

# MD/PhD Guidelines

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The Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS) and the TTUHSC School of Medicine (SOM) offer a combined Doctor of Medicine/Doctor of Philosophy (MD/PhD) degree program for eligible students interested in pursuing careers in biomedical research and academic medicine.

**The following policies and guidelines have been established for this program:**

**APPLICATION, INTERVIEW & SELECTION PROCESS:** Information about admission requirements is located at <https://www.ttuhschool.edu/medicine/admissions/reqs.aspx>.

Prospective students will apply through the [Texas Medical and Dental Schools Application Services \(TMDSAS\)](#), indicating their request for consideration in the MD/PhD program. Following completion of the application through TMDSAS, including adequate processing time, eligible candidates will receive an email invitation from the SOM with a link and instructions for completion of the secondary application.

Entry into the MD/PhD program is also possible for traditional MD students enrolled in the TTUHSC SOM as described under Enrollment Options.

GSBS will utilize information from the SOM application in lieu of requiring a formal GSBS application. Upon review of the application materials, the admissions committees from the SOM and GSBS will develop a list of applicants to invite for interviews. The MD/PhD interviews will be coordinated through the SOM Office of Admissions, and selected applicants will participate in a total of **four 20-minute interviews**.

The PhD component of the interviews is tailored to match the research interests of the applicant and will include at least two members of the MD/PhD Selection Committee. Faculty members who conduct interviews with MD/PhD applicants on behalf of the PhD program submit an evaluation form in the Slate application management system. The feedback will be used by the GSBS Senior Associate Dean and MD/PhD Selection Committee in the process of ranking applicants according to five general categories of criteria: 1) commitment to career as a Physician Scientist, 2) research experience, 3) academic records, 4) test scores, and 5) holistic review of personal attributes.

The SOM Associate Dean of Admissions, or other designated representative, and the GSBS Senior Associate Dean will meet periodically to review the applicant rankings, and submit a rank list to the SOM admissions committee to make final decisions for all acceptances. The SOM Admissions Committee makes the final decision for entry into Medical School and will notify GSBS on which applicants have been accepted. Upon concurrence of both schools, all accepted applicants will be admitted to the MD/PhD program.

**CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION:** Acceptable MCAT and GPA scores are required. Previous research experience and commitment to a career as a Physician Scientist will be key elements in the evaluation.

**ENROLLMENT OPTIONS:** The MD/PhD curriculum is flexible to accommodate the academic needs of the students, such as the need for increased research time. Students commonly enter the program at entry to TTUHSC SOM. However, students may also enter after 1-2 years in medical school.

To be eligible to enter the program after matriculation, a TTUHSC SOM student must complete at least one year of medical school; complete at least one TTUHSC SOM student research rotation with a favorable letter of recommendation from the research mentor; and fulfill the MD/PhD progression criteria for Phase 1 of medical school. The student will then be interviewed by at least two members of the MD/PhD Selection Committee and be approved by the full committee. For matriculation into the program the student must also receive a passing grade on the USMLE Step 1.

**Enrollment Options:**

The SOM curriculum consists of three phases: **Phase 1:** Pre-clerkship coursework; **Phase 2:** Clerkships; **Phase 3:** Advanced Clinical Experiences.

Students in the MD/PhD program may choose **two options** for the transition from the SOM to the GSBS to complete the PhD program.

**Option 1.** The PhD component is completed after the SOM Phase 1 curriculum. In this case, the pattern for enrollment from bachelor's or master's degree status at entry to medical school is as follows:

	Summer	Fall	Spring
Year 1	GSBS	SOM	SOM
Year 2	GSBS	SOM	SOM
Year 3	GSBS	GSBS	GSBS

Students typically matriculate into GSBS in the summer semester and begin a laboratory rotation in a field close to their prior research or in a field they are seriously considering for their doctoral dissertation. This rotation allows them to adjust to the campus and begin learning about the variety of possibilities for future research. In late July or early August, MD/PhD students matriculate into the medical school and begin their course work. During the summer following the first year of medical school, the student has approximately two months for another laboratory rotation. After completing the second year of medical school, students must take and pass the USMLE Step 1 examination, no later than April 15. The student will then register for GSBS courses beginning in the summer term. Note: A delay in taking STEP 1 (or STEP 2, if applicable) will result in a loss of salary and/or scholarship for the summer term.

No more than two weeks after taking the USMLE Step 1, students are required to begin their dissertation research. Students who successfully complete the second year of medical school will have completed up to 30 hours of credit that will be applied toward the PhD curriculum. The PhD requirements of the GSBS and the selected concentration will apply.

**Option 2.** The PhD component is completed after the SOM Phase 2 curriculum. Students must complete all components of the Phase 1 and Phase 2 curricula, obtain a passing score on USMLE Step 1, begin clerkships in period 1 of the Phase 2 curriculum and obtain a passing score on Step

2CK prior to transitioning from the SOM to the GSBS. Students transitioning after the 3<sup>rd</sup> year must take and pass Step 2CK no later than May 1.

Irrespective of the chosen option, students transitioning to the GSBS after their second or third year of medical school must obtain a memo from the SOM releasing them to take courses beginning in the appropriate summer semester.

The student in consultation with his/her PhD mentor and the SOM Associate Dean for Student Affairs (Dr. Lauren Cobbs) will select a Clinical Advisor by the end of the first year of the doctoral program. The Clinical Advisor may be included in the PhD Advisory Committee; however, he/she will only have voting rights if they also hold a membership within the GSBS.

Students are encouraged to arrange shadowing experiences with their Clinical Advisor throughout their research project to maintain the clinical skills they obtained in the Phase 1 and Phase 2 curricula. The clinical clerkships will be completed on the campus where the doctoral research project is conducted.

The course requirements for the PhD training phase are determined by the individual concentrations and may vary depending on the area of research. Generally, by the time the coursework is completed, the student will be well-established in research with their mentor. The length of time that is required to complete the research, as well as write/defend a dissertation can vary. No influence should be exerted by the MD/PhD program in an attempt to shorten this phase of training. When the students are engaged in their research, they are subject to the same rules and expectations as any other doctoral students within that concentration. In addition to the preparatory work accomplished in medical school, students commonly spend three and a half to four years in graduate training. Students must have successfully defended their dissertation before transitioning back to the SOM, irrespective of the progression option they chose.

**PROGRESSION CRITERIA:** Students in the MD/PhD program must maintain:

- SOM grades of Pass in all Phase I curriculum blocks.
- Students must meet all ethical, professional and integrity standards outlined by SOM policies (SOM OP 40.03 and 40.04).
- GSBS grades of B or better in each course
- GSBS cumulative GPA of 3.5 or better

Any student who fails to maintain the standards described above during Year 1 of the medical school curriculum will meet with the GSBS Sr. Associate Dean and the SOM Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. The program co-chairs will determine the appropriate course of action. A recommendation from the Co-Chairs to the Deans for dismissal from the MD/PhD program would include (but not limited to):

- Any student who must repeat Phase I or Phase II of medical school
- Any student who must repeat a SOM or GSBS course
- Any student who fails in their first attempt to obtain a passing score on the USMLE Step 1 Exam

The requirements to maintain status in the MD/PhD program are at a higher level than those for retention in either the School of Medicine or the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences. Any MD/PhD student who withdraws or is dismissed from either school for any reason will be

automatically dismissed from the MD/PhD program. Dismissal from the combined degree program, or voluntary withdrawal, shall result in discontinuance of the student's research assistantship and scholarships. A student may withdraw from one or the other of the two schools and, with consent of the Dean of the school, continue in the school of their choice if they continue to meet that school's standards of performance and conduct.

**THE MD/PHD PHYSICIAN SCIENTIST OPERATING COMMITTEE** consists of the:

GSBS Dean – Brandt Schneider, PhD

GSBS Sr. Associate Dean – Michael Blanton, PhD

SOM Dean – John DeToledo, MD

SOM Associate Dean for Admissions - Felix Morales, MD

SOM Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs – Simon Williams, PhD

In addition, the following members will be appointed in January by the GSBS and SOM Dean to serve 3-year terms. These appointments will be staggered to provide for continuity of the committee's work:

- Two representatives from the faculty of the clinical departments of the School of Medicine;
  - Ebtesam Attaya Islam, MD, PhD, Internal Medicine (2025)
  - Ty Whisenant, MD, PhD, Internal Medicine (2027)
- Two graduate faculty representatives from the GSBS doctoral concentrations;
  - Volker Neugebauer, MD, PhD, Pharmacology & Neuroscience (2024)
  - Kendra Rumbaugh, PhD, Immunology & Infectious Diseases (2027)
- Two MD/PhD students.
  - Johanna Villarreal (2026)
  - Robert Barnes (2027)

Co-Chairs from the SOM and GSBS (Dr. Williams and Dr. Blanton) will provide oversight of this committee as appointed by their respective Deans. The faculty members will be selected because of their experience with the MD/PhD program and their expertise in certain scientific areas. Student participation serves to bring the perspective of the students to the deliberations of this body and, in turn, is helpful in the career training of the students. The committee members along with the students will be full voting members. The SOM Assistant Dean of Admissions (Louis Perez) and the GSBS Assistant Dean (Pam Johnson) will also serve on the committee as ex-officio non-voting members.

The MD/PhD Physician Scientist Operating Committee has a number of critical responsibilities:

1. The members serve as liaisons to academic departments or interdisciplinary programs;
2. The committee reviews and advises on guidelines and general management decisions;
3. The members are available as advisors to the students;
4. The members may serve in an advisory function to individual students or sometimes as active intermediaries in the event an issue arises; and
5. A representative from the committee will conduct exit interviews for students withdrawing from the program.
6. The committee provides an annual report to the SOM Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee and the GSBS Graduate Council

**MD/PHD STUDENT EVALUATION SUBCOMMITTEE:** In June each year, the GSBS Sr. Associate Dean will facilitate annual reviews for each student in collaboration with the following individuals: (1) MD/PhD student, (2) student's research mentor or concentration graduate advisor

if the student is undeclared, (3) SOM Associate Dean for Student Affairs, and (4) SOM Sr Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

A standardized form (Attachment A) along with a report from DegreeWorks is used to summarize grades for the term and provide an overview of key factors which may impact a student's progress in the program, such as student motivation, initiative, participation, and overall level of scholarship/research aptitude. The committee also advises on future program components and timelines. The Sr. Associate Dean will report to the Physician Scientist Operating Committee in the Summer of every year on the progress of the students.

**FUNDING:** All MD/PhD students receive full tuition and financial support throughout their training, as long as they are in good standing. Financial support consists of scholarships while in the SOM and a Research Assistantship while in GSBS (See Attachment B). Students receiving a Research Assistantship are considered employees at the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (50% FTE) and qualify for in-state tuition, fee waivers and options for health and dental insurance benefits. Research Assistantship positions do not accrue sick leave or vacation. As an employee, the Texas Education Code (Sec. 54.065) allows for in-state tuition for non-residents. While completing the doctoral program, GSBS and the mentor share equally in funding the RA position. Students are required to apply to the RA position at least 30 days prior to matriculating into GSBS.

**\*\*** When students complete their doctoral degree, they return to scholarship support from the SOM. The research assistantship will be discontinued and students are no longer eligible for health and dental options as an employee.

All MD/PhD students **ARE REQUIRED** to complete the following steps each year of medical school. If these requirements are not completed, School of Medicine **will not** be able to process tuition and stipend scholarships.

1. Submit a scholarship application each year, no later than **April 1<sup>st</sup>**, to School of Medicine Admissions;
2. Submit a FAFSA each year, no later than **April 15<sup>th</sup>**;
3. Submit a Scholarship Acknowledgment Form (upon receipt of scholarship award letter); and
4. Submit a detailed tuition/fees statement for each term enrolled in medicine to School of Medicine Admissions.

It is the responsibility of the student(s) to notify School of Medicine Admissions prior to transitioning over to GSBS and prior to transitioning back to School of Medicine after completion of their PhD.

Tuition scholarships will be issued to cover tuition and mandatory fees while in the MD/PhD program. Non-mandatory fees will not be covered such as library fees, parking fees, ETD fee, graduation fee, student health insurance fee, late fees, etc. All scholarships will be processed through the Scholarship Tracking System. If a student withdraws from the program, they may be liable for any required refunds of state or federal financial aid funds. Any scholarship over the cost of tuition, fees, books and supplies is taxable.

**DIPLOMA:** Upon completion of the PhD requirements, MD/PhD students will receive their PhD diploma at the next designated graduation date (May, August, or December). Students are

encouraged to attend the GSBS commencement ceremony. Graduates in August, December and May are all recognized at one ceremony held in May of every year. MD/PhD students will attend the SOM commencement upon completion of the medical degree, at which time they will receive special recognition.

The School of Medicine and the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences reserve the right to make changes in the MD/PhD program in alignment with state requirements, program accrediting bodies, and institutional accreditation standards. Changes in policies and procedures will not be altered retrospectively and thus matriculated students will complete the MD/PhD program according to requirements in effect at the time of admission.

Revised and amended: July 2000, May 2008, April 2010, October 2011, September 2014, June 2016, May 2019, April 2025.



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HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER™

Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

## GSBS Forms

### MD/PhD Annual Review

#### Student Information:

Name:

R Number:

Program:

Matriculation:

#### Qualifying Exam

Date of Qualifying Exam:

Admission to Candidacy:

Date of Evaluation:

Present at Evaluation:

#### Grades

Date	Course Number	Course Name	Grade	Credit
9/12/2006	MSCI 5060	Clinical Oriented Anatomy	XX	9

**Comments** *(Include student's motivation, initiative, participation, overall level of scholarship, and research aptitude):*

Student's progress is satisfactory   ☐ Yes   ☐ No (If no, suggested remedy:)

Student

Department

Major Advisor

Associate Dean for Educational Programs - SOM

Dean, Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

# Proposed MD/PhD Financial Support

	YEAR 1			YEAR 2			YEAR 3		
	1st Year SOM			2nd Year SOM			YEAR 1 GSBS		
	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring
	1-Jun	Sept - Dec	Jan - May	1-Jun	Sept - Dec	Jan - May	1-Jun	Sept - Dec	Jan - May
Registration	GSBS lab rotations	SOM 1	SOM 1	GSBS lab rotations	SOM 2	SOM 2 / STEP 1 before April 15	GSBS	GSBS	GSBS
Financial Support									
SOM Stipend - Scholarship	\$4,000	\$ 12,500	\$ 12,500	17000	\$ 12,000		\$29,000 (2416.67 per month)		
SOM Tuition scholarship	-----Paid in full -----			-----Paid in full -----					
GSBS Research Assistant							2083.33 / mo		
GSBS Tuition scholarship							--- Paid in full ---		
	YEAR 4			YEAR 5			YEAR 6		
	YEAR 2 GSBS			YEAR 3 GSBS			YEAR 4 GSBS		
	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring
	1-Jun	Sept - Dec	Jan - May	1-Jun	Sept - Dec	Jan - May	1-Jun	Sept - Dec	Jan - May
Registration	GSBS	GSBS	GSBS	GSBS	GSBS	GSBS	GSBS	GSBS	GSBS
Financial Support									
GSBS Research Assistant	\$29,000 (2416.67 per month)			\$29,000 (2416.67 per month)			\$29,000 (2416.67 per month)		
GSBS Tuition scholarship	-----Paid in full -----			-----Paid in full -----			-----Paid in full -----		
	YEAR 7		YEAR 8						
	3rd Year SOM		4th Year SOM						
	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring					
	May - Dec	Jan - April	May - Dec	Jan - April					
Registration	SOM 3	SOM 3	SOM 4	SOM 4					
Financial Support									
SOM Stipend - Scholarship	\$ 17,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 17,000	\$ 12,000					
SOM Tuition scholarship	----Paid in Full -----		----Paid in Full -----						