



USUHS
Graduate Program in Neuroscience
Policy on Completion of Ph.D. Dissertation,
Defense and Public Seminar

Dissertation

A written dissertation based on the original experimental research is required. The dissertation must fulfill all requirements of the University as outlined in the Graduate Education Bulletin, its active amendments, and additional specific requirements of the Neuroscience Program. The dissertation may follow either the traditional format or the manuscript-based format. Requirements for the dissertation are those in effect at the time the Neuroscience Program Director is formally notified of the selection of a dissertation format. The student and mentor will jointly decide upon the format to use and, with the approval of the advisory committee, communicate this decision to the Director of the Neuroscience Program. A complete draft of the dissertation will be thoroughly reviewed by the thesis advisor and approved by him/her to be forwarded to the Thesis Advisory Committee. The Thesis Advisory Committee will have a minimum of 2 weeks to review the document.

The requirements for the traditional dissertation format are detailed in the Graduate Education Bulletin and supporting documents available from the Office of the Associate Dean for Graduate Education. No additional or distinct requirements are imposed by the Neuroscience Program.

The requirements of the Neuroscience Program relating to the use of the manuscript-based thesis format extend and supercede those of the University. The manuscript-based dissertation will be based upon at least two completed manuscripts for which the student is the first author. Manuscript-based dissertations must additionally include Introduction and Discussion chapters which extend and unify the manuscripts. Copies of the manuscripts will be attached to the memo notifying the program director that the manuscript-based dissertation format will be used. It is the shared responsibility of the mentor and advisory committee to insure that the manuscripts are of appropriate scholarly quality and of sufficient content to fulfill the requirements of the Program and the University for the Ph.D. degree. The manuscripts must be linked conceptually by focusing on the same or closely related hypotheses. The student may be a co-first author on one of the papers but only if this role is formally identified in the manuscript and ultimately, in the published report. If the Advisory Committee determines that more methodological details and/or results from additional studies that are not provided in the manuscripts are required, this information will be included as an appendix. This need for this additional information will be defined through formal deliberations of the advisory committee and communicated by the committee chair in writing to the student and mentor. This determination should be with the decision to use the alternate dissertation format and thus, shall be communicated to the Program Director at the time of notification of the use of the manuscript-based dissertation format. Manuscripts included in the dissertation must be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal for publication prior to the dissertation defense.

Dissertation Defense

A closed defense of the dissertation will be conducted by the Thesis Advisory Committee in no less than two weeks following their receipt of the draft dissertation. The candidate will formally review his/her work in a brief presentation (not a full seminar), and answer questions posed by members of the Thesis Advisory Committee. Other faculty members will be allowed to attend this meeting with permission of the Chair of the Thesis Advisory Committee. However, the meeting is not open to the public. The Thesis Advisory Committee will vote to determine whether to proceed with the Public Seminar. The Thesis Advisory Committee may approve the Dissertation at this time or may wait until the Public Seminar and/or the completion of required corrections/changes to approve the thesis. If the Thesis Advisory Committee, by majority vote, determines that the Dissertation is unsatisfactory, the Committee will determine what corrective actions must be taken. When the Thesis Advisory Committee determines that the Public Seminar is to be scheduled, the Chair of the committee will request (through the Director of the Neuroscience Program) that the Office of Graduate Education schedule the seminar for a time approximately 2 weeks later. Announcements for the seminar are prepared by the Office of Graduate Education.

Public Seminar

The candidate will present a scholarly and serious presentation of his/her thesis research in a 50 min public seminar. At the end of the Public Seminar, the candidate will answer questions from the audience. The presentation and the candidates responses to questions will be evaluated by the Thesis Advisory Committee and provide the basis for approval of the Public Seminar component of the Ph.D. dissertation.

Following the Public Seminar, the Thesis Advisory Committee will conduct a closed discussion with the candidate. The results of the Thesis Advisory Committee's evaluation of the Public Seminar will be recorded. Upon approval by the Thesis Advisory Committee of the Dissertation and of the Public Seminar (with signatures obtained from all members of the Committee), the results will be transmitted to the Associate Dean for Graduate Education. In the event of an unsatisfactory outcome, the Thesis Advisory Committee will recommend a course of action to Director of the Neuroscience Program.

(policy approved by Neuroscience Executive Committee: Oct. 21, 1997)