



**School of Basic Biomedical Sciences  
College of Medicine**

**M.D./Ph.D PROGRAM**

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**ACADEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

## ***Objective:***

The combined M.D./Ph.D. program within the College of Medicine at the University of South Florida is designed to foster development of the next generation of physician-scientists who will make major contributions via translational medicine to enhance the diagnosis and treatment of human disease.

The program is oriented towards a small group of highly qualified and motivated students and is structured to provide an outstanding medical education, scientific training, and state-of-the-art clinical practice by integrating these experiences in an interdisciplinary environment. The program will be uniquely tailored to meet the need of each individual student and to promote a deep sense of scientific discovery combined with the application to modern medicine.

## ***Policies and Procedures:***

- I. The MD/PhD Advisory Committee serves as the oversight committee and the admissions committee for the MD/PhD Program
- II. The MD/PhD Advisory Committee shall be comprised of five members from Basic Science Departments and 5 from Clinical Departments plus the Program Director. The Program Director will be appointed by the VP/Dean USF Health. Associate Dean for Undergraduate Educational Affairs and the Associate Dean for Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs will serve as *ex officio* members
- III. For existing medical students, to be considered for entry into the MD/PhD program, they must apply prior to entry into the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Medical School
- IV. The academic progress of MD/PhD students will be reviewed by the MD/PhD Advisory Committee each semester
- V. All MD/PhD students must achieve at least passing grade with commendation (“PC”) in all Medical School courses. With grades of “P”, the student will be dismissed from the MD/PhD program but can continue in the MD program. Students in the MD/PhD program who fail any course will be dismissed from the MD/PhD program with will be referred to the APRC for disposition regarding the MD program. MD/PhD students must have a grade point average at or above the class mean at the end of each year of medical school. If they fall below but are passing, they may continue in the MD program but will be dismissed from the MD/PhD program. It is incumbent upon the student to monitor his/her performance.

- VI. All MD/PhD students must achieve a “B” or better in all graduate courses. Failure to do so shall result in dismissal from the MD/PhD program. Any student dismissed from the combined program can elect to continue in the traditional MD programs if they receive appropriate faculty recommendations.
- VII. MD/PhD students must do a laboratory research rotation in the summer prior to joining the medical school. This requirement may be waived for students who have received late acceptance into the MD/PhD program. The students will be required to do rotations between Years 1 & 2 and 2 & 3 after completion of USMLE Step 1 but before the Fall semester of Medical School. Two of these rotations must be in the laboratory of an investigator other than the dissertation adviser. The rotation laboratory supervisor should be selected in consultation with the Director of the MD/PhD Program. Each research rotation comprises a period of six-eight weeks with the objectives of:
- i. Familiarizing students with potential dissertation mentors. Students will receive a briefing on the research focus of the laboratory and receive 1-3 reviews and/or research papers to read and discuss with the mentor during the rotation
  - ii. Introducing students to the conduct of laboratory science. Students will be engaged on limited projects with the goal of understanding the basis for the hypothesis being tested and the general approach to test the hypothesis and will participate in weekly laboratory meetings with their current mentor
  - iii. Developing skills in diverse laboratory techniques. Students will be exposed to techniques (theory and practice) associated with the rotation project by collaborating with investigator (mentor, graduate student, postdoctoral trainee and/or technician) and conduct laboratory research throughout the week and on weekends when indicated
  - iv. Integrating M.D./Ph.D. students with other graduate students and faculty and to expose students to other research activities of the program and departments
- VIII. Graduate studies formally begin at the end of Year 2 of Medical School. Entry into the Graduate Program requires a passing grade on USMLE Step 1. Failure on USMLE Step 1 will result in probation in the program. Failure to pass USMLE Step 1 on a second attempt will result in dismissal from the MD/PhD program. A passing score in USMLE Step 1 must be reported by November 1<sup>st</sup> of the respective academic year.
- IX. MD/PhD students are not required to take the Foundations in Biomedical Sciences (Course #: GMS 6001) but are required to fulfill program specific requirements and to take the required courses in Research Ethics & Skills, Biostatistics, etc. Specific requirements for completion of the Ph.D. degree are listed in the handbooks of the respective academic and research concentrations and include various metrics such as the requirement to have authored a refereed publication that describes some aspects of their dissertation research.

- X. Progress toward completion of the PhD involves the following timeline:
- i. MD/PhD Students **must** declare their choice of a dissertation advisor by the end of Year 1 of graduate work. The choice of dissertation advisor is subject to the approval of the MD/PhD Advisory Committee
  - ii. MD/PhD students **must** successfully complete their Qualifying Exam by October of Year 2 of Graduate Study
  - iii. MD/PhD students **must** have completed their dissertation proposal with approval by their Thesis Committee by August of Year 2 of graduate study
  - iv. MD/PhD students should complete their PhD studies and defend their dissertation 3-4 years after the start of graduate studies
  - v. Inability to meet this time line must be appealed for approval by the MD/PhD Advisory Committee.
- XII. MD/PhD students must have successfully defended their dissertation and have submitted the approved dissertation prior to starting Year 3 of Medical School.
- XIII. MD/PhD students will be required to participate in ½ day clinic/week during the graduate work prior to entering Year 3 of Medical School. Arrangements for this experience will be made through the members of the MD/PhD Advisory Subcommittee designated as the Clinical Transition Subcommittee
- XIV. In years 3 and 4 of Medical School, MD/PhD students will be required to attend journal clubs and similar professional enrichment activities
- XV. The MD and PhD degrees will be conferred only upon completion of the requirements for **BOTH** degrees.
- XVI. The MD/PhD Advisory Committee has been authorized by the Committee on Medical Student Admissions and the Committee on Graduate Medical Sciences Education and the Graduate Student Affairs to enforce these guidelines of the MD/PhD Program.
- XVII. Admission to the combined MD/PhD involves the following requirements:
1. Student applications will be submitted through AMCAS
  2. Applicants must meet the standards and prerequisites for admission to the both M.D. and Ph.D. programs in the College of Medicine and the University of South Florida
  3. The Graduate Record Exam (GRE) will be waived
  4. Applicants will be expected to have a minimum MCAT score of 30 with no individual score less than 8 and a minimum science and overall GPA of 3.7
  5. Candidates will also be evaluated based upon submission of a modified essay, the extent and level of their previous education, awards and honors, other relevant research experience, professional training, and publications

and reference letters, considering both the numerical rankings and the text of the letters which will be used to assess a student's desire and motivation to become a physician-scientist

6. Successful completion of an interview process that includes the Program Director, members of the M.D./Ph.D. Program Advisory Committee and selected student representatives
7. The deadline for applications will be December 1<sup>st</sup>, but because of a rolling admission process, submission of early application is recommended

XVIII. Students admitted to the combined MD/PhD program will be responsible for all tuition costs associated with the M.D. degree. For the training period associated with the Ph.D. program, students will receive a tuition waiver for the matriculation portion of each registered credit hour (full time status, 12, 12, 8 cr. hrs) together with the current stipend. A tuition waiver and pro-rated stipend will also be paid during the research rotation periods. There are no "payback" clauses to the program. Ph.D. tuition waivers should be provided by the institution and student stipends provided during the laboratory rotations should be derived from institutional funds. However, once a student selects a dissertation mentor, the mentor is responsible for maintaining the student stipend during the entire period of PhD training.

FIGURE 1: COMBINED M.D./Ph.D. DEGREE TIMELINE

