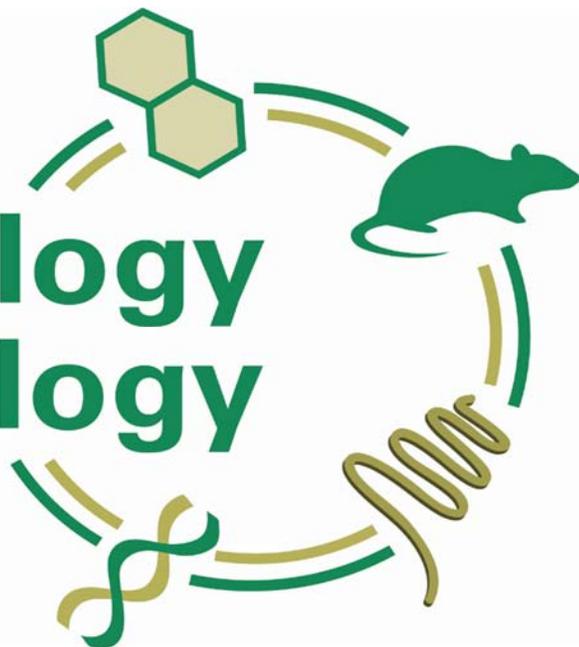


Department of  
**Pharmacology  
& Toxicology**



Doctoral Program Handbook  
(2018-2019)

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology uses effective leadership, productive collaboration, and expertise in molecular, cellular and integrative pharmacology and toxicology to excel in research, education and service.

The principal objective of the departmental Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) program is to prepare students for pharmacology- and toxicology-related careers. Departmental faculty have expertise in biochemical/molecular pharmacology, cardiovascular pharmacology, drug metabolism, immunohematology and toxicology, neuroendocrine pharmacology, neuropharmacology, gastrointestinal pharmacology, toxicology, and carcinogenesis (see departmental website for details on faculty research interests (<http://www.phmtox.msu.edu/>)).

The Department has specific obligations to doctoral graduate student trainees, and conversely, trainees have obligations to the Department and to themselves. An important shared obligation is to maintain an environment in which there is mutual trust, respect, personal integrity, collegiality, and continuous striving toward excellence in scholarship.

### **The Department will provide for the student:**

1. A scholarly environment conducive to conducting meritorious scientific research.
2. Responsiveness to valid academic needs and goals.
3. Support and encouragement of creative and original scholarly activity.
4. An annual evaluation of the program and a willingness to make changes as appropriate.
5. Training in written and oral scientific communication.
6. Guidance and mentorship for a science career.
7. An environment that respects and values a broad range of backgrounds, viewpoints, and experiences.
8. Training through the Environmental Health & Safety (EHS) office to include new researcher orientation as well as several specific training sessions and manuals.

### **The student has the following responsibilities and goals:**

1. To demonstrate aptitude for scientific research including: commitment and effort, knowledge of the literature, formulation of hypotheses, experimental tests of hypotheses, analysis of experimental data and effective written and oral communication skills.
2. To present original scientific research at regional and national discipline appropriate conferences and meetings.
2. To produce peer-reviewed scientific publications.
3. To strive for superior performance in academic courses.
4. To participate in departmental seminars both as a speaker and a member of the audience.
5. To interact with faculty and students as colleagues.
6. To attend and actively participate in the educational/career development programs offered by the department.
7. To demonstrate academic and research integrity.

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Students enter the Pharmacology and Toxicology PhD program through the Michigan State University Biomolecular Sciences (BMS) Gateway. At the end of their second semester in the program, students declare a major and select a major advisor. Details of BMS program requirements can be found at <https://biomolecular.natsci.msu.edu/students/bms-student-handbook/>

The Pharmacology and Toxicology PhD program has three components: 1) didactic instruction in the concepts and language of the pharmacological and toxicological sciences; 2) training in hypothesis-driven dissertation-based research and the scientific method that is built around an original dissertation research project that results in publications in peer-reviewed journals and presentations at scientific conferences; 3) training in scientific communication and professional development.

### I. PROGRAM COMPONENTS / DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

#### 1. First Year BMS Students

**Research Rotation:** First year BMS students participate in a research rotation system that spans the fall and spring semesters. Research rotations provide opportunities for students to become familiar with the research activities of the training faculty before selecting a major advisor. Students participate in three 10-week long research rotations in different laboratories. Emphasis during research rotations is on: 1) active participation in laboratory work, 2) gaining a working knowledge of the research field, and 3) production of sufficient experimental results that a valid evaluation of the student's potential for a career in research can be made. During this time students also engage in course work detailed in section II part 4.

**Welcome/Orientation:** After completing their first year rotations, the students will make a final decision to join the department and choose a mentor. This happens at the end of Spring semester of their first year. At that time, they will attend a department orientation to receive information about the expectations and specific department requirements.

**First Year Seminar:** Students entering the Pharmacology and Toxicology PhD program present a departmental seminar summarizing some aspect of his/her research rotation experience. This seminar takes place at the end of the summer semester of their first year. The seminar should be 10 minutes long followed by 5 minutes of discussion/question time. Student performance during the seminar presentation and the subsequent questioning period will be evaluated on the basis of: organization, presentation and knowledge of content. All members of the department are invited to attend these seminars, tenure stream and fixed-term faculty members are asked to provide a written evaluation of the student's seminar performance and this is transmitted to the student and a copy is placed in the student's file.

**First Year Evaluation:** Before the beginning of their second year of graduate school, the faculty (tenure stream and fixed-term) will evaluate each student on the basis of:

- 1) Academic achievement (course grades). A 3.0 minimum overall grade point average from among the coursework is required.
- 2) Performance during rotations (demonstration of interest, research ability and perseverance).
- 3) Performance in the first-year seminar (see above).

At this time, the faculty can recommend to the Graduate Program Director that the student be allowed to progress to the second year of the program or that the student be dismissed from the program. Students who fail to identify a faculty mentor before the beginning of their second year of graduate school will need to meet with the Graduate Program Director to discuss whether they will be able to continue in the program. Students with a GPA between 2.0 and 3.0 will be provided with a schedule prepared by the graduate program director in consultation with the department graduate program committee detailing measures they must take to improve their academic standing. Students with a GPA of less than 2.0 will be dismissed from the program. Students can view their academic records by contacting the graduate program director and making a formal request to view their file.

A student who receives a grade of 2.0 or above in a course may not repeat the course on a credit basis unless this action is approved by the associate dean of the student's assigned college. The number of credits that a graduate student may repeat is determined by the student's major advisor or guidance committee, if a guidance committee has not been formed the graduate program committee will assume this role. When a course is repeated on a credit basis, the last grade and credits earned completely replace the previous grade in the computation of grade-point averages, however, all entries remain a part of the student's permanent academic record.

Any course repeated for credit must be taken on the same grading system under which the course was taken the first time, except where standard requirements to the contrary must be satisfied in order to meet graduate requirements. Credit by examination may not be used to repeat a course in which a grade below 2.0 was received.

If a student receives a deferred grade (DF) the required work must be completed and a grade reported within 6 months with the option of a single six-month extension. If the required work is not completed within the time limit, the DF will become U (unfinished) and will be changed to DF/U under the numerical and Pass-No Grade (P-N) grading systems, and to DF/NC under the Credit-No Credit (CR-NC) system. *This rule does not apply to graduate dissertation work.* All dissertation research credits (PHM999) will remain graded as DF until the student successfully defends their dissertation. At that time, all of their research credits will be graded as "P" by the University Degree office as the student's degree is conferred.

**2. Selection of Major Advisor and Guidance Committee:** Students in the BMS program select a major advisor and their degree-granting department / program in late April of their first year in graduate school. The major advisor can be a tenure-system or a fixed-term faculty member; fixed-term faculty members must obtain prior approval from their College and the Graduate School before agreeing to be a major advisor.

Major advisors are expected to:

Advise students about course requirements and graduate program policies

Advise students in the development of a research plan and provide the appropriate training to allow the student to carry out that plan.

Help the student develop the professional skills required in the field (these include but are not limited to scientific writing, proposal and manuscript preparation, presentation skills and professional network development)

Provide continuous feedback to the students with respect to their research goals and their development as a scientist.

Commit to support the student's stipend, health insurance and tuition from the time that the student officially joins the mentor's lab and extends until the student's final dissertation defense, as long as the student remains in academic good standing.

Students proceeding in the PhD program select a guidance committee during their second year in graduate school. The major advisor is chair of the student's guidance committee, which consists of at least four MSU-appointed faculty members (three faculty members with primary appointments in Pharmacology and Toxicology and one committee member with a primary appointment in another department). At least three committee members, including the committee chairperson, must possess an earned PhD. Students may also select faculty members from other institutions to serve on their committee; this requires prior approval from the Graduate School. The committee oversees student coursework, advises the student concerning research and conducts the oral defense of the research proposal and dissertation.

Students can modify the composition of their guidance committee during the course of their PhD if needed with consultation from their major advisor and the graduate program director.

Students meet with their guidance committee at least once a year to discuss their progress and future directions. Students are strongly encouraged to utilize their guidance committee members at any time for advice; this does not require a formal committee meeting. Students should take the initiative to plan a committee meeting once a year, but it is the duty of the major advisor to verify in the student's annual evaluation that this meeting occurred.

Students have multiple options in the event that their major advisor leaves MSU prior to the completion of their degree. Students should discuss their options both with the major advisor and with the graduate program director. Students who wish to change major advisors during the course of the PhD should also contact the graduate program director.

3. **Setting up your Program of Study:** After the selection of a major advisor and a guidance committee students must submit their program of study for approval using the GradPlan system (<https://gradplan.msu.edu>). Students should update GradPlan with subsequent graduate program activities at least annually.

4. **Coursework:** The table below is intended to provide a general outline of course requirements; modifications to a student's required courses may be requested by the major advisor dependent upon student's background. The graduate program committee in consultation with the graduate program director must approve requests for a waiver of any course requirements. Should this request occur in the student's first year, then the graduate program director will serve as the student's major advisor. The final decision will be sent to the student and a copy of this decision placed in the student's departmental file.

### **Year-by-year synopsis**

The table below details the most expedient path to PhD degree completion, deviations from this path are possible with prior approval.

Year	Course Work (minimum requirement)	Milestones	Other expectations
Year 1 (BMS program year)	PHM801, PHM802 + two other courses from PHM816, PHM830, BMB801, BMB802, PHM827, PSL828, PSL829	Select a major advisor  Give first year seminar	Participate fully in research rotations and activities offered by the BMS program  When possible participate in activities offered by the Pharmacology and Toxicology PhD program  Begin the University responsible conduct of research (RCR) education program
Year 2	Complete required coursework with the possible exception of PHM816  Additional courses if required by your major advisor / guidance committee	Select a guidance committee  Define research area  Complete the University RCR education program if not completed in year 1	Conduct independent laboratory research  Participate fully in Pharmacology and Toxicology Ph.D. program activities including departmental seminars, student chalk talks and graduate student forum
Year 3	PHM816 if not taken in years 1 or 2.  Additional courses if required by the major advisor / guidance committee	Submit and defend dissertation proposal	Conduct independent laboratory research  Present research at regional and national conferences  Prepare and submit manuscripts for publication  Participate fully in Pharmacology and Toxicology Ph.D. program activities including departmental seminars, student chalk talks and graduate student forum
Year 4 - completion	Additional courses if required by the major advisor / guidance committee		Conduct independent laboratory research.  Present research at regional and national conferences  Prepare and submit manuscripts for publication  Participate fully in Pharmacology and Toxicology Ph.D. program activities including departmental seminars, student chalk talks and graduate student forum.
Final year		Write and defend PhD dissertation	Complete and submit all manuscripts resulting from PhD research for peer review.

### Research Credits (PHM999)

Each student working toward a Doctor of Philosophy degree must conduct original research upon which a dissertation makes a significant contribution to knowledge is to be prepared and published. The research is to be under the direction of and acceptable to the guidance committee. **All doctoral students must register for and successfully complete a minimum of 24 credits and no more than a total of 36 credits.** Requests for overrides to exceed the maximum of 36 credits of PHM999 must be directed to the Office of the Registrar (<https://www.reg.msu.edu/Forms/FormsMenu.aspx>), should the total number of credits go above 45 the RO will confer with the Graduate School before considering the request for an exception.

**5. Dissertation Research Proposal:** After selecting a guidance committee, the student, with the help of his/her major advisor, will begin to prepare a dissertation research proposal that will constitute the written portion of the comprehensive exam (see Comprehensive Examination below for deadline). The proposal will be distributed to the other members of the guidance committee and will serve as the basis for an oral portion of the comprehensive examination. The written proposal will be submitted to the guidance committee no less than two weeks prior to the date of the comprehensive exam.

**6. Comprehensive Examination:** Students in the Pharmacology and Toxicology PhD program are required to take their comprehensive exam during their 7<sup>th</sup> semester in the program (fall semester of year 3). Delays beyond the 31<sup>st</sup> of January of the student's 8<sup>th</sup> semester in graduate school require a letter of explanation to the graduate program committee. The comprehensive examination consists of the defense of a dissertation research proposal written in the format of a National Research Service Award application (students applying for extramural funding from a source other than NIH can use the format specified by their funding agency with prior approval from their guidance committee). The goal of the oral examination is to make an in-depth evaluation of the student's dissertation proposal, including an evaluation of the student's knowledge of related areas of pharmacology and toxicology. The student presents a public departmental seminar (45-50-minute presentation followed by 10-15 minutes for questions). This seminar consists of a presentation of the literature that led to the development of the student's central hypothesis, the student's research progress and preliminary data and proposed experiments for completion of the dissertation research project. Students are expected to present a very limited number of slides (no more than 5) outlining their proposed experiments.

After the seminar, the student will have a closed meeting with the members of the oral comprehensive examination committee. During this time, the committee will ask questions related specifically to the proposal and evaluate the student's knowledge of the principles of pharmacology and toxicology. The evaluation of the principles of pharmacology and toxicology will include 10 questions from a predefined question bank. Students have access to the question bank in the months leading up to their comprehensive examination.

The comprehensive examination committee comprises the student's guidance committee (minus the major advisor) plus a faculty member in the Pharmacology and Toxicology Department who will be designated by the graduate program committee. This latter individual will serve as chair of the oral examination committee. The roles of the chair are to serve as a representative of the faculty with the responsibility of ensuring that the student's seminar and the oral comprehensive examination are conducted pursuant to the format outlined above and to report the student's grade. The chair of the oral comprehensive examination committee will also provide a written report on the oral exam to the student and the major advisor, this report will be placed in the student's file.

The student will be graded on the written and the oral component of the exam separately. For both sections, there are three (3) possible grades: 1) Pass, 2) Conditional Pass or 3) Fail. If there is not a consensus among the examination committee regarding grading of a student's written or oral component, the Graduate Director will be notified and he/she will mediate to bring about an agreement. For the written exam, a conditional pass will be given if relatively small portion of the student's proposal needs to be revised and re-evaluated. If the proposal needs to be completely rewritten this would be considered as a fail. Similarly, during the oral exam minor gaps in knowledge

will lead to a conditional pass, a serious lack of knowledge and or an inability to discuss the research plan will be considered a fail. Students who fail the assessment of the basic principles of pharmacology and toxicology but defend their own research and proposal well will be given a conditional pass. The student will be given a second opportunity to answer a new set of principles questions, if the students fails a second time they will receive a fail for the oral component of the exam.

Students receiving a conditional pass in either the written or the oral exam will work with the comprehensive exam committee to define the path forward for remediation. Students who completely fail the written section will need to provide the comprehensive exam committee with a new proposal, the time frame for this will be decided by the comprehensive exam committee. Student who pass the written portion of the exam but who fail the oral portion will also work with the comprehensive exam committee to schedule a new oral defense. Both sections of the examination may be repeated once; if failed a second time the student will be dismissed from the graduate program or given the option of finishing with a Master's degree.

**7. Dissertation Seminar and Defense:** Students must complete a scholarly research project and prepare a written dissertation based upon this research. Several weeks (no fewer than two) before the final defense the student must submit his/her dissertation for review by the guidance committee. The dissertation must be prepared following the graduate school guidelines. The dissertation must be approved by the guidance committee, other possible outcomes are a rejection of the dissertation or the dissertation can be accepted subject to revisions required by the committee. The student must pass an oral examination and defense of the dissertation. This part of the examination includes a public seminar outlining the work presented in the dissertation followed by a closed examination conducted by the guidance committee. The seminar includes a 50-minute presentation with 10 minutes for questions and discussion from the audience. The oral dissertation defense is a final oral examination that tests the student's knowledge of scientific areas relevant to the student's research project. The oral defense is a pass / fail exam. Students who fail the both parts of the final exam will be given the option of completing a MS degree.

## **8. Other Program Requirements:**

**A. Departmental Seminars.** Attendance at weekly departmental seminars (Wednesdays at noon) is required of all students in the doctoral program. Attendance will be recorded and will be included as part of the student's annual evaluation, which will then become a component of evaluating the student's "good standing" status. Attendance at seminars presented by student peers is also important as provides an indication of professional respect.

**B. Graduate Student Forum:** The graduate program committee schedules graduate student forums during the Fall and Spring Semesters; attendance is recorded and is expected for all students in the PhD program. These forums serve as a vehicle for student enrichment and they provide a time for students to practice presentations before meetings and conferences. Possible other enrichment activities include, but are not limited to, continuing Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) education, workshops on scientific writing, workshops on grant/proposal writing, workshops of making oral presentations, workshops on mentoring, discussions of nonacademic careers and discussions on major issues in science and academia. Graduate student chalk talks are part of graduate student forum; therefore, all students are expected to attend.

**C. Productive Research Leading to Peer-Reviewed Publications:** Students in the department of Pharmacology and Toxicology are expected to engage in publication-quality research. Students should make every possible effort to submit their research for publication prior to defending their PhD research.

**D. Annual Student Evaluations:** During a regularly scheduled faculty meeting sometime at the beginning of Spring semester, the Graduate Program Director will inform all members of the faculty of the Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology of the progress of each student.

Students meet individually with the graduate program director annually. Prior to this meeting the student and the major advisor independently complete forms describing the student's progress and their plans for the coming year. The student and the major advisor are expected to meet to discuss these forms prior to submitting them to the graduate program director. The graduate program director will review these forms with the student, and they will be placed in the student's file. These forms are provided to the student at least a month before the annual review will take place. The students should also submit an updated transcript and individualized development plan (IDP) prior to their meeting with the graduate program director.

**E. Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR):** Pharmacology and Toxicology Students are required to complete the University's responsible conduct of research (RCR) workshop series in their first or second year of study. This program covers all nine basic principles of RCR outlined by the Michigan State University Research Integrity Council. Student attendance at these workshops is tracked, and students are provided with a certificate on completion of the program. This certificate is required for graduation. Thereafter students will receive at least 3 additional hours of continuing education a year. The continuing education will take the form of discussions in lab meetings, special seminars, sessions in graduate student forum and case histories. Students should work with their individual mentors for instruction on how to meet this University requirement.

**F. Teaching: As part of the teaching requirement,** students who have completed their comprehensive exam will attend a department workshop on teaching and have the opportunity to gain hands-on experience within the classroom. This will be accomplished under the guidance of faculty mentors who provide each student with confidential feedback on his/her instructional performance. This experience could include one or more functions such as preparing lecture material, delivering a lecture, preparing an examination or tutoring of a student.

**G. Service:** The Graduate Students will form a student advisory council (SAC). This will be comprised one student from each of the second through fifth year classes. The SAC will be chaired by the student representative from the fourth-year class. This committee advises the department chair and / or the graduate program director of issues and concerns raised by the student body. The SAC also assigns student representatives to departmental committees. Student representatives are assigned to all departmental committees, except for the faculty advisory committee.

## II. DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES: ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

1. **Outside Employment:** The doctoral training program culminates in the PhD degree. Students are expected to devote the full twelve-month year to graduate work and are not permitted outside employment if funds administered by the program are provided for support.

## 2. Time Limits for Requirements for PhD

- a. Comprehensive examinations must be taken within five years of the first course taken towards the degree.
- b. The doctoral degree must be completed within eight years of initial enrollment as a doctoral student. If degree is not completed within eight years, the comprehensive examination must be passed again and require a time limit extension approval of the 8 year time limit from The Graduate School.

## 3. Termination and Withdrawal

- a. **Termination:** Should a decision to terminate a student be made, all information regarding the decision will be held strictly confidential between the student and the concerned faculty and be released only with the consent of the student involved, unless this decision becomes the substance for a grievance procedure in which case such information shall be released to the grievance committee. A decision to terminate may be made on the grounds of failing academic performance, lack of sufficient definable progress (e.g. not meeting goals of yearly evaluation), or dishonest laboratory practice. The decision to terminate a student is a serious one and is not made lightly.

**Withdrawal:** Students may choose to withdraw from the department for personal or professional reasons. Should a student choose to withdraw, a letter detailing the specifics of withdrawing, including reasons for the withdrawal and the date on which this is effective should be provided to the graduate program director.

**Voluntary Withdrawal During the Semester:** A student may voluntarily withdraw from the University prior to the end of the twelfth week of a semester, or within the first 6/7 of the duration of the student's enrollment in a summer or special sessions (calculated in weekdays). Withdrawal is not permitted after these deadlines.

After submission of the Departmental letter described above, the withdrawal procedure within the University begins in the office of the Associate Dean of the college *in which the student is enrolled* or in the Office of the Registrar. Upon official voluntary withdrawal from the University, symbols are assigned to courses in which the student was enrolled according to the effective date of the withdrawal as follows: If withdrawal is before the middle of the semester or summer session, no symbols will be assigned to courses in which the student was enrolled. If withdrawal is after the middle of the semester or summer session, symbols will be assigned by instructors to courses in which the student was enrolled as follows: W (no grade) to indicate *passing or no basis for grade* regardless of the grading system under which the student is enrolled; N to indicate *failing* in a course authorized for P-N grading, or 0.0 to indicate *failing* in a course authorized for numeric grading.

In case of official withdrawal from the University, fees are subject to refund according to the refund policy.

A student living in an off-campus organized living unit should consult the individual unit for policies regarding room and board refunds.

If three or more complete semesters of school are missed after withdrawal, including the summer sessions, the student must apply for readmission online at [www.reg.msu.edu](http://www.reg.msu.edu).

**Voluntary at the Close of a Semester:** There is no formal procedure for withdrawal at the end of a semester with the exception of submitting the departmental letter; however, a student living in University housing should notify the manager of the appropriate unit.

**Unauthorized:** A student who leaves the University during a semester or summer session without obtaining an official withdrawal will be reported as having failed all courses.

The withdrawal procedure will not take place automatically for the student who leaves campus because of illness, of either one's self or family member, but must be initiated by the student. If this cannot be done in person, withdrawal may be initiated by writing the associate dean of the college in which the student is enrolled or the Office of the Registrar, 150 Administration Building.

A student who leaves the University without withdrawing formally forfeits any fees or deposits paid to the University.

**Involuntary:**

(1) **Armed Forces:** A student who is called into the Armed Forces during the semester should present orders for induction at the office of the associate dean of the college in which the student is enrolled or at the Office of the Registrar for appropriate action.

(2) **Mental or Physical Health:** The University, through its Vice President for Student Affairs and Services or designee (hereinafter, the "Vice President"), may require a student to complete a mandatory assessment pursuant to the process outlined in this Policy if the Vice President has been presented with a credible report that the student, for reasons pertaining to mental or physical health, poses a direct threat to his/her health and safety or that of others.

[\(<http://splife.studentlife.msu.edu/regulations/selected/mandatory-assessment-and-involuntary-withdrawal-policy>\)](http://splife.studentlife.msu.edu/regulations/selected/mandatory-assessment-and-involuntary-withdrawal-policy)

**Disciplinary:** If a student is dismissed for disciplinary reasons during a semester, courses are dropped without grades and without refund and the registration canceled.

**III. DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES: INTEGRITY AND SAFETY IN RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES**

**A. Academic Integrity:** Academic Integrity is honest and responsible scholarship. Students are expected to submit original work and give credit to other peoples' ideas. Maintaining your academic integrity involves:

- Creating and expressing original ideas
- Acknowledging all sources of information
- Completing assignments independently or acknowledging collaboration
- Accurately reporting results when conducting research
- Honesty during examinations

Academic integrity is the foundation of university success. Learning how to express original ideas, cite sources, work independently, and report results accurately and honestly are skills that carry students beyond their academic careers. Academic dishonesty not only cheats the student of valuable learning experiences, but can result in a failing grade on assignments, a failing grade in a course, or even expulsion from the university for the student.

For more in-depth information about types of Academic Misconduct: <https://ombud.msu.edu/academic-integrity/Academic%20Integrity%20at%20MSU.pdf>.

See also - *Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Creative Activities*:  
<https://grad.msu.edu/sites/default/files/content/researchintegrity/guidelines.pdf>

**B. Environmental Health & Safety (EHS):** Before beginning working in a lab setting all safety training must be completed. The EHS office provides a New Researcher Orientation as well as several specific training sessions and manuals. For more information: <https://ehs.msu.edu/lab-clinic/index.html>.

#### IV. STUDENT CONDUCT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflicts can be broadly defined and include both personal and professional interactions that have reached a perceived impasse. Students who develop conflicts with laboratory personnel or with their mentors should try to resolve these within the laboratory first. Should this not be feasible, the Graduate Program Director/Associate Chair should be contacted to discuss the situation with both parties involved. If the conflict involves the Graduate Program Director, the student should contact the Department Chairperson. A goal of the Department is to try to resolve difficulties in-house first and to have both student and advisor on equivalent ground when working to resolution.

**The Ombudsman of MSU:** There may be occasions when a student believes that a conflict is not resolvable within the department. A resource for the student, then, is the MSU Ombudsman (<http://www.ombud.msu.edu/>). The student is encouraged to contact the Ombudsman when having real difficulty with any part of the University and when he/she doesn't know where to turn for help. The student will get an *independent* point of view in an *informal* and *confidential* way.

An Ombudsperson will also assist students who want to file formal complaints and grievances, which is often the final step in a student's effort to resolve a dispute. There are systems in place at MSU to receive and hear a student's formal grievance. Which system is used depends on the nature and location of the grievance. Although it is not required, a consultation with a University Ombudsperson is strongly recommended before entering a formal complaint or grievance in the appropriate system.

**Grievance Procedures (from University Academic Programs online catalog):** *A grievance involves a formal hearing before a panel of students and faculty to resolve a student's allegation of a violation of his or her academic rights, as set down in the Student Rights and Responsibilities (SRR) or the companion document for Graduate Students, called Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities at Michigan State University (GSRR);* <http://www.splife.studentlife.msu.edu/graduate-student-rights-and-responsibilities>. *The SRR and the GSRR documents require departments, schools and colleges to develop grievance procedures consistent with these documents.*

*It is important to recall that the SRR and GSRR require a student in conflict with an instructor to attempt to resolve the dispute before filing a request for a grievance hearing. The student should start the process by meeting with the instructor and then with the Department Chair and/or the Ombudsman. Most of the time, the parties to a dispute settle the issues during these discussions.*

*However, if a student remains dissatisfied with the outcome of these conversations, the student may submit a written request for a grievance hearing to the Department Chair to whom the instructor reports. The letter must state the specific nature of the complaint and the redress, or remedy, the student seeks as an outcome of the hearing.*

*Upon receiving a request for a grievance hearing, the unit administrator forwards the letter to the Chair of the department hearing board. The hearing panel for Graduate Students is chaired by the Department Chair or designee and is made up of an equal number of faculty and students (undergraduate or graduate, depending on the status of the student requesting the hearing). The Chair of the hearing board in cases involving undergraduate students may be a faculty member, not the Chair or Chair's designee.*

*After receiving the written complaint, the hearing board can request a response from the instructor and then decide if the request for a hearing has merit. If so, the Chair of the hearing board will schedule a hearing; if not, the hearing board can dismiss the case--a decision that the student can appeal to the college hearing board.*

*Both the student and the instructor are allowed to call on witnesses to appear at the hearing on their behalf, and they can seek an adviser to help them throughout the process. The advisers must be members of the MSU community—faculty, staff or students.*

*If the student prevails at the initial hearing, the hearing board asks the Department Chair to implement an appropriate redress to accommodate the student. If the instructor prevails at the hearing, the student can file a request to appeal the department hearing board's decision to the college-level hearing board.*

*The Ombudsman is available to assist students, instructors and hearing boards through every stage of the grievance process. The office is open 8 a.m. to noon and 1 to 5 p.m. Monday - Friday throughout the year and is committed to accommodating all students.*

## **V. STIPENDS AND BENEFITS**

Students in Pharmacology and Toxicology are guaranteed funding by their advisor and/or the Department until they pass their dissertation defense if they continue to be in good standing with the Department. Support can be in the form of a fellowship or an assistantship. All forms of funding will include stipend, tuition and fees, and university-designated medical insurance.

**Research Assistantship:** Research assistantship (RA) is employment of Graduate Students that includes a stipend, tuition waiver and health insurance and compensation and for which performance of defined duties is expected. Students appointed on an assistantship are employees of the University and are subject to payroll deductions as set by the government. Therefore, the student must fill out required employment paperwork.

RAs must be actively pursuing degree programs and making satisfactory progress toward their degree. This means that the student *must be registered* the semester that they are appointed as a RA.

The academic year encompasses two appointment periods: August 16-December 31 and January 1-May 15. During each appointment period a RA's responsibilities require an average of 10 hours per week for a quarter-time appointment, 20 hours per week for a half-time appointment, and 30 hours per week for a three-quarter-time appointment. Summer appointments cover the intervening period but the distribution of duties may vary. Anticipated distribution of duties over the weeks of a semester should be communicated to the RA by the appointing unit at the time of appointment.

**Tuition Waiver:** Tuition waivers in the amount of 9 credits for Fall semester, 9 credits for Spring semester, and 3-5 credits for summer session are available for RAs. The tuition waiver will be provided during the period of the assistantship, to a maximum of 23 credits per year. The

student's tuition waiver will not be functional if either the student is not registered, or the student is under-registered (does not meet minimum number of credits per semester -6 min for Fall and Spring semesters; 3 for summer semester).

All RAs are classified as full-time students during the semester(s) of their appointments as long as they are enrolled for the minimum credits required for the assistantship. Full-time status for doctoral students is defined as a minimum of 1 credit for those students who:

1. have successfully completed all comprehensive examinations and are actively engaged in dissertation research; or
2. are doing department-approved off-campus fieldwork related to preparation of their dissertation.

For those students who decide to enroll for 1 credit each semester, the student should consider the number of 999 credits he/she still needs to complete the program.

**NOTE:** If a student has outstanding student loans (even though currently on deferment), the student may have to be enrolled for a certain number of credits each semester to maintain the deferment status. It is the student's responsibility to notify the Department's Assistant to the Graduate Program Committee of this status

**Exemption from Out-of-State Resident Tuition:** This exemption applies to a summer session that precedes or follows an appointment for an entire academic year, regardless of whether the student was previously enrolled at MSU. If the student does not have a signed GA form before registering for summer session, he/she will pay out-of-state resident course fees and tuition. Upon receiving a copy of the appointment form for the entire academic year through the middle of the semester of the subsequent Fall semester, the Office of the Registrar will refund the full amount of out-of-state tuition that the student paid for the summer session.

**International Student Accident and Health Insurance:** International students are required to have health and accident insurance. Students are required to purchase the MSU Student Accident and Health Insurance Plan unless they have evidence of alternative insurance equal in benefits and provisions to the MSU plan. Fees for the student's insurance are included with the bill for tuition and fees during registration. Waivers to allow purchase of alternative plans must be approved by the Benefits Office, Human Resources, 140 Nisbet Building.

**Fellowships:** A variety of graduate fellowships are available to Michigan State University students. Stipends and sources of support vary widely. In addition to applying for fellowships offered by the University and through the University by outside agencies, students are encouraged to consult such publications as the following,

*Financial Aids for Graduate Students*, Bernard G. Maxwell, Editor.  
*The Foundation Directory*, Marianna O. Lewis, Editor.  
*Scholarships, Fellowships, and Loans*, Normal Feingold.

Michigan State University annually awards a number of fellowships and tuition scholarships to encourage and assist high achieving students to pursue study leading to a graduate degree. A recipient of one of these awards must be enrolled in a degree program but is not required to give formal service to the University or to the department.

Most fellowships require full-time pursuit of a graduate program. Unless the fellowship carries specific requirements for determining eligibility, the department or school is responsible for determining and certifying the full-time status of the student. All predoctoral graduate fellows paid through the University must be registered during the period for which payment is made.

**Graduate School Dissertation Completion Fellowships:** These fellowships allow students to devote full time to writing the doctoral dissertation. This fellowship program is for students in the final months of their programs and who are about to defend. Application must be made directly to the department or college.

**Sponsored Fellowships:** Fellowships sponsored by industries, foundations, and government agencies are available to high achieving students for graduate study in various departments or colleges at Michigan State University. These fellowships are awarded through individual departments or colleges.

Receipt of externally funded fellowships worth at least \$20,000 (direct costs) by students who have written their own grant applications makes the students eligible for in-state tuition rates. The in-state tuition rate applies only to the semester during which the student is supported by the fellowship. This policy applies only to grants funded through a competitive process by a US institution/agency/foundation. Funds obtained through non-competitive processes (e.g., need-based fellowship) or from international sources do not qualify the students for in-state tuition rates.

**The Graduate School Funding:** More information about other funding sources for Graduate Students can be found on the Graduate School's website: <https://grad.msu.edu/funding>

**Student Health Insurance:** Health insurance is provided for all students that are funded on an assistantship or on fellowship. Michigan State University offers a student health insurance plan through Blue Care Network (BCN). This information may be accessed through: <https://www.hr.msu.edu/benefits/students/health/>.

MSU also offers other insurance options for student employees (Research Assistants) and spouses. These can be found at: <https://www.hr.msu.edu/benefits/index.html>. (Reference to spouse includes MSU recognized same-sex domestic partners or Other Eligible Individuals (OEI) of Graduate Assistants.)

## VII: UNIVERSITY RESOURCES:

**Graduate Student Organizations:** <https://grad.msu.edu/graduate-student-organizations>

**Graduate Student Life & Wellness:** <https://grad.msu.edu/wellness>

**Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives:** <http://inclusion.msu.edu/>

**Safety and Security:** <https://grad.msu.edu/safety-and-security>

**Support and Resources:** <https://grad.msu.edu/partners-in-wellness>

**Professional Development:** <https://grad.msu.edu/professional-development>

Additional Resources:

*Academic Programs:*

<https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/>

*Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities (GSRR):*

<https://grad.msu.edu/gsrr>

*Guidelines for Graduate Student Advising and Mentoring Relationships:*

<https://grad.msu.edu/sites/default/files/content/researchintegrity/guidelines.pdf>

*Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Creative Activities:*

<https://grad.msu.edu/sites/default/files/content/researchintegrity/guidelines.pdf>

*Policy on Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct :*

[http://www.hr.msu.edu/documents/uwidepolproc/RVSM\\_Policy.htm](http://www.hr.msu.edu/documents/uwidepolproc/RVSM_Policy.htm)

*Anti-Discrimination Policy (ADP):*

<http://oie.msu.edu/policies-procedures-forms/documents/2015%2009-11%20Faculty%20Guide.docx.pdf>