The Graduate Program in Neuroscience
Program Requirements – 2015-2016

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Introduction
The goal of the Graduate Program in Neuroscience is to produce the best neuroscientists possible. The breadth of our faculty allows us to provide interdisciplinary training drawing from a variety of topics, techniques and perspectives, including neuroanatomy, biochemistry, molecular biology, physiology, biophysics, pharmacology, in vivo brain imaging (e.g., fMRI, M-EEG), computational modeling and behavior. A graduate of our program will be well versed in the neurosciences, prepared to conduct independent research, and equipped to pursue a variety of career paths.

Curriculum

Core Sequence. During the first year, students are required to take a series of eight graduate level courses that provide exposure to core principles of neuroscience. NEURO 501, 502, 503 & 504 cover topics in cellular neurophysiology, cellular and molecular neurobiology, developmental neurobiology, neuroanatomy, neuroparmacology, systems neuroscience, cognition and behavior. NEURO 511A is a short course in statistics for neuroscience. NEURO 527 is a reading and discussion course focusing on topics covered in NEURO 501-504. NEURO 545 exposes students to quantitative methods and modeling used in neuroscience. NEURO 559 introduces students to a wide variety of neurological and psychiatric diseases.

Seminar Series. All students are expected to attend the Program seminar series (NEURO 510) throughout their graduate careers. Students receive credit for this course during their first two years.

Lab Rotations. During the first year, students are required to complete three one-quarter laboratory rotations (NEURO 526). At the end of each rotation, students submit an abstract and deliver a short oral presentation describing their work. The rotation advisor will provide a written evaluation of the student’s performance. Students should contact the Program Office at the beginning of each quarter with the name of their rotation advisor. All students in the Program are expected to attend the quarterly rotation talks.

Electives. Students typically complement their coursework with electives in areas of interest. Students must complete electives totaling at least 10 credits. These do not have to be graded credits. Single credit courses that represent lab meetings, departmental journal clubs, etc., do not fulfill the elective requirement. Entering graduate students will in general not be allowed to take elective courses in their first year, but may do so under special circumstances (e.g., a course is not offered every year) with prior approval by the Program Directors. More senior students should consult with their advisor to determine an appropriate curriculum of elective courses. The Program’s Core Elective Course List provides an up-to-date listing of elective courses that do not require prior Program Director approval for credit. In addition, students may petition the Directors to receive credit for courses that are not part of the core list, but are deemed important for the student’s dissertation project. Director approval for any elective not on the list is required before the student enrolls in the course. Students may also petition for credit for courses taken at other institutions while enrolled in the Program, such as summer courses at Cold Spring Harbor or Woods Hole. Electives may be taken for a grade or on a pass/fail basis.
Required Graduate Student Courses

NEURO 501: Introduction to Neurobiology: Molecular & Cellular Neurobiology. (3) (Offered: A) Carlson
Concepts and techniques of molecular and cell biology as applied to understanding development and function of
the nervous system. Required for all first year students.

Introduction to neuroanatomy and modules on sensory and motor systems, examination of macroscopic and
microscopic neural tissues. Required for all first year students.

NEURO 503: Cognitive and Integrative Neuroscience (4) (Offered: Sp) Phillips
A discussion of higher neural processes like learning, memory, and decision making. Lecture and laboratory
discussion of original literature, exercises in data analysis and quantitative reasoning. Required for all first year
students.

NEURO 504: Biophysics of Nerve, Muscle, and Synapse (3) (Offered: A) Sullivan, Zagotta
Introduces biophysical properties of nerve and muscle cells. Topics include intrinsic electrical properties of
neurons, ion channels, receptor signaling, calcium signaling, contraction of muscles, and synaptic function.
Required for all first year students.

NEURO 510: Seminar in Neurobiology (0.5) (Offered: A, W, Sp)
Weekly seminar on current topics in neuroscience. Attendance is expected throughout graduate training.
Required for first and second year students

NEURO 515: Teaching Practicum in Neurobiology & Behavior (3-6) (Offered: A, W, Sp, S)
Supervised training in the teaching of neuroscience and related scientific topics. Teaching internships are
assigned as part of the annual “match” or by approval by one of the Directors.

NEURO 526: Introduction to Laboratory Research in Neurobiology & Behavior (4)
(Offered: A, W, Sp, S)
Students carry out research projects in the laboratories of different faculty members on a quarterly rotation basis.

NEURO 527: Current Topics in Neurobiology & Behavior (1) (Offered: A, W, Sp) Rieke
Critical discussion of original scientific literature, both classic and contemporary; topics complement those in the
concurrent NEURO 501 - 504 series. Emphasizes student participation. Required for all first year students.

NEURO 545 Quantitative Methods in Neuroscience (3) Rieke, Bair, Fairhall This course provides exposure to a
variety of quantitative methods that are applicable to the study of the nervous system. It provides an intensive
tutorial on mathematical methods and their application to neuroscience research. The course format revolves
around computer exercises and discussion of journal papers. Topics can include linear systems theory, Fourier
analysis, ordinary differential equations, stochastic processes, signal detection theory and information theory.
Required for all first year students.

NEURO 559 Neurobiology of Disease (3) (Offered: S) Grabowski
Introduces medically important neurological and psychiatric diseases and experimental approaches to
understanding the basis for diseases and their treatments. Covers stroke, epilepsy, autoimmune diseases of the
CNS, neurodegenerative diseases, autism, psychosis, anxiety disorders and mood disorders. Required for all first
year students.

NEURO 600: Neurobiology & Behavior Research/Independent Study. (Variable-max 10 cr.) (Offered: A, W,
Sp, S)
Independent research. Taken prior to General Examination.

NEURO 800: Doctoral Dissertation (Variable-max 10 cr.) (Offered: A, W, Sp, S)
Dissertation Research. Taken after completion of General Examination. Limited to graduate students in the
program.
Graduate School Minimum Requirements

It is the responsibility of the student to meet the following minimum graduate school requirements. Most are met by the Program requirements, but they should be considered when selecting your elective courses.

1. At least 18 credits of your course work must be at the graduate level and must be completed prior to scheduling your General Exam. The Graduate School accepts numerical grades in 400-level courses approved as part of the major and all 500-level courses.

2. A minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00 is required for a graduate degree. The Graduate School provides the Neuroscience Program with a quarterly Low Scholarship Report which lists the names of graduate students whose GPA's fall below 3.0 either cumulatively or for that quarter. The Neuroscience Program reviews the status of each student on the low scholarship list and sends to the Graduate School a specific recommendation—i.e. no action, warn, probation, final probation, or drop—for each case. A “no action” or “warn” recommendation does not appear on the student's permanent record. The Registrar will record only those actions recommending probation, final probation, and drop.

3. The student must pass the General Exam. Registration as a graduate student is required the quarter the exam is taken.

4. The student must prepare a doctoral dissertation on a topic in neuroscience. The topic and scope of the dissertation are developed with guidance from the dissertation advisor and thesis committee. There is no clear-cut definition of a minimum requirement for a thesis. However, the dissertation should describe original research that advances the field of neuroscience and clearly indicates training in research. A reasonable goal for many students is two first-author articles targeted for professional, peer-reviewed journals, such as The Journal of Neuroscience. Credit for the dissertation ordinarily should be at least one-third of the total credit. The Candidate must register for a minimum of 27 credits of dissertation over a period of at least three-quarters.

5. The student must pass a Final Examination, usually devoted to the defense of the dissertation. The General and Final Examinations cannot be scheduled during the same quarter. Registration as a graduate student is required the quarter the exam is taken and the degree is conferred.

6. Completion of all work for the doctoral degree must be done within ten years of matriculation. This includes quarters spent On-Leave or out of status as well as applicable work from the master's degree from the University of Washington.

7. Registration must be maintained as a full- or part-time graduate student at the University for the quarter in which the degree is conferred.

8. A student must satisfy the requirements that are in force at the time the degree is to be awarded.
Supervisory Committee

Students must establish a Supervisory Committee by the end of Winter Quarter of the second year in the Program. This Committee serves several important functions, including evaluating the student's progress, advising the student on their research, and conducting the student’s General Exam. Students can meet with their Supervisory Committees as often as necessary, but a minimum of one meeting per year is required to ensure adequate and timely progress toward the PhD degree. It is expected that the first meeting will take place soon after the committee has been formed, well before the General Exam is scheduled. These meetings are not examinations. They consist of a presentation on progress and future plans and extensive discussion. The Committee should approve the student’s progress before the General Exam is scheduled.

The Committee is made up of Faculty that the student selects, in consultation with the Supervisor, and with approval of the Program Directors. The Supervisory Committee must contain at least three individuals who are members of the Program training faculty. At least one member of the Committee should represent an area of neuroscience outside the student's immediate area of research. A criterion for “outside” status is membership in a focus group outside the field of the dissertation advisor. In addition, the student will select a Graduate School Representative (GSR) to the Supervisory Committee. The GSR represents the interests of the student and should not have a primary appointment in the Supervisor's home department, nor be part of the Neuroscience list in Graduate Faculty Locator. It is suggested that the Committee contain at least four members (in addition to the GSR) to avoid having to cancel the General Exam if a committee member cannot attend. While it is not always possible to have all of the Supervisory Committee members attend each meeting, it is a requirement of the Graduate School that the advisor(s) and the GSR attend the General Exam. **NOTE: The Supervisory Committee must be appointed at least 1 month before the warrant request to schedule the exam is submitted on-line to the Dean of the Graduate School. Contact the Neuroscience Program Office to request Committee approval from the Directors and the Graduate School.**

General Examination

Students are encouraged to take the general exam by the end of Summer Quarter of their second year, and must take it by the end of the Autumn Quarter of their third year. If the student’s advisor (or other critical committee member) plans to be on sabbatical or family leave during the Autumn Quarter of the student’s third year, then the student is expected to take the exam before the advisor (or other committee member) goes on leave. The General Exam consists of two written components and two oral sections. The written parts consist of a brief research proposal and answers to three questions on prepared topics. The oral sections consist of a 20 minute presentation on the thesis proposal and questioning about topics related to the area of the dissertation and general knowledge. Details on the format of the General Exam are provided below. Specific details regarding the General Exam policy and procedures are located in the “Supervisory Committee and General Examination Process” document available via the Neuroscience website.

Prior to the Examination, the student should designate a member of the Committee who is not the advisor to serve as the General Examination Administrator, who will be responsible for collecting written questions and administering the General Examination.

**Note:** In order to schedule your General Exam, you will need to submit a warrant request on-line to the Dean of the Graduate School. You can submit a warrant request on-line at MyGradProgram (http://www.grad.washington.edu/mygrad/student.htm).

**Warrant requests must be submitted on-line to the Graduate School and approved by the Neuroscience Program at least 3 weeks before the General Exam**
Dissertation and Final Exam

1. **Two months** before the planned final exam, the student shall designate and get approval for the **Reading Committee** (advisor/s, plus two members of their Supervisory Committee).

2. **Six weeks prior** to the projected final exam date, the student distributes a full draft of the entire dissertation* to all members of the supervisory committee and to the Neuroscience program office (neurogrd@uw.edu). We encourage students to do this electronically.

3. At that time, the student may initiate scheduling a room and obtaining the warrant.

4. **Four weeks prior** to the target final exam date, the program office staff will request 1) confirmation from the entire committee that each member is available for the exam; and 2) confirmation from the Reading Committee that each member thinks there is a draft dissertation that is sufficiently complete to move forward with scheduling the final exam.

4. **At least three weeks prior** to the exam date, with (and only with) those approvals, the program office will officially enter the exam into the Graduate School website.

5. When submitting the dissertation electronically through ProQuest, the student must also submit an electronic pdf of the dissertation to the Neuroscience Program Office (neurogrd@uw.edu). The Neuroscience Office staff will handle the printing and binding of Program’s paper copy of the dissertation.

6. Other steps occur according to the Graduate School rules.

* Neuroscience dissertation guidelines:
The dissertation should include an introduction that provides the scientific background supporting the rationale for the thesis work. This chapter should briefly review the literature and help put the work into a broader context. Subsequent chapters should include the dissertation work itself, and may be in the format of submitted or accepted publications. The thesis should conclude with a final chapter synthesizing the major findings and proposing future directions for the work.

Training and Teaching

We expect our students to develop proficiency in teaching neuroscience to undergraduate and/or graduate students. A minimum of two teaching quarter credits (total of 6 course credits) are required for graduation (Teaching Practicum, NEURO 515). At the end of year 1 and until this requirement is completed, each student selects his or her preferences for teaching internships for the following academic year. The faculty conduct a “match” to optimize these preferences in light of the opportunities available and demand. Students have the option to postpone teaching one year if there are compelling reasons. A list of the current opportunities can be found on the Neuroscience website under “Teaching Requirements.” Students must fulfill their teaching requirement through the match.

Student Evaluations and Individual Development Plans (IDPs)

First year students are evaluated at the end of each lab rotation; each student may review his or her rotation evaluations in the Program Office. After joining a dissertation lab, each student will work closely with his or her mentor on an Individual Development Plan (IDP). The initial IDP/Progress Report (and elective plan) will be submitted to the Neuro office before the start of autumn quarter. Then, every year before each student’s annual committee meeting, starting with the first meeting after the supervisory committee is formed, the student and his or her mentor will sit down to update the student’s combined IDP/Progress Report.

In the IDP/Progress Report, students are asked to address any unmet Milestones or other program requirements. As soon as a student schedules his or her annual committee meeting, he or she should let the Neuro office know so Lucia or Margie can check the student’s records and inform the student of any issues that need to be
addressed. When this information is returned, we will also send the student’s mentor(s) the appropriate Student Evaluation form (either 2nd & 3rd Year or Senior).

The IDP/Progress Report should be reviewed at the beginning of each annual committee meeting. If the student has not yet completed his or her elective requirements, this would also be a good opportunity to discuss course options that would be most useful to the student’s development. **Within 14 days of the annual committee meeting, the student must submit the updated IDP/Progress Report to the Neuro office, along with the advisor’s completed Student Evaluation Form, cc-ing the advisor on this email. The Annual Committee Meeting Milestone will not be met until this paperwork is submitted.** The evaluations and IDPs will be reviewed by the Graduate Training Committee, and any concerns and/or problems are referred to the Directors.

**Satisfactory Progress**

Satisfactory progress is not just a matter of maintaining a satisfactory (3.0) GPA. The Neuroscience Program also expects that students enter a dissertation laboratory by the end of their third rotation (a fourth rotation will be allowed with the approval of the Directors), and that the student will reach their academic milestones in a timely manner (see Neuroscience Milestones document, available via the Neuroscience website). Each student will be expected to meet with their Supervisory Committee at least once a year. Each student will be evaluated by their advisor and this evaluation will be reviewed by the Graduate Training Committee. Any student who is judged not to be making satisfactory progress may be reviewed by the Graduate Training Committee and the Directors at any time, and action will be taken to address the lack of progress. Failure to meet established milestones can result in a Program Probation and if not resolved to the satisfaction of the Directors, may result in formal sanctions and removal from the Program. The requirements are in place to facilitate progress toward the dissertation and a successful graduate school experience. We encourage students to perceive them not as hurdles but as stepping stones.

**Additional Program Requirement Documentation**

The following referenced documentation is available via the Neuroscience website


Forms:
- Supervisory Committee Appointment
- Doctoral Supervisory Committee – Post-General Exam Meeting
- Doctoral Supervisory Committee – Annual Meeting
- Teaching Requirement Fulfillment Form

Policies/Lists
- Supervisory Committee & General Examination Process
- Core Electives
- Milestones – General & MSTP