



The University of Texas at Austin
**Interdisciplinary
Neuroscience Program**

GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

2026-2027

PhD

MS (exit degree)

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Welcome to UT Austin!

We are excited for you to join us in the Interdisciplinary Neuroscience Program (INP) at The University of Texas at Austin. You are now part of an outstanding graduate 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 Austin webpages for more detailed information or contact the INP Graduate Coordinator and/or Graduate Advisors for further assistance.

Useful Websites

- [Interdisciplinary Neuroscience Program](#)
- [Graduate School](#)
- [Academic & Registration Policies](#)
- [Office of the Registrar](#)

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

Financial Support. INP graduate students who are in good standing are guaranteed stipend support for up to **5 years** at the current level of approved funding contingent upon satisfactory academic, professional performance, and availability of funds. This support is not dependent upon Teaching Assistant status or receipt of a predoctoral fellowship. For continued funding throughout the graduate career, please refer to the offer letter. For additional information, contact the program graduate adviser. Student health insurance and tuition assistance are provided in accordance with INP and Graduate School policies. Stipend amount, travel support for scientific meetings, and additional support for tuition or health insurance may increase with the award of certain fellowships or teaching assistantships.

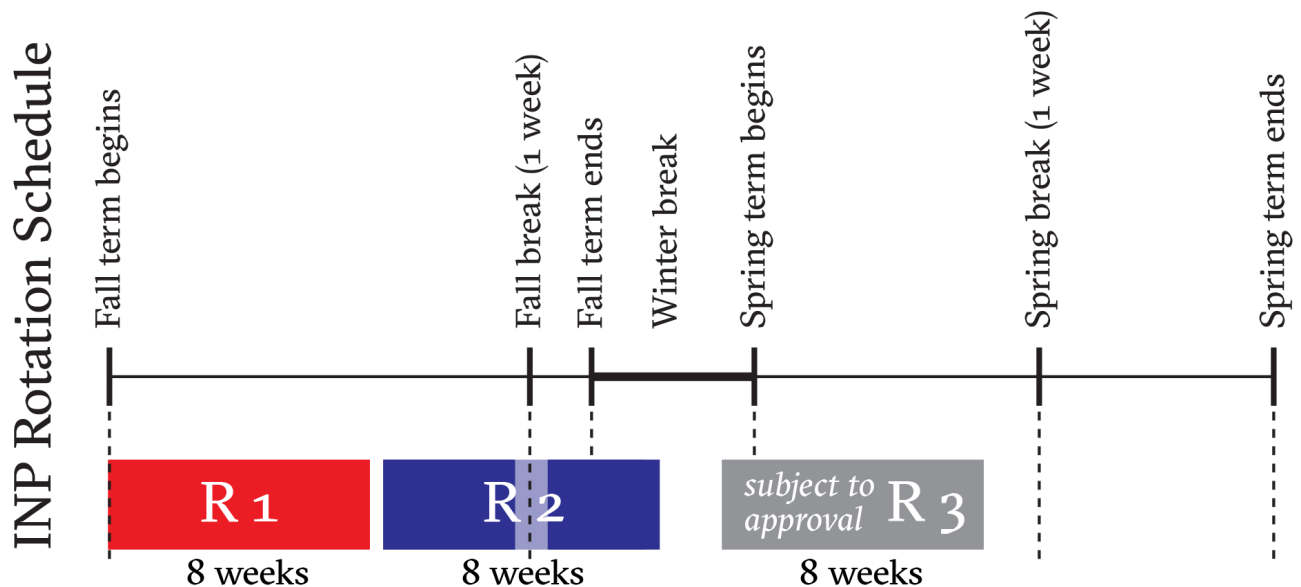
PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND MILESTONES

The INP is a campus-wide organization responsible for research and teaching activities related to neuroscience at UT Austin. The program is multidisciplinary with more than 90 participating neuroscientists from 13 departments and is designed to promote interdisciplinary training and interaction. Research in the INP is diverse, with investigators covering major disciplines and techniques in neuroscience, and it represents 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 INP 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 “Boot Camp” prior to the start of their first year. INP 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 the summer prior to Boot Camp, students are expected to contact faculty to coordinate and establish 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 third rotation would last for 8 weeks in the beginning of the Spring semester (i.e., January through the end of February/early March). Students choose rotations from among faculty members of the INP who are accepting students. *NOTE: If a student is supported by the INP training grant, they can only choose labs from among members of the training grant.* Students are encouraged to discuss potential rotations with faculty during the summer. There will also be opportunities to discuss potential rotations with faculty at the evening faculty talks during the INP Boot Camp. For each rotation, the student will work on a research project under supervised training to learn the appropriate methodology from the faculty mentor's laboratory. During research rotations it is common for students to spend more 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

(Subject to approval) 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 6-week break in the academic calendar from early December to mid January. Students are still being paid by the INP and/or their home lab during this time. It is expected that students will take time off from working in the lab (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.

Qualifying Exam. The goal of the INP Qualifying Exam is to confirm that each student has the foundational knowledge and skills needed for success in the program. This includes a broad understanding of neuroscience, the ability to write a clear review paper addressing a knowledge gap in their field, and the skill to defend the topic orally. Through this process, students demonstrate scholarly engagement and the ability to think clearly and effectively. The qualifying exam consists of two parts:

1. **Part I. Breadth.** Principles of Neuroscience I and II, taken in the fall and spring semesters of the first year, form the core curriculum of the INP and serve as the primary assessment of students' breadth of knowledge in neuroscience. The breadth exam consists of six essay questions, two per unit of the course, answered during the final exam period, with each response limited to one page. ***Exemption: Achieving a score of 90% or higher on any of the three midterm exams will exempt the student from the two essay questions associated with that unit on the qualifying exam.*** Essay responses are graded on a pass/fail basis; students must pass all questions to fulfill the breadth requirement. Students who do not pass all questions must complete a 30-minute oral remediation exam consisting of a 10-minute presentation and 20-minute Q&A on one instructor-selected question, due by the end of the following semester. Faculty mentors with whom the student rotates will be notified of exam outcomes.
2. **Part II. Depth.** The second part of the qualifying exam assesses depth of knowledge. It is administered between **August 16** and **October 1** of the student's second year by a committee of three INP faculty members selected by the student, with a Graduate Advisor moderating the session. The Graduate Advisor may also serve as one of the three committee members. ***Students must submit their qualifying exam committee for approval between June 1 and July 15; once approved, scheduling of the exam may begin.*** The student's faculty mentor may attend the exam with the student's consent and may provide the committee with relevant context regarding the student's research area, training progress, and academic background. For the exam, the student identifies a "gap in knowledge" within their field, in consultation with their mentor. The student then writes a paper of approximately 2,500 words on this topic and prepares to defend it orally before the committee. The paper must be solely authored by the student, though feedback from peers and the faculty mentor is permitted. A 250-word abstract is due by **July 15**. The oral exam begins with a 20-minute presentation by the student, followed by a 40-minute Q&A. Possible outcomes are Pass, Conditional Pass, or Fail. A Conditional Pass

requires the student to address specific areas identified by the committee for further review, instruction, or remediation. A Fail requires the student to retake the exam. All remediation must be completed by the end of the fall semester of the student's second year in the program, barring scheduling constraints.

Fellowship Application. All students, including international students, are expected to submit a predoctoral fellowship application (NRSA, NSF or other fellowships approved by the Graduate Advisors) that requires an extensive research proposal element. This will preferably be in the second year, and no later than the middle of their third year—except for NSF proposals which are only accepted in a student's first year. For fellowship applications that are not from NSF or NIH, please contact the GAs to determine if the application fulfills this requirement.

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 in any department by an INP faculty member or, with permission from the Graduate Advisors, any relevant course taught by a non-INP faculty member. Any INP student may TA for a Psychology (COLA) course, but only students who are in a Psychology lab are guaranteed the stipend rate offered to COLA students. The expectation is that the first 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. In most cases, students will not TA for more than three semesters, though funding needs or gaps may occasionally necessitate additional teaching appointments. It is highly recommended that students contact course instructors to inquire about potential TA positions at least six months in advance.

Research. A core part of the Ph.D. degree is extensive training in neuroscience research. The INP supports and encourages broad 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 complete 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 the specialized portion of the qualifying examination. Students are expected to fully immerse themselves in the relevant literature for their specific research area and ensure they have a solid mastery of basic concepts related to it. These efforts should not preclude, of course, staying current with 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 independently of courses and 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 complete all course requirements by the end of the Fall semester of the third year. During the third year, they must form a Ph.D. thesis committee and meet with them twice per year until graduation. In the first meeting, students present a written proposal of their research, often styled as an NIH grant. The candidacy project does not need to be perfect; the key goal is engaging with the committee to refine the research. Once the committee approves the document, students enter candidacy and focus full-time on dissertation research under guidance from their advisor and committee. After candidacy, students should meet with their committee approximately every six months. These meetings serve as progress check-ins rather than formal presentations and help refine research direction. The final meeting is an oral defense of the dissertation.

Criteria for “Good Standing” in the Program. When the handbook, Graduate Advisor, or INP 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 maintain at least a 3.0/4.0 GPA in all graduate courses taken each semester, **with at least a 'B' in the two required Principles of Neuroscience courses**.
- First year. Students 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 by the end of the third year, and to form their dissertation committee and enter candidacy by the beginning of the fourth year. **Students must then meet with their committee twice per year.**

Progression Meetings. The Graduate Advisors hold annual Progression Meetings to monitor student progress and address questions related to qualifying exams, candidacy, dissertation, and other milestones. These are group meetings held at the start of each semester. First-year students meet twice per year (fall and spring); second-year students meet once (fall only). Students at any stage are encouraged to contact the Graduate Advisors to request an individual meeting whenever questions or concerns arise.

REGISTRATION AND COURSES

[Registration is done online](#) each semester, and it is the student's responsibility to register for courses at the appropriate time in the semester. Students should be sure and to confirm their registration or it may be canceled.

Course Requirements. A minimum of 81 credit hours is required for the Ph.D. degree. Of these, 24 credits must come from the Major and Elective course requirements described below; the remainder are research hours. **Students may count up to 9 hours of upper-division undergraduate courses with prior approval from the Graduate Advisors.** A standard course load of 9 credit hours per semester in fall and

spring, plus 3 in the summer, will satisfy this requirement in approximately four years. Registration beyond these limits requires the recommendation of the Graduate Advisors and approval of the Graduate Dean, and will be permitted only under exceptional circumstances. The curriculum is designed to allow maximum flexibility in tailoring a course of study to the student's primary area of interest. When choosing electives, students are strongly encouraged to select courses outside their immediate research area and to develop a broad neuroscience background. Breadth of training matters for several reasons: neuroscience is an inherently interdisciplinary science requiring familiarity with diverse subject areas and methodologies; a wider foundation produces stronger dissertation proposals; and graduates with broad training are better positioned to conduct cutting-edge research and teach neuroscience at a scholarly level.

- **Major requirements.** Students must complete a core curriculum that includes Principles of Neuroscience I (NEU 382T), Principles of Neuroscience II (NEU 383T), a statistics course, an ethics course, a grant writing course, three graduate elective courses in neuroscience, and a graduate seminar on communication skills in neuroscience. Students must also attend the weekly *Neuroscience Seminar Series*, and join lunch meetings with the invited speakers when relevant.
- **Elective requirements.** Three elective courses are required. Students are encouraged to select electives in consultation with their faculty supervisor, and all elective courses must be approved by the Graduate Advisors prior to registration. At least two of the three electives must be taken for a grade; one may be taken Credit/No Credit with Graduate Advisor approval.

Adds, Drops, and Change of Grade Status. Students must clear all holds/bars to register. For registration times, visit the [registration information sheet](#). Students can add/drop and have their grade status changed during their registration period. During class days 5 to 12 for the fall or spring term or days 3 to 4 for summer sessions, courses may be added by the department in which the course is offered. Visit the Office of the Registrar's page to see the deadline to change grade status to or from the Credit/No Credit basis. Students employed as graduate research assistants or teaching assistants may not reduce their course load to a less than full-time status. For more information, please visit the [Graduate School registration policies](#).

Grades. Students must have a graduate grade-point average (GPA) of at least 3.0.

- 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. Following the qualifying exam, the student, in consultation with their faculty supervisor, must form a Dissertation Committee. The committee must consist of at least four members, at least three of whom must be INP Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) faculty, including the faculty supervisor. At least one member must come from outside the student's major area of neuroscience and must not be a member of INP. The Graduate Advisors must approve the proposed committee. Upon Admission to Candidacy, the Dean of the Graduate School officially appoints the committee to advise and guide the student in their research and dissertation. ***Students must meet with their committee twice per year.***

Dissertation Proposal. The Dissertation Proposal consists of a written document and an oral presentation. The format, length, and level of detail of the oral presentation are at the discretion of the faculty supervisor, in consultation with the Dissertation Committee. The written proposal **must** follow the format and guidelines for the Specific Aims and Research Strategy (including Bibliography/References Cited) sections of predoctoral National Research Service Awards from the National Institutes of Health. At the time of this writing, the Specific Aims section was limited to 1 page and the Research Strategy to 6 pages. See the links below for additional details, and consult the Graduate Advisors with any questions.

- [NIH Fellowship Instructions](#)
- [NIH Forms Directory](#)

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.

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 Graduate School. 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 Graduate School and in the format stipulated by the INP. Visit the [Graduate School Guidelines for Dissertation](#) for their policies regarding this requirement, and consult with the Graduate Advisors about the INP 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 Graduate School 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 Graduate School 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 Graduate School 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, details their experimental methodology and data analysis and discusses the results and conclusions they reached. After questioning from the general audience has concluded, the student meets privately with their Dissertation Committee for 2 hours 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. The student should therefore expect that the entire exam will last approximately 3 hours.

- 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 the 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 the submission](#). It is critical that the 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 School or visit their website.

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. Students should not let anyone into the buildings, or bring friends in with them. 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. INP graduate students have access to the laboratory where their research work is to be done. With the approval of the faculty supervisor (and approval of other laboratory supervisors as applicable), students may be able to use equipment in other research and teaching laboratories. Students must check with the faculty member in charge to learn the proper use of any equipment to be used. Students must check with the 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 the supervising professor and should be worn. Closed shoes are required. The UT Safety office does not approve sandals as appropriate footwear for the laboratory. No eating or drinking is allowed in wet laboratories. **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 INP 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 students wish to serve as a representative, they can 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. Ordinarily, grievances between students and instructors are resolved informally. If such efforts fail, the Graduate Advisors and/or Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee in Neuroscience, will consider the matter. Visit the Graduate School [website](#) for more information.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR HUMANE RESEARCH

Each student should read the expanded form of this statement here: [Society for Neuroscience Statement 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 INP Boot Camp, there is a separate advising session. Students will be advised on which general classes to take and also given a list of related courses. After choosing their home lab, students should discuss with their faculty mentor which courses would best fit with their 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, students may take up to 9 hours of upper division undergraduate courses. Students must receive prior approval from the Graduate Advisors.

Under what circumstances can I do a third rotation? All efforts should be made to find a home lab by the end of the Fall semester in the first year. Requests for a third rotation (first 8 weeks at the start of the Spring semester) are determined on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the Graduate Advisors and Director with reasonable justification as to why a third rotation is needed to help secure a home lab.

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 Graduate School 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 students may apply. An excellent web site to visit is [GrantsNet](#). Each spring, the INP is allowed to submit a limited number of nominations for University Continuing Fellowships. They are highly competitive and the Graduate Coordinator will notify students if the Executive Committee has chosen them as their 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.

Can I change labs? Students are encouraged to choose a lab as early as possible, as most of their research will be carried out there. This decision typically happens by the end of the first semester in the program. That said, it is not uncommon for students to change labs or mentors after this point. Legitimate reasons include a shift in research interests, personality conflicts, or loss of project funding. There is no formal penalty for changing labs or supervisors. Students should be aware, however, that a lab change will likely mean a new research project and some delay in progress while new techniques are acquired. If a student wishes to explore this option, it is their responsibility to initiate conversations with potential new supervisors. It is possible that no other faculty member will be in a position to take on a new student; in that case, the options are to remain in the current lab or to withdraw from the program. In any case, students are strongly encouraged to discuss the situation with their current supervisor and the Graduate Advisors as early as possible to ensure a smooth transition.

Can I get a Master's degree? The INP only offers an exit Master's degree when the Ph.D. degree can not be completed, and only in instances approved by the INP 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 INP faculty supervisor and another INP faculty member as a second reader.

Can I get a short-term loan? Short-term loans for tuition or emergency cash are available to UT Austin students enrolled at least half-time through the TEX phone system. Tuition loans are limited to the amount of tuition owed. Repayment terms vary depending on when during the semester the loan is taken out. To apply, call TEX at (512) 475-9950 and select option 33, then visit the University Cashier's office within 24 hours to sign a promissory note. For questions, call (512) 475-6282. International students should contact the International Office at (512) 471-1211.

How will I receive my grades? Students can 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/>.

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