

# **GUIDE TO GRADUATE STUDY 2008**

**Institute for Neuroscience**

**The University of Texas at Austin**

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## **Welcome to the Graduate Program in Neuroscience!**

This handbook has been designed to provide answers for questions you may have during your graduate studies in the Institute for Neuroscience at The University of Texas at Austin. This book is not a replacement for the Graduate Catalog but a supplement to it. You will find many additional links to UT's web pages that provide more details about areas of interest.

### **Aims of Graduate Education in Neuroscience**

A graduate of the Program in Neuroscience from the University of Texas at Austin will exhibit the following attributes:

- In-depth knowledge of their chosen area of Neuroscience.
- A broad understanding of the major areas of Neuroscience, including: the molecular, cellular, systems, behavioral, and theoretical levels of analysis of the nervous system.
- The ability to design, plan and execute independent and original research projects and to publish the results of those projects in leading neuroscience journals.
- The ability to construct logical and rigorous research grant proposals.
- A willingness to instruct others, and the ability to communicate clearly in both written and spoken formats.
- A commitment to honesty and integrity in research, publication, scientific and interpersonal interactions.

### **The Administrative Structure of the Neuroscience Graduate Program**

The Institute of Neuroscience (INS) is a campus wide organization consisting of graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and research and teaching faculty bound together for the purposes of fostering all aspects of neuroscience as an independent scientific discipline. Within the INS is a Graduate Studies Committee (GSC), approved by the Graduate School, which is responsible for teaching and training graduate students. The Director of the INS also serves as Chair of the GSC

The main committee responsible for the affairs of the INS and GSC is the Executive Committee (EC), which is a body voted on by members of the GSC. The Committee consists of the Director of INS, the Graduate Advisor, the Chairs of the Admissions and Curriculum committees, six at-large members, and nonvoting student and associate INS member representatives. There are also various committees that have been formed such as the Progressions Committee, the Recruitment Committee, the Seminar Committee, and the Financial Aid Committee, all of which provide important service functions to the graduate program and graduate students. All are subcommittees of the EC.

The administrative activities of the INS and the graduate program within the GSC are handled by the Graduate Coordinator. The Graduate Coordinator can help with questions about the program and any other administrative concerns related to the Graduate School or the University. The office of the Graduate Coordinator is in Neural and Molecular Sciences Building, 4.104, 471-3640, [neuroscience@clm.utexas.edu](mailto:neuroscience@clm.utexas.edu).

Director of INS and Chair of GSC: Daniel Johnston  
 Graduate Advisor: John Mihic  
 Chair of Admissions: Kristen Harris

Chair of Curriculum Committee: Rueben Gonzales

Graduate Coordinator: Krystal Ho

At large EC members:

Mary Hayhoe

Chandra Bajaj

Harold Zakon

Rick Aldrich

Larry Cormack

Bill Geisler

Student Representative: Brian Welsh

### **Doctoral Program Requirements**

The Neuroscience Graduate Program is administered by the GSC of the Institute for Neuroscience and is designed to promote interdisciplinary training and interaction. As such, the program does not reside in any one department or college at the University. Rather, faculty members in several different departments that represent the breadth of modern Neuroscience research and who are members of the GSC may supervise students. The graduate program is specifically aimed at students wishing to obtain a Ph.D. degree. The three major components of the Ph.D. program are as follows:

- Course Requirements– Didactic and laboratory courses.
- Research – Original laboratory-based studies that contribute significant new knowledge to the field of Neuroscience. The 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.
- Qualifying exam – Including generating and defending an independent research proposal and demonstrating a general knowledge of Neuroscience.
- Predoctoral Fellowship- eligible students are required to submit a predoctoral fellowship application (NRSA, NSF or other applicable fellowships) by no later than December of their third year.

### **Course Requirements**

A minimum of 81 credit hours (graduate courses only) are required for the Ph.D. degree. Twenty-two of these credits must be composed of the Major and Elective course requirements described below, and the remainder are 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 for choosing a course of study to match 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 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 from our program to serve as scholarly teachers of Neuroscience.

#### **■ Major requirements:**

Four courses are required of all Neuroscience students:

- a) Principles of Neuroscience I (and accompanying discussion section) and Principles II. These courses are taken in the first and second semesters during the first year of graduate studies.
- b) a 1-hour ethics of science course.
- c) a 3-hour statistics course.

#### **■ Elective requirements:**

Four elective courses are required of all students. 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. Electives must be approved by the Graduate Advisor.

### **Course Waivers**

Students will be allowed to request course waivers for core and elective courses on a case-by-case basis. The elective must be from an accredited university and be of graduate level. The GSC chair and graduate advisor will decide whether to grant such waivers. For non-UT courses, the student must supply documentation of their course grade and the course syllabus. The student must also contact an INS course director that teaches the similar course at UT. The course director will review the replacement course syllabus and consult with the graduate advisor to determine the acceptability of the replacement course.

### **Research Requirements**

A core part of the Ph.D. degree is extensive training in Neuroscience research. The purpose of this 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. It is essential for all Ph.D. students to begin the research training process as early as possible in their program. Therefore, all entering students are required to choose a rotation laboratory and begin to learn research techniques during their first semester in the program. Furthermore, all Neuroscience Ph.D. students in good standing will be engaged in supervised research during every semester that they are enrolled in the program. It is important for each Neuroscience Ph.D. student to understand that appropriate progress toward the Ph.D. degree and good standing in the program are contingent upon research progress.

#### **■ Sequence of research training**

**First year:** All entering students begin learning research methods by engaging in formal laboratory research rotations during the first year. Students must participate in at least two different laboratory rotations during the first and second semester. For each rotation the specific research project and methods will generally be given to the student by their supervising rotation professor. During research rotations it is not unusual for students to spend greater than 20 hours/week in the laboratory. For the summer semester the student may either choose a faculty supervisor and lab and begin thesis research, or he/she may perform an additional research rotation before choosing a faculty supervisor. If, early on during any of these research rotations, students wish to choose another lab, they may do so by first consulting the GA for approval. Students should choose rotations from among Full members of the INS who are taking students. If a student is supported by the INS training grant, then he or she should only choose labs from among members of the training grant faculty. A list of these faculty members can be obtained from the Graduate Coordinator. If a student has a particular interest in rotating and working in a lab of a Research Faculty and Associate member of the INS, this should be discussed ahead of time with the Graduate Advisor and the Director of the INS.

**Second year:** By this time, all students should have made a choice of faculty supervisor. In addition, the students are expected to begin aggressively reading the relevant literature for their specific research area. This should not preclude, however, staying abreast of major new published findings in other subfields of neuroscience. Familiarity with the literature may be enhanced by various journal clubs, but the students are also expected to read the literature independent of courses 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. Students are expected to complete the qualifying examination by the end of the second year and, if eligible, are also required to

submit a predoctoral fellowship application (NRSA, NSF or other applicable fellowships) by no later than the middle of their third year. It is not unusual for students to spend greater than 20 hours/week in the laboratory during the second year.

**Third year and beyond:** The student will complete any remaining course requirements during this year and will apply for admission to candidacy. After admission to candidacy, the student will be engaged full time in dissertation research. In addition, students must gain teaching experience by performing at least one semester as a teaching assistant in an undergraduate or graduate course. Students may not TA for more than three semesters. The Graduate Studies Committee of the Institute for Neuroscience supports and encourages broad-based training and multidisciplinary research projects that may involve more than one laboratory.

## **THE DOCTORAL QUALIFYING EXAMINATION: *To be announced***

### **Dissertation Committee**

Upon successful completion of the oral qualifying exam, the Dissertation committee must be formed by the student in consultation with the supervising professor and the Graduate Advisor. The Committee must consist of at least five members, three of whom must be members in the Institute for Neuroscience GSC, including the faculty supervisor. At least one member of the Committee must also be from outside the student's major area of Neuroscience. The committee must be approved by the Graduate Advisor and Chair of the GSC before the meeting to approve the Dissertation Proposal (see below) and before becoming part of the *Application for Doctoral Candidacy*. 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 in the writing of the final dissertation.

### **The Doctoral Dissertation Proposal**

a) Timing - For students who pass the qualifying examinations in the spring of their second year, this first review of the written proposal by the Dissertation Committee **must** occur by the end of September of the third year. For students who pass their qualifying exams at another time, the meeting and proposal defense **must** occur within three months following successful completion of the oral qualifying exam. Petitions for extension of these deadlines **must** be made to the GA within two months of passing the qualifying examination. The initial version of the dissertation proposal **must** be provided to the student's dissertation committee **at least two weeks** prior to their oral presentation.

b) The initial proposal - For this initial proposal submission, students are expected to consult closely with their faculty supervisor to design their research project and compose the written proposal. At the agreement of the student and supervisor, a student may adapt any part of their qualifying examination proposal in their initial proposal submission to their committee. The proposal **must** be written using the format of an NIH Grant proposal (e.g., Specific Aims, Background, Preliminary Data, Methods and Experimental Procedures) and must be submitted to each member of the dissertation committee at least two weeks prior to the committee meeting.

c) The oral presentation - The format, length and detail of the oral presentation of the proposal will be at the discretion of the student's faculty supervisor in consultation with the dissertation committee.

## **Ph.D. Candidacy**

### **Admission to Candidacy**

Admission to candidacy requires that the student has passed the qualifying examination, has submitted and successfully defended his/her dissertation proposal to the dissertation committee, and has submitted the electronic *Application for Doctoral Candidacy* to the Office of Graduate Studies at this website: <http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/pdn/index.html>. This *Application* requires the official nomination of a dissertation committee and a one-page, written dissertation abstract. It is then sent via email to the Graduate Advisor, the supervising professor and the GSC Chair for final approval by the OGS. After official admission to doctoral candidacy, the student must be continuously enrolled in the appropriate dissertation courses: NEU X99R for the first semester, and subsequently 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). It is strongly urged that students attain candidacy within 2.5 years following initial matriculation.

### **The Doctoral Dissertation**

When research is sufficiently advanced, the student begins writing the dissertation in conformity with the regulations of the Office of Graduate Studies and with the format stipulated by the Institute for Neuroscience. 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 to 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 supervising professor and members of the dissertation committee at least **four weeks** before the date of the final dissertation defense.

**NOTE:** Doctoral students graduating after spring 2001 will be required to provide documentation of having taken (and having passed a test on) the UT Copyright Tutorial at <http://www.lib.utsystem.edu/copyright/>. The Tutorial can be taken anytime before turning in the dissertation. It is advised to take it well before that time (early in candidacy), because its goal is to educate the student on the often confusing and constantly changing copyright laws. The Tutorial site provides a test that, after having been taken and passed, provides a Certification of completion. This Certification (or a copy of it) must be turned in by the time of dissertation submission or the dissertation may not be accepted and the student's graduation may be delayed or denied.

A UT graduate student who would like emotional and moral support while writing the dissertation should be sure to subscribe to DISSLIST. Students writing dissertations as well as faculty/staff who can help will be on the list to discuss dissertations and answer questions. DISSLIST is owned by the Graduate School Professional Development Program. To subscribe, go to: <http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/rc/disslist>

### **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 Committee member and 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 Office of Graduate Studies then publishes the time and place for the defense.

At their dissertation defenses students present a one hour seminar that is open to all members of the public and University community. During the seminars students explain 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 his or her thesis committee during which time the student may be questioned by their Committee on any aspect of the Dissertation and general research area related to the Dissertation. At the conclusion of the questioning the student and the thesis advisor are 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 committee 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. The advisor may be asked to rejoin the committee to discuss the outcome of the defense prior to informing the student.

### **Submission and Publication of Dissertation**

After successfully completing the dissertation defense and making any final revisions stipulated by the committee, the student is required to electronically submit the dissertation for publishing and archiving to PROQUEST/UMI Dissertation Services in Ann Arbor, MI. An unsigned copy of the Committee Certification form, with the members' names, must be included in the electronic dissertation. In addition, refer to the *Checklist for Final Submission of Dissertation or Treatise* for your graduating semester for additional paperwork that you are required to submit to the Graduate School for graduation.

### **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 Adviser.

### **Duplicating and Binding**

Students may order bound hardcopies of the final dissertation through PROQUEST/UMI at the time of electronic submission of the final dissertation. Additional copies may also be ordered after electronic submission is completed.

### **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.

## ■ **Monitoring and Evaluating Students**

### **The Progressions Committee**

A Progressions Committee will monitor student progress during the first two years prior to admission to candidacy. During this time the Committee meets individually with students after their first, second, and third semesters, and aids the Graduate Advisor in advising students thereafter. The Progressions Committee is appointed by the Executive Committee. It is expected that students maintain at least a B average in graduate school. Any grade of C or below in a required course will require a retake of that course. If a student obtains a C or below in more than two courses, that student may be subject to dismissal from the program. The Progressions committee will report its recommendations to the Executive Committee for a final decision.

Students will take the core courses (currently the two-semester Principles of Neuroscience course) and electives in their first year and are expected to do well in all major areas represented in the Institute. At the end of the first year, the Progressions Committee, with the aid of the course coordinators, will evaluate the students' strengths and weaknesses based on their performance in their coursework. The Progressions committee also will review performance in other courses and progress in laboratory research (in consultation with students' research supervisors). The Progressions Committee reviews this information with the student during each meeting and provides the student feedback regarding his/her progress. The Committee also will discuss any issues that the student wishes to bring up. Any serious academic weaknesses that the Committee identifies may be addressed by requiring the student to take additional course work in the area of weakness. Conditions, such as the date by which the course is to be completed and any performance criteria, may be stipulated.

During the third and following years, the Progressions Committee will continue to monitor the progress of each student, but will not have regular meetings with advanced students unless a problem is identified (such as a failure to form a Dissertation Committee, failure to submit a dissertation proposal in a reasonable time, or unsatisfactory research progress as reported by the Dissertation Committee). The Progressions Committee will be informed when the student has formed a Dissertation Committee, received approval for this from the GA and chair of the GSC, and submitted a dissertation proposal. Advising and monitoring is generally referred to the supervising professor and dissertation committee at that point, but the Progressions Committee will continue to monitor student progress. The student is required to have yearly progress report meetings with the dissertation committee, and a written report of the outcome of each meeting must be filled with the Graduate Coordinator and become a permanent record of the student's file. These forms are available from the Graduate Coordinator, and it is the responsibility of the student to bring this to each committee meeting and return signed to the Graduate Coordinator.

### **Supervising Professor**

Early in the graduate career, the student will discuss program interests with members of the INS faculty. After choosing a dissertation lab and supervising professor (from among the Full INS members who are accepting students) at the end of the first year, the student and supervising professor will meet to decide upon the student's didactic and research activities. The supervising professor and the Progressions Committee will direct the student's work toward the advanced degree.

The supervising professor acts as Chair of the student's Dissertation Committee, guiding the research work and the writing of the dissertation, as well as assisting the student to resolve difficulties as they arise. It is not the responsibility of the supervising professor to remind the student of deadlines specified by the Graduate School, the need to maintain satisfactory grades in coursework, etc. In graduate school, it is expected that each student will develop self-responsibility, maturity, and an ability to design and plan work activities. Each graduate student exhibits a unique personality, and must be dealt with individually.

The supervising professor, in most instances, will direct the beginning Ph.D. student rather closely, then gradually pass on more responsibility as the student gains experience and knowledge. After the student gains admission to doctoral candidacy, he/she should be making most of the decisions, writing clearly, and planning and executing the work in a way that leads to results of the highest quality and integrity.

**Dissertation Committee:** see Ph.D. candidacy section

### **Research Progress Reports**

With the help of the supervising professor, the student will prepare and give annual progress reports during a collective meeting of his or her Dissertation Committee. At least 3 days prior to the meeting, the student must provide the committee members with a brief written document outlining progress made since the last meeting. During the progress report meeting the student makes an oral presentation to the entire committee in which the experiments and results are discussed. The timely presentation of these progress reports will greatly facilitate the student's progress towards the degree. A copy of the progress report, signed by each member of the committee, should be given to the GA and become part of the student's file. If yearly progress report meetings are not held, the student may be considered not to be making satisfactory progress towards the degree and subject to loss of financial support and dismissal from the program. It is the student's responsibility to schedule these meetings well in advance.

### **General and Specific Requirements**

General and specific requirements for degrees in the Graduate School may be altered in successive catalogs, but the student is bound only by the requirements of the catalog in force at the time of admission, within a six-year limit. At the student's discretion, the student may choose to fulfill the degree requirements of a subsequent catalog.

### **Continuation in the Graduate School**

Registration in the Graduate School beyond the first semester (or Summer session) is dependent on these main factors: 1) maintenance of a 'B' grade point average (at least a 3.0 GPA) for all upper-division and graduate courses taken in a given semester, with at least a "B" in the required Principles of Neuroscience courses 2) satisfactory completion of the Qualifying Exams taken in the spring semester of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year 3) satisfactory progress in research, and 4) entry into doctoral candidacy by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in Graduate School.

Should a graduate student make less than a 'B' average in a given semester or summer session (less than 3.0 GPA), the student will be warned by the Office of the Graduate Dean that continuance as a graduate student is in jeopardy (warning status). During the next semester or summer session in which the student is registered, a 'B' average must be maintained or the student will be subject to dismissal. During this time of warning status, the Graduate Dean will not permit dropping a course or withdrawal from courses.

The Neuroscience Graduate Studies Committee may re-admit the graduate student who has been dismissed for further graduate study only by petition. The petition will be approved or disapproved by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

### **Student Responsibility**

The student is held responsible for knowing deadlines, degree requirements, and enrolling for courses that fit into the degree program. The student is likewise held responsible for knowing University regulations with regard to the standard of work required for continuance in the Graduate School. If the student needs additional information, the Student Office of the Graduate School or the Graduate Advisor should be consulted. All

students are encouraged to check with the appropriate degree clerk in the Student Office of the Graduate School early in their graduate careers.

### **Expected Time to Obtain Ph.D. Degree**

- The time from entry into the Ph.D. program to graduation with a Ph.D. degree depends on many factors: student motivation, research progress, mentoring, funding for the research project, state of equipment and research materials needed. Generally, it takes 5 years from the first date enrolled to complete the degree.
- Students should successfully complete the first part of the Qualifying Exam near the end of their second year (usually in the first week of May).
- In the beginning of the third year (usually in September or October) students complete the university requirement for candidacy by forming a dissertation committee, successfully presenting a dissertation proposal to their dissertation committee, and submitting an application for candidacy to the office of graduate studies.
- If sufficient research progress has not been demonstrated by the end of the third year in the program and the student has not been admitted to candidacy, the Progressions Committee may recommend to the Executive Committee the student's termination from the Ph.D. program.
- The student should complete the degree within three years after admission to candidacy (usually within five years of entering the program). Should the work extend beyond three years (after admission to candidacy), the Neuroscience Progressions Committee will review the case, and annually thereafter, and recommend whether candidacy should be continued. Continued candidacy will be allowed only through petition to the Graduate Advisor and Chair of the GSC.
- All Ph.D. students are **strongly** encouraged to discuss the timing of when the degree can be obtained with their research supervisor. This should be done before the student enters Ph.D. candidacy, and it is essential that this be discussed openly with the supervisor during the preparation of the dissertation proposal.

### **Registration Procedures**

#### **How to Register**

Each student is responsible for registering each semester. Graduate students must register for at least 9 hours in fall and spring semesters and at least 3 hours in the summer.

Registration is done electronically at <http://www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/registration/>  
Note that a UT EID (Electronic ID) is needed to access this service.

Be sure and confirm your registration or it will be cancelled.

#### **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:

1. Whether a course is to be taken on the Credit/No Credit basis 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.
2. Adds/Drops can be initiated in the Graduate Coordinator's Office.

Dropping a graduate course beyond the standard date for undergraduates will only be approved for substantial, non-academic reasons. 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. In addition, students in Neuroscience must receive a B or better in every required course. Only upper-division and graduate level courses taken while in graduate status at the University of Texas at Austin, or courses reserved-for-graduate-credit taken at UT Austin in the last semester prior to graduation, except Thesis and Dissertation courses (NEU 698AB and x99R & W), are counted in the average. If a student receives a C in more than two courses, despite having an overall B average, the Progressions committee may recommend to the Executive Committee dismissal from the program.

In some courses the symbol 'CR' is given. Courses taken on a Credit/No Credit basis are not computed in the grade point average. No more than twenty percent of the credit hours submitted for any Ph.D. degree may be taken on a Credit/No Credit basis.

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. The incompletes can include 'X's', 'I's or any combination.

In computing the overall average, letter grades from other institutions will not be used.

### **Course Load**

The maximum course load for a graduate student is fifteen semester hours or nine 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 the supervising professor or Graduate Advisor about combined course and work loads. The University recognizes nine hours as a minimum full-time load during the long semester and three 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.

## **General Information**

### **The Terminal Master's Degree (M.S.)**

While no separate MS program in Neuroscience exists at this time (e.g., students will be admitted to the doctoral program only); a terminal **Master of Science** degree may be granted in certain circumstances, usually when a student does not make adequate progress to the PhD degree or for personal reasons. Such students will be identified by the faculty supervisor, graduate advisor and/or Progressions committee on a case-by-case basis. If such a case is warranted, the INS will follow the Office of Graduate Studies stipulations for a "thesis" MS degree whereby students must complete at least 24 credit

hours of didactic coursework, plus the two thesis courses (698A and 698B) for a total of 30 credit hours

Students will also be expected to pass an oral thesis defense of a full NIH-style research proposal as required and described previously for entering into PhD candidacy. The student will defend this proposal orally to a committee of three INS GSC faculty and the thesis advisor chosen by mutual agreement of the thesis advisor, student, and graduate advisor. Students awarded a terminal MS degree from the INS will not be allowed to re-apply to enter the PhD program at any later date.

### **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. (Refer to the Graduate Guide, Information Handbook for details of the procedure. The Handbook is available in the Graduate School Office).

### **Financial Support**

All Neuroscience graduate students who are in good standing are guaranteed stipend support at the level of \$24,000/year for five years, including student health insurance and tuition assistance, provided they abide by the policies of the INS as outlined in this handbook and those of the Graduate School.

If eligible, students are required to submit a predoctoral fellowship application by no later than the middle of their third year and to participate in a least one semester of teaching assistantship during their program. Support at the level of \$24,000/year is guaranteed regardless of the students 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 funds for additional tuition assistance and/or additional health insurance may be provided with the award of certain fellowships or teaching assistantships.

### **Outside Employment**

Outside employment is prohibited by internal and external funding agencies.

### **The 99 Hour Rule**

The "99 hour rule" refers to the implementation of State law SB 961, passed by the 75th Legislature. This rule makes those students at UT Austin with over 99 doctoral hours subject to the payment of nonresident tuition.

#### *Effect on Graduate Students Enrolled before August 1999*

In their meeting on November 11-12, 1998, the regents approved UT Austin's request to apply the "99 hour rule" only to students entering graduate school in fall 1999 (when a new catalogue came into effect) or later.

#### *Effect on Graduate Students entering in fall 1999 or Later*

Texas residents and nonresidents, who normally would be entitled to pay resident tuition by virtue of work appointments or fellowships, might wonder whether they would be affected by the 99-hour rule (i.e. whether they will reach the point at which the payment of nonresident tuition becomes mandatory). For most students, the answer is "no." An average student will be able to study at UT Austin full-time for seven complete academic years, and the six intervening summers, before being affected by the 99-hour rule. For students staying beyond seven years, in a number of cases there is still the possibility of a programmatic or individual exemption from the rule. Questions can be addressed to

Associate Dean John Dollard, Office of Graduate Studies, G0400, University of Texas, Austin, TX, 78712. Phone: (512) 232-3604.  
e-mail: dollard@mail.utexas.edu

### **Copyright Regulations**

If copyrighted material is used in the dissertation, the student must get the written permission of the copyright owner. Microfilming is the same as publication and the writer is responsible for any copyright material in the published thesis or dissertation. The student must sign a disclaimer against any harm to the University should a copyright holder sue when the student has used the copyrighted material of another person in the dissertation without appropriate permission. Thus, the graduate student should adhere to the copyright laws. Copyright laws also apply to computer software, and students are expected to obtain legal copies of all software used in their work.

### **Additional Important Information**

#### **Policies on the Use of Animals in Neuroscience Research**

Each student should read the expanded form of this statement at:  
<http://www.sfn.org/pubs/policy.html>

#### **Responsibility for 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.

#### **General Principles**

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 experimental procedures involving laboratory animals.

Animals selected for a procedure should be of an appropriate species and quality and the minimum number required to obtain valid results.

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 unanesthetized 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.

### **Access to Building and Laboratories**

Upon arrival the student will be issued access cards and keys to the appropriate buildings by the Graduate Coordinator. 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 471-4441. Do not prop any doors open, because this may cause an alarm to activate and makes the buildings vulnerable to thieves.

### **Library**

The student should adhere strictly to the library regulations on campus. Books and reference materials should be returned by their due dates. Books and bound journals must not be used on a laboratory bench where they may become damaged by solvents. Materials must always be checked out before they are removed from the library.

Libraries of interest to the neuroscience graduate student are Life Science, Chemistry, Engineering, Physics, Math, Geology, Law, Public Affairs, and the Perry-Casteñeda Library (Main Library).

### **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 supervising professor (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 to check with the faculty member in charge and read the instruction booklet before working with most instruments in the College. Check with your supervising professor in advance of using any apparatus, if at all in doubt.

*Remember that being allowed to work in a lab other than your own is a special privilege that can be revoked if you leave the lab in disarray or damage the equipment.*

### **Safety**

Safety is of paramount concern in laboratories. The student should constantly guard against injuries from cuts, fires and explosions, and hazardous chemicals. Safety glasses should be worn as necessary in the laboratory. Smoking is not permitted in any University of Texas building. A sign should be posted when dangerous materials or explosive gases are being employed in a laboratory. Students should review the safety information available on the UT web site (<http://www.dcc.utexas.edu/safety/labman/>).

All new students are required to attend several safety orientation courses that are offered by the UT Office of Environmental Health and Safety. These courses include the following:

Hazard Communication (General) - 1 hour  
 Laboratory Safety - 1.5 hours  
 Fire Extinguisher Use - 1 hour  
 Hazard Communication (Site-Specific) - to be given by lab supervisor

Students working with radioactive materials should obtain a copy of the manual *RADIATION* from the University Safety Office and are required to attend a class offered by the Safety Office to become familiar with the regulations regarding the use of radioactive materials at the University of Texas at Austin. 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.

Lights, water, steam and gas should be turned off when leaving the laboratory, unless special arrangements are made to have them remain on. Be particularly careful that water does not overflow and cause damage in the building.

Laboratory coats can be obtained through your supervising professor and should be worn. Closed shoes are recommended. Sandals are not approved by the UT Safety office as appropriate for laboratory work.

No University equipment (including computers) or materials should be taken from the building without permission of the supervising professor and the appropriate Dean's Office. All laboratories and offices should be closed and locked when personnel are not present.

### **Use of Telephones and Fax Machines**

No personal phone calls may be charged to the University phones. Long distance calls involving University business require an access code that can be obtained from your Supervising Professor. This code is confidential and must not be given to others.

### **Graphic Methods and Drawing Equipment**

The student should become familiar with specific requirements made by the Graduate School, the editors of journals, and the supervising professor before preparation of graphs, tables, photographs, etc. A hastily or poorly drawn graph, although it may be supported by careful experimentation and valid data, will reflect poorly on the quality of work and on the author.

### **Graduate Student Organizations**

The Graduate Student Assembly represents all Graduate Students and each department has one student representative. If you wish to serve as the Neuroscience representative please contact the Graduate Coordinator. The web page for the GSA is:  
<http://www.utexas.edu/students/gsa/>

The Neuroscience Graduate Students' Association (NGSA) is a student organization for those graduate students interested in Neuroscience. More information may be found on their web page: <http://www.utexas.edu/students/ngsa/index.html>

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### *For which classes should I register?*

As part of the Orientation program there is a separate advising session. You will be advised on which general classes to take and also given a list of related courses. You should discuss with your mentor which courses would best fit with your individual area of study. Thereafter, the annual Progressions Committee meeting is an excellent time to discuss course choices with the Advisors.

### *May I take an undergraduate course?*

Yes, but it will not count towards your GPA or your required number of Graduate hours.

### *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: <http://www.grantsnet.com/>. Each spring the Department 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 a 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 supervising professors or laboratories if I've already started working in a particular lab? If so, what is the process for carrying this out?*

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 supervising professors 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 the 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 laboratories or supervisors. 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 insure a smooth transition.

### *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?*

Grades are no longer mailed to students automatically. To view your final grades or to request that a printed grade report be sent at the end the semester go to: <http://www.utexas.edu/studetn/reistrar/grades/>.

*How do I obtain a transcript?*

Transcripts may be ordered at the Registrar's Office Main Building Room 1 or online at: [www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/transcripts](http://www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/transcripts). A UTEID is required. The fee for transcripts is currently \$10.00.

*When will I get paid?*

Students receive their stipend paycheck at the beginning of each month.

*Where can I take professional development courses?*

Through the Graduate School's "Intellectual Entrepreneurship" Program, UT graduate students in any discipline may now enroll in graduate-level professional development courses. Offered under the Graduate School prefix (GRS), there are 16 professional development courses offered throughout the academic year (fall, spring and summer); these classes focus on such topics as academic and professional writing, the use of technology, entrepreneurship, advanced pedagogy, ethics, consulting, etc. Course descriptions and schedules can be accessed via the Graduate Studies Intellectual Entrepreneurship WEB Page: <http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/development.html> Because space is limited, students are encouraged to register for summer and Fall GRS classes at the first available opportunity.