the spring on grant writing. In the fall of each year, they have a Fellowship Fair and they include a seminar on how to apply for an NSF Fellowship. In addition, there are small summer fellowships and professional development fellowships for which you may apply. An excellent web site to visit is GrantsNet. Each spring, the INS is allowed to submit a limited number of nominations for University Continuing Fellowships. They are highly competitive and the Graduate Coordinator will notify you if the Executive Committee has chosen you as its nominee.

***Are there benefits?*** All neuroscience graduate students who are in good standing receive student health insurance and tuition assistance as part of their guaranteed stipend. Students are required to submit a predoctoral fellowship application and to participate in at least one semester of teaching assistantship during their program and funds for additional tuition assistance and/or additional health insurance may be provided with the award of certain fellowships or teaching assistantships.

***Am I allowed to change labs?*** Students are encouraged to choose a lab as soon as possible in which they will carry out the bulk of their research while they are here. Usually this happens by the end of the first year. It is not uncommon for students to change labs or mentors after this point. There are many legitimate reasons for this including a change in research interest of the student or supervisor, personality conflicts that may arise between the student and supervisor, or loss of funding for a project. There is no penalty to the student for changing labs or supervisors. However, the student should realize that it is likely that their research project will change, and this will probably lead to a delay in research progress while new techniques required for the new project are acquired. The Graduate Advisor and Graduate Coordinator are available to help with this type of transition. If a student wants to explore this option, it is the student's responsibility to talk with other potential supervisors and labs. It is possible that no other faculty mentor will accept a student, and in this case, the options are to stay with the original lab or to withdraw from the program. In any case, it is advisable to discuss the options with the current supervisor as soon as possible to ensure a smooth transition.

***Can I get a Master's degree?*** The INS program only offers a terminal master's degree, and only in instances approved by the INS director. Approved master's degree candidates are required to have completed the first two years of coursework, and to produce a written thesis of at least 25 pages (single spaced, not including bibliography) under the advisement of an INS faculty member, and with the INS Director and Graduate Advisor as additional readers.

***Can I get a short-term loan?*** Short-term loans for Tuition or Emergency Cash are available through TEX phone system to UT Austin students enrolled at least half time. Tuition loans are for up to the amount of tuition only. Repayment is due depending on the time you take out the loan in the semester. You may call TEX at 475-9950 and select option 33. You must go to the University Cashier's office within 24 hours and sign a promissory note. Questions? Call 475-6282. International students should call the International Office at 471-1211

***How will I receive my grades?*** To view your grades, visit the UT registrar's site for grade reporting.

***How do I obtain a transcript?*** Transcripts may be ordered at the Registrar's Office Main Building Room 1 or online at: https://utdirect.utexas.edu/apps/student/transcripts/. A UT EID is required.

***When will I get paid?*** Students receive their stipend paycheck at the beginning of each month.