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# UNIVERSITY of **HOUSTON** | ENGINEERING

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Department of Biomedical Engineering

## Graduate Student Handbook

*Updated: 08/31/2023*

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## WELCOME

*From the desk of the Department Chair, Dr. Metin Akay*



I welcome you to the Department of Biomedical Engineering at the University of Houston, established in 2010. We are dedicated to building one of the most respected Biomedical Engineering programs, not only in Texas and in the U.S., but also in the world.

We have built an innovative entrepreneurship environment and healthcare-focused academic curriculum to meet the demands and requirements of the ever-changing global economy that influences health care technology, management and delivery.

Our main goal is to develop leadership in academia, government, and industry nationally and globally. The importance of global scientific, social, and cultural interaction and the demands of the dynamic, ever-changing global healthcare economy have been strongly emphasized in our undergraduate and graduate programs.

To achieve these goals, we are leaders in three academic and research fields:

### Neural, Cognitive, and Rehabilitation Engineering

We focus on neural implants, neurogenesis, neurochips, cognitive engineering, neural signal and image processing and modeling, and brain computer interface from hardware to experimentation.

### Biomedical Imaging

We focus on *in vivo* molecular and cellular imaging research with strong emphasis on biomarkers, therapy assessment, and biology models related to cancer. We also focus on clinical cardiovascular and brain imaging and develop an advanced interdisciplinary research field.

### Bionanoscience

We focus on gene regulatory networks, genetics of systems biology, computational biology, and infectious diseases. We also focus on innovative drug discovery and design, translational research, and personalized medicine, as well as the recent advances in bionanoscience and engineering.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Metin Akay'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Metin Akay, Ph.D.

*Founding Chair, John S. Dunn Endowed Chair Professor*

Department of Biomedical Engineering

3605 Cullen Blvd, Room 2027

Houston, TX 77204-5060

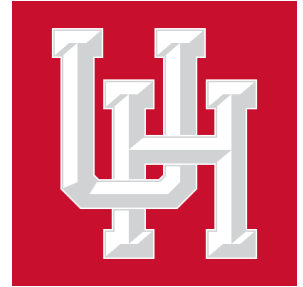
## DEPARTMENT INFORMATION

University of Houston: <http://uh.edu/>

Graduate School: <http://www.uh.edu/graduate-school/>

Cullen College of Engineering: <http://www.egr.uh.edu/>

Department of Biomedical Engineering: <http://bme.uh.edu/>



**Location:**

Science & Engineering

Research Center

(SERC – Building 545)

2nd Floor

Office Hours: Monday to Friday; 8am to 5pm

**Address:**

University of Houston

Department of Biomedical Engineering

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Houston, TX 77204-5060



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## FACULTY

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## DEGREE PLANS & TIMELINES

### Doctor of Philosophy in Biomedical Engineering (from Bachelors)

*The program requires the successful completion of a minimum of 72 credit hours of approved coursework, and program milestones.*

#### Degree Plan: (as of Fall 2020)

24 Coursework Credits

- 2 Math Courses (BIOE 6300 +1 other)
- 1 Statistics Course (BIOE 6301)
- 1 Core Course (BIOE 6350)
- 4 Elective Courses

36 Research Credits

12 Dissertation Credits

Seminar (1 credit each semester enrolled)

#### Timeline (4- 6 Years)

- Coursework
- Qualifying Exam
- Form Dissertation Committee
- Prospectus
- Dissertation Defense
- Graduation

### Doctor of Philosophy in Biomedical Engineering (from Masters)

*The program requires the successful completion of a minimum of 54 credit hours of approved coursework, and program milestones.*

#### Degree Plan: (as of Fall 2020)

12 Coursework Credits

- 1 Math Course (BIOE 6300)
- 1 Core Course (BIOE 6350)
- 2 Elective Courses

30 Research Credits

12 Dissertation Credits

Seminar (1 credit each semester enrolled)

#### Timeline (3-5 Years)

- Coursework
- Qualifying Exam
- Form Dissertation Committee
- Prospectus
- Dissertation Defense
- Graduation

### Masters of Science in Biomedical Engineering (Non-Thesis)

*The program requires the completion of a minimum of 30 credit hours of approved coursework.*

#### Degree Plan:

(as of Spring 2017)

30 Coursework Credits

- 1 Math Course (BIOE 6300)
- 1 Statistics Course (BIOE 6301)
- 1 Core Course (BIOE 6350)
- 7 Elective Courses

#### Timeline (2 Years)

- Coursework
- Graduation

### Masters of Science in Biomedical Engineering (Thesis)

*The program requires the completion of a minimum of 30 credit hours of approved coursework and a successful Thesis defense.*

#### Degree Plan: (as of Fall 2013)

21 Coursework Credits

- 1 Math Course (BIOE 6300)
- 1 Statistics Course (BIOE 6301)
- 1 Core Course (BIOE 6350)
- 4 Elective Courses 3 Research Credits

6 Thesis Credits

#### Timeline (2 Years)

- Coursework
- Form Committee
- Thesis Defense
- Graduation



### Track Areas

- Each Track allows for a specialized focus within a prominent area of Biomedical Engineering. Below are the three Tracks offered by the UH BME program:
  - **Neural, Cognitive, and Rehabilitation Engineering:** We focus on neural implants, neurogenesis, neurochips, cognitive engineering, neural signal and image processing and modeling, and brain computer interface from hardware to experimentation.
    - **Example courses:** Brain-Machine Interfacing, Neurocomputing, Signal Processing, Neural Technology Interfaces
  - **Biomedical Imaging:** We focus on in vivo molecular and cellular imaging research with strong emphasis on the imaging of cancer biomarkers, therapy assessment, and cancer biology models etc. We also focus on clinical cardiovascular and brain imaging and develop an advanced interdisciplinary research field based on human cardiovascular and brain imaging.
    - **Example courses:** Optical Imaging, Electromagnetic Imaging
  - **Bionanoscience Science:** We focus on gene regulatory networks, genetics of systems biology, computational biology, and infectious diseases. We also focus on innovative drug discovery and design, translational research and personalized medicine, as well as the recent advances in bionano science and engineering.
    - **Example courses:** Biomaterials, Drug Delivery and Design, Microdevices, Mass Transport Phenomenon, Tissue Engineering

## ADMISSIONS

### Requirements

- **Course Requirements:** These courses are required, should an applicant not have a Biomedical Engineering background.
  - 2 years of Calculus (through differential equations)
  - 1 year of Engineering/Calculus based Physics
  - 1 year of Biology
  - 1 year of Chemistry
- **Admission Criteria**
  - B.S. Degree: Biomedical Engineering or related field
  - GPA: (MS) 3.00/4.00 on last 60 hours (Ph.D.) 3.30/4.00 on last 60 hours or Graduate hours if hold MS degree
  - GRE: (Current scale) Q-159, V-150 (Prior scale) Q-750, V-450
  - (International Applicants) TOEFL: PBT- 580, CBT- 236, IBT- 92
  - (International Applicants) IELTS: 7.0 overall with a minimum 6.5 writing score
- For the most up to date information regarding the Admission Process, please visit: <http://www.bme.uh.edu/graduate/admissions>

### Unconditional Admissions

- Unconditional Admissions means an incoming student was accepted into the program without any conditions. The student can proceed throughout the semester without certain requirements.

### Conditional Admissions

- Conditional Admissions means an incoming student was accepted into the program with conditions that they **MUST** meet in order to stay in the program.
- An example of a condition:
  - Student is required to complete the first 12 credit hours with a “B” or 3.0/4.0 average. (This means the student must get a 3.0 or above to stay in the program.)
- To change the Conditional Admission, the conditions must be met. At the end of that semester, the student will be evaluated and if the condition has been met, a [GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENT PETITION](#) will be submitted to change their status to Unconditional.
- The Conditional status **MUST** be changed no later than the end of the student’s first year of enrollment.
- If it is a part-time student, the Conditional admission must be changed to Unconditional admission at the completion of the first 12 hours of graduate credit.
- Should a student **NOT** meet their condition within the specified Time Frame, they will be ineligible for any advanced degree at this institution and will not be permitted to re-enroll for graduate study.

### Leveling Courses

- If leveling courses are required for admission, the leveling courses must be completed prior to the student taking graduate level courses. Leveling courses must be completed with a minimum grade of B. Leveling courses cannot be counted towards graduate level credit.

## ACADEMIC ADVISING

### Role of Academic Advisor

- The Graduate Academic Advisor is responsible for confirming course enrollment, processing petitions for changes or adjustments to the degree plan, coordinating degree plan audits, assisting with academic plans, managing student records and facilitating dialogue between students, staff and faculty.
- All petitions will initially go through the Graduate Advisor, who will then begin the process required to gain signatures. Once a decision has been made regarding the petition, the approval or denial confirmation will come from the Graduate Advisor.
- The Graduate Advisor is available to meet with students Monday through Friday, 8am to 5pm. Advising is done preferably by appointment as the advisor may be busy or occupied with another student. Walk-In hours are subject to change.

### Role of Faculty Advisor/PI

- The Faculty Advisor/PI is responsible for the overall learning that occurs while graduate students are actively engaged in their studies.
- The Faculty Advisor/PI should meet with each student at the beginning of each semester to determine their plan for academic engagement and learning.
- The Faculty Advisor/PI is a mentor and role model within their academic field.

### Orientation

- At the beginning of each Semester, incoming Biomedical Engineering (BME) students will have multiple Orientations to attend:
  - Cullen College of Engineering Orientation
  - Graduate School Orientation
  - (If being offered) Biomedical Engineering Departmental Orientation
  - (If Applicable) International Student Orientation
- It is important that students make a strong effort to attend all orientations; some are mandatory.

### Credit Load

- Doctoral students who hold an Assistantship and receive the Graduate Tuition Fellowship (GTF) are required to take 9 credit hours per semester.
- Doctoral students not receiving funding or an Assistantship can take up to 12 credit hours per semester.
- Master's students who hold an assistantship or scholarship must take 12 hours per semester.
- Master's students can take up to 12 credit hours per semester.

### Enrolling in Courses

- The students are encouraged to enroll themselves but may consult the Graduate Advisor if help is needed.
- Any student seeking to take an ELECTIVE or MATH course outside of the department, that has not previously been approved, will need to fill out a general petition stating why they would like to take the course.
- There are deadlines for enrolling in courses; they change each year but can be found in the appropriate Academic Calendar.

### Dropping a Course

- If a student wants to Drop a course, meaning no longer take it, they can. But there are restrictions.
  - If a PhD student is funded (meaning they are receiving a stipend and the GTF) they must remain in at least 9 credit hours; a funded MS student must remain in at least 12 credit hours.
  - If they drop BELOW 9 credit hours, they will lose their GTF, therefore they must pay all tuition and fees charged to their student financial account.
  - After the twelfth day of classes (Official Reporting Day) [4th class day in summer terms], students must gain their instructor's signature and will need to submit the [STUDENT INITIATED DROP FORM](#) in order to have the course dropped.
  - International students CANNOT drop below 9 credit hours due to their Visa Restrictions, UNLESS they submit the [REDUCED COURSE LOAD \(RCL\) FORM](#).
    - RCL form is traditionally used for international students who will be in their final semester and only need less than 9 credit hours to graduate.

### Seminar

- The Seminar Course (BIOE 6111) is not a traditional lecture/lab course.
- BIOE 6111 is a professional development opportunity aimed at engaging students outside of the classroom by bringing in professionals within the field as well as an opportunity for students to present their research endeavors.
- Students are required to register for **ONE** Seminar course per **SEMESTER** as they are enrolled in research hours. *Students on an MS with non-thesis degree plan do not need to enroll in seminar unless they are taking extra research credit hours.*
- BIOE 6111 is a required one credit course, but the credit does not count toward the required overall degree plan credit hours.
- Adding this One Credit Course to the Semester Course Schedule can cause the student to register for 10 credits instead of the traditional 9. In this case, students can reduce their research credits by 1, so the total credit hours equal 9 or simply take an extra credit.

### Department Courses

- Departmental Courses are taken with the entire BME Graduate population and potentially some upper level undergraduate students.
- Doctoral students and Master's students should follow the degree plan that was being used during the year they entered the program.
- A listing of courses can be found within the Graduate Catalog and on the BME website: <http://bme.uh.edu/graduate/thrust-area>
- Students may have the opportunity to take Electives outside of the BME program. If this is the case, confirm that the Elective can be used, by speaking with the Graduate Academic Advisor. *Only twenty-five percent of your coursework may be completed outside of the BIOE department.*
  - Note: The BIOE Statistics for BME is the only statistics course allowed to fulfill the statistics requirement.
- In the first semester of the graduate program, all students may only take courses within the BIOE department, unless specified by their PI.

### Masters Research Hours

- Masters Research Codes start with a “6” and end with “98”. For example... 6198.
- The second number in the code represents the amount of credit hours being offered. For example... 6398 = 3 credit hours or 6598 = 5 credit hours.
- Course enrollment options include:
  - 6198= 1 credit
  - 6298= 2 credits
  - 6398= 3 credits
  - 6498= 4 credits
  - 6598= 5 credits
- For students interested in enrolling in 6 credits, they must enroll in two of the above options. For example... 6198 and 6598 = 6 credits.
- Master's students first enroll in the 6x98 as soon as they begin working on their master's research.

### Doctoral Research Hours

- Doctoral Research Codes start with an “8” and end with “98”. For example... 8198.
- The number in the middle is the number of credit hours being offered. For example... 8398 = 3 credit hours or 8598 = 5 credit hours.
- Course enrollment options include:
  - 8198= 1 credit
  - 8298= 2 credits
  - 8398= 3 credits
  - 8498= 4 credits
  - 8598= 5 credits
- For students interested in enrolling in 6 credits, they must enroll in two of the above options. For example... 8198 and 8598 = 6 credits.
- Doctoral students first enroll in the 8x98 as soon as they begin working on their Doctoral research.

### Master's Thesis Hours

- Master's Thesis Codes are 6399 and 7399; 6399 occurs first, then 7399.
- Students traditionally complete their thesis hours during the last two semesters.
- Master's students are awarded a final thesis grade in 6399 and 7399 from their Thesis Advisor after successfully defending their thesis.

### Doctoral Dissertation Hours

- Doctoral Dissertation Codes are 8399, 8699 and 8999.
- Students traditionally complete their Dissertation hours during the last two- three semesters.
- Doctoral students are awarded a final dissertation grade in 8399, 8699 and/or 8999 (12 hours of dissertation courses) from their dissertation chair after successfully defending their dissertation and submitting 5 copies of their dissertation to the Engineering Dean's Office for binding. If students have taken/are taking more than 12 credit hours, only the last 12 hours of thesis will be graded.

## ACADEMIC POLICIES

### Graduate Catalog

- The Catalog is updated annually and houses all policies and information related to Graduate study. Please, follow this link and select the most current Graduate Catalog: <http://catalog.uh.edu/index.php>

*Policies and Information including: Overall Policies, General Admission Policies, Planning the Graduate Program, College Policies, Programs and Degrees, Courses and Graduate Student Assistantships.*

### Departmental Policies

#### Academic Standing

- In order to stay active in the program, students must maintain a minimum cumulative 3.0 grade point average at the completion of each semester.
- A student whose cumulative GPA falls below 3.0 will be placed on academic probation. To be removed from academic probation, the student's cumulative GPA must be at least a 3.0 in the following semester.
- If a student fails to meet a cumulative 3.0 GPA in the following semester, they are subject to dismissal from the program.
- A graduate student who receives a grade of C+ or lower and/or a grade of U in 12 semester hours of credit attempted at UH in all courses taken including undergraduate leveling, and repeated courses, is ineligible for any advanced degree at this institution and will not be permitted to re-enroll.

#### Qualifying Exam

- CORE Coursework must be completed before the Qualifying Exams – this includes:
  - BIOE 6300 – Math Methods in BME (Spring only)
  - BIOE 6301 – Stats Methods in BME (Fall only; if applicable to degree plan)
  - BIOE 6350 – Genomic and Proteomics (Fall only)
- The Qualifying Exam must be completed at the end of the 3rd semester, unless an exception has been approved by the Department Chair and Graduate Director.

#### Enrollment

- Seminar (BIOE 6111) is required every semester for all PhD students and Master's students taking extra research hours, unless they've received an exception from their PI, due to interference with a confirmed graduation date.
- Math Methods is the first required BIOE math course, and Stats for BME is the required BIOE statistics course. Stats is generally offered in the fall, and Math Methods in the spring.
- Once students enroll in research and thesis or dissertation, respectively, they have to remain continuously enrolled in research and thesis or dissertation.
- Only 25% of courses may be taken outside of the department. If the course a student wants to take hasn't previously been approved by the department, they will need to get PI approval, and then Graduate Director approval, via petition. The petition should include an explanation of why the course is relevant to the student's research. Petitions can be turned in to the Graduate Advisor.
- All first semester BIOE students may only take BIOE courses.
- Research courses coded at the 6000 level are for master's students only.  
Research courses coded at the 8000 level are for doctoral students only.

### Cullen College of Engineering Graduate Academic Policies

- A full list of the Engineering College, Graduate Student Academic Policies can be found [here](#).

*Policies including: Admissions, Enrollment and Time Limitations, Transfer Credit, Credit Level Changes, Residency Requirement, Earning Credit, Grade Point Average, Four C-Rule, Qualifying Examination, Practical Training, Graduation, Theses/Dissertation Guide, Committee Formation, Academic Honesty, Grievance Policy, Competitive Scholarships, Presidential Fellowships, and GTF.*

### Graduate School Forms and Procedures

- A full list of the Graduate School Forms and Procedures can be found [here](#).

*Forms and Procedures including: Graduate and Professional Student Petition, Student-Initiated Drop Form, Student Initiated Term Withdrawal, Medical/Administrative Term Withdrawal Request, Letter of Financial Backing, CPT, Reduced Course Load Form.*

### Safety Training

- At the beginning of each semester, incoming students are required to take Laboratory safety training.
- These training(s) are mandatory in accordance with safety regulations from the department of Environmental Health and Safety <https://www.uh.edu/ehs/>
  - Students working INSIDE a Laboratory within the SERC building will need to take the Biological Safety (EH12) Course. <https://www.uh.edu/ehs/commons/safety-training/catalog/eh12/index>
  - Students working in a Laboratory OUTSIDE of the SERC building will need to take the General Laboratory Safety and Hazardous Materials Orientation (EH06) <https://www.uh.edu/ehs/commons/safety-training/catalog/eh06/>
- In addition to these trainings, we ask that students follow the posted Laboratory Safety Expectations and Policies located within each Laboratory.

### Human Resources Training

*For Ph.D. /M.S. Teaching Assistants & Research Assistants only*

- Human Resources requires the following trainings to be completed within 30 days of enrollment
  - *Conflict of Interest/Responsible Conduct Online Training*
  - *Mandatory Online Hiring Training (Accessed through MyUH)*
  - Completion certificates can be emailed to the Department Business Administrator.

## PROGRAM MILESTONES

### Coursework

- Coursework as outlined in the degree plan must be completed by the time of graduation. However, the more common option is to have it done in two to three years, then focus on research.
- Students must get a C+ or better in a course to earn credit toward their degree. Please refer to the “Grading Policies” in the Graduate Catalog of the appropriate year.

### Qualifying Exam (Ph.D. Only)

- **Eligibility**
  - Doctoral students are eligible to sit for the Qualifying Exam after the second semester of graduate studies. For example, students entering in the fall should take their Qualifying Exam the following spring and vice versa. Doctoral students **MUST** complete the Qualifying Exam by the end of their third semester, unless an exception has been approved by the Department Chair and Graduate Director.
  - Students must confirm with the Graduate Advisor that they plan to complete their Qualifying Exam in a given semester.
- **Components of Exam**
  - The Qualifying Exam is administered orally and students must submit two abstracts (1) current research and (2) future research, one week prior to the exam.
  - Notes, PowerPoint slides or electronic displays are **prohibited**.
- **Committee**
  - The Graduate Advisor will create the Qualifying Exam committee based on faculty availability and the student’s schedule.
  - The committee will consist of at least four (4) members: the candidate’s Research Advisor, Department Chair, and two (2) additional faculty members from the department selected by the chair and graduate program director. Additional faculty should represent the candidate’s research focus area and are primarily responsible for the examination of the candidate.
  - The Research Advisor may ask questions but is expected to fulfill the advocate role for the candidate as he/she prepares for the examination. The Chair’s primary function is to ensure that there is consistency across all candidates qualifying examinations.
- **Overview**
  - Qualifying Exam Committees are coordinated by the Graduate Advisor. Students will be notified of the date and time of their exam via email.
  - Examinations are expected to span about 1 hour but may vary between 1 to 1.5 hours.
  - The oral component will start with a general overview provided by the candidate on their research track area and prospective research project.
  - The student must submit the abstracts to the graduate advisor at least 1 week before the exam. The Graduate Advisor will then give the abstracts to the Qualifying Exam Committee.
  - The Exam Committee will then ask questions and engage in discussions with the student for the remainder of the session. The following is the goal and scope of the oral exam:
    - Determine student’s depth of understanding of the Biomedical Engineering graduate core.
    - Assess student’s capacity to think critically and apply engineering tools to solve problems.
    - Assess student’s capacity to integrate skills in an area of research in biology and/or biomedical engineering.
    - A successful student will be knowledgeable, able to think critically, and demonstrate the ability to integrate and/or apply course information to topics pertinent to their research area.
  - Immediately following the oral examination session, the Exam Committee will meet in a closed session to discuss the student’s performance and determine the results of the exam. The following results are possible:
    - **Pass:** the candidate may continue in the PhD program, complete course work, and prepare to defend a prospectus.



- **Contingent Pass:** the candidate is allowed to continue in the PhD program only if they successfully fulfill a contingency plan recommended by the Exam Committee.
- **Fail:** the candidate will be removed from the PhD program. A contingent plan may be developed to enter the Master's program, either thesis or non-thesis. The candidate may petition to retake the qualifying exam during which time he/she may be retained in the PhD program until the petition is resolved. If the petition is not accepted, he/she will be removed from the PhD program. If the petition is accepted, a continuation in the PhD program will be contingent upon results of a re-examination.
- The [QUALIFYING EXAM SCORE SHEET](#) will be filled out and turned into the Graduate Advisor, so the results can be put into the student's file.

#### Formation of MS Thesis/PhD Dissertation Committee

- The MS Thesis/ PhD Dissertation Committee members are determined by the student and their Advisor.
  - A PhD Dissertation Committee must consist of at least five members, with
    - the advisor as chair,
    - at least two additional faculty members from the Biomedical Engineering Department, and
    - at least one additional University of Houston tenure-track faculty (not from the Biomedical Engineering Department);
    - at least one additional tenure-track faculty (not from the University of Houston);
    - In total, you need a minimum of **four** tenure-track faculty members from the University of Houston and **one** tenure-track faculty member from outside the University of Houston.
  - A MS Thesis Committee must consist of at least three members, with
    - the advisor as chair,
    - at least one additional faculty members from the Biomedical Engineering Department, and
    - at least one additional University of Houston tenure-track faculty member (not from the Biomedical Engineering Department);
    - In total, you need a minimum of **three** tenure-track faculty members from the University of Houston.
- The Committee members must fill out the [COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT FORM](#) with their acknowledgement that they will participate. The form must be submitted well before the proposal defense is scheduled since the committee must be approved by the Department and Dean's Office prior to the defense. A student need not be enrolled while requesting to form a committee but must be enrolled when the defense takes place.
- If a Committee member is outside of the University of Houston, that member's CV must be sent to the Graduate Advisor.
- **Doctoral Dissertation Committee Formation Deadline:**
  - The Committee must be formed at least two weeks prior to the Prospectus.
- **Master's Thesis Committee Formation Deadline:**
  - The Committee must be formed by the 12<sup>th</sup> school day/ ORD of the semester the student plans to defend.
- Thesis/Dissertation must be filed

#### Prospectus (Ph.D. Only)

- **Eligibility**
  - Doctoral students must complete their Prospectus at least one semester before Graduation.
- **Components**
  - A rough draft of a research proposal should be shown to the student's research advisor for approval of content prior to scheduling the oral presentation.
  - The oral presentation of the dissertation prospectus is made to the student's Dissertation committee.

## Overview

- The student's presentation should take advantage of appropriate audio visual aids and should be limited to no more than 50 minutes.
- Copies of the written dissertation prospectus must be distributed to all members of the student's dissertation committee no later than one week prior to the oral presentation. In the oral examination, the student is expected to defend their prospectus and justify that the proposed research is of acceptable quality and magnitude consistent with quality doctoral education.
- Following the oral presentation of the research proposition, questions are welcomed from members of the departmental faculty. Following general questions, departmental faculty members other than those on the student's dissertation committee are excused and the student's dissertation committee and interested faculty from the student's major will remain to ask questions regarding the candidate's proposed research. Generally, the oral discussion of the dissertation prospectus is limited to three hours.
- After questioning, the candidate is excused from the room while the dissertation committee conducts its deliberations.
- **Committee**
  - The Prospectus Committee is comprised of the Dissertation Committee members that were listed on the approved Committee form.
  - The decision regarding whether or not the dissertation prospectus is acceptable is the decision of the dissertation committee alone.
  - The student's dissertation committee conveys its evaluation of the acceptability of the dissertation prospectus to the chair of the departmental graduate committee by signing the [PROSPECTUS APPROVAL FORM](#).
  - If the student's dissertation prospectus is considered acceptable, the chair of the departmental graduate committee will recommend to the Graduate College that the student be advanced to PhD candidacy status.
  - If the student's dissertation prospectus is unacceptable, the chair of the dissertation committee formulates recommendations for future action and submits them to the chair of the departmental graduate committee and the chair of the department. Either of two recommendations is possible:
    - A re-examination may be scheduled, and the entire process repeated, or
    - The student may be removed from the doctoral program. The results of the dissertation prospectus presentation are conveyed to the student by the chair of the departmental graduate committee.

### Dissertation/Thesis Defense

- The student will coordinate their Defense date with their committee and Advisor.
- If a room needs to be reserved, the student can contact the Graduate Advisor.
- The written thesis/dissertation must be distributed to your committee *at least* two weeks prior to your defense date.
- Results should be reported to the Graduate Advisor, using the [final score sheet](#).
- **Dissertation/ Thesis Defense Deadline**
  - The Graduate School and Cullen College of Engineering has set a deadline for defending. All students must defend by the given date, or they will not be able to graduate that semester. The deadline changes each semester; the Academic Calendar will note the date. Please refer to the preparation guide for engineering deadlines: <https://www.egr.uh.edu/academics/graduate-programs-policies/guide-preparation-thesesdissertations>.
    - For example, in Fall 2018, all students planning to defend, had to have their defense completed by Wednesday, December 5.

### Dissertation Submission

- All information necessary for submission can be found here: <https://www.egr.uh.edu/academics/graduate-programs-policies/guide-preparation-thesesdissertations>
- If there are questions or if clarification is needed regarding this two-step process, contact the College Graduate Coordinator located in E421 in the Dean's Office of Engineering Bldg 2 (D3): Miranda Vernon-Harrison, phone 713-743-4219.

### Graduation

- **Graduation Application Deadline**
  - Students must apply for Graduation via their myUH account by the deadline or else they will not be able to graduate in that given semester. The Graduation Application deadline can be found in the Academic Calendar.
    - For example, in Fall 2018, the deadlines for graduation application were (1) September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018 with a \$25 fee and (2) October 26, 2018 with a \$50 fee.
    - After October 26, 2018, if students did not apply for graduation, they are NOT allowed to graduate in that semester.
- **Steps for Graduation**
  - Apply for Graduation via MyUH and pay fee (\$25- if late, \$50)
  - Complete final degree plan (get blank form from Graduate Advisor)
  - Complete Dissertation/Thesis
  - Submit Electronic Dissertation/Thesis into the Vireo website
  - Submit approved hard copy of Dissertation/Thesis to Miranda Vernon-Harrison (E-421)
  - Pay for binding (\$40)
  - Attend Commencement
  - Make sure your address is updated and accurate in your MyUH account
  - For more information: <https://www.egr.uh.edu/academics/graduate-programs-policies/graduation>

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

### Research Assistantships

- Research Assistantships are awarded directly to students by the department faculty. The sources for RA funding are derived from research grants and contracts awarded to the faculty. Typically, the faculty sponsor arranges to do research with a student who is pursuing a PhD or MS degree. It is the responsibility of all applicants to find a faculty member with whom he/she can conduct research projects. Research assistantships are usually given to students that the faculty member has had in class and with whom the faculty member or research group intends to do research.
- RA positions are highly competitive and are traditionally awarded only to Ph.D. students.

### Teaching Assistantships

- Teaching Assistantships are awarded to applicants by the chair of the Department and are usually given to new graduate students for one year only. The awards are based on the potential of the candidate to make an outstanding contribution to the BME graduate program. Usually, students who have been given a TA for one year are expected to transition into being supported as an RA after their first year.
- TA positions are highly competitive and are only awarded to Ph.D. students.
- Not all students recommended for a TA will receive one due to the limited available positions.

### BME Departmental Scholarship

- The scholarship is awarded through the Department of Biomedical Engineering. Applicants are eligible upon acceptance into the Graduate Program. Scholar selections are determined by the department's scholarship committee. Criteria used for awarding this competitive scholarship are as follows:
  - Academic record in undergraduate program, the quality of the undergraduate program, the reputation of the academic institution and any previous other academic experience
  - Graduate record examination results
  - Letters of recommendation
  - Job experience
  - Publications
  - Research Interests and research statements
  - Research Experience
  - Journal Publications
  - Poster and oral presentation record/evidence
- In order to maintain the BME Departmental Scholarship, current scholars must complete a minimum of 6 credit hours each Fall/Spring/Summer semester and maintain a minimum 3.0 semester GPA. Awarding of the scholarship is contingent upon available funds.

### Graduate Tuition Fellowship (GTF)

- The Graduate Tuition Fellow or GTF is awarded each semester to students with RA or TA positions. GTF traditionally covers tuition and some fees (not all fees are covered). The GTF award is submitted by the department on behalf of the student.

### In-State Waiver

- In-State Waivers are awarded to students with TA or RA positions who are from outside the state of Texas. The waiver grants out-of-state students, in-state tuition. This is submitted by the department on behalf of the student.
- \$1,000+ scholarships awarded to a student from an Advisor or UH affiliate, can grant out-of-state students, in-state tuition. Proof of the award needs to be given to the Graduate Advisor, prior to the start of the semester.

## University of Houston Scholarship Opportunities

- Scholarship opportunities for Graduate students can be reviewed here:  
<http://www.uh.edu/financial/undergraduate/types-aid/scholarships/index.php>

## Bill Payment Options

*There are three options for students in regards to paying their bill: <http://www.uh.edu/financial/payment/plans/#IPP>*

- **Installment Pay Plan:** This plan is available to any student unable to pay the full amount due by the university due date.
  - Does not cover prior unpaid balances.
  - \$25.00 non-refundable origination fee.
  - Provides for 4 separate installments.
  - The first installment is due by the initial due date for all students and must be at least 25% of the current semester's tuition and fees.
  - All payments from any funding source must satisfy outstanding balance before any refund can be issued.
  - A late fee charge of \$25.00 will apply for each installment not paid by the due date.
  - Any additional charges added to the student's account after the initial installment will be included in the installment plan. However, you may be required to immediately pay an amount equal to at least 25% of any new charges.
  - The Installment Pay Plan is not available for Summer or Winter Mini session students who are not enrolled in the Spring term.
  - The Installment Pay Plan is not available to students whose financial aid covers 100% of their total term balance.
- **Emergency Deferment Plan:** This plan defers the payment of all the current semester's tuition and mandatory fees. (non-housing students)
  - Is only available to students who **do not** live in university housing.
  - Does not cover prior unpaid balances.
  - The deferment covers only tuition and required/mandatory fees for the current term.
  - The plan defers payment until the 90th day for the fall/spring term or the 45th day of the regular session for the Summer term.
  - The deferment has a 5% annual percentage rate assessed on the Official Reporting Date of the Fall/Spring/Summer term.
  - A late fee charge of \$25.00 will apply if outstanding debt is not paid in full by due date.
  - Requires that any credits to the account (financial aid, etc.) must first be applied to the unpaid balance of the deferment.
  - The plan must be paid during the term for which it was entered.
- **Short-Term Tuition Deferment Plan:** This plan defers the payment of all the current semester's tuition and fees. (housing students only)
  - Is only available to students who live in university housing.
  - Does not cover prior unpaid balances.
  - Is for the entire balance of current term tuition, fees, housing, board
  - The deferment accrues interest at a 12% annual percentage rate assessed on the Official Reporting Date of the Fall/Spring/Summer term.
  - The deferment has a \$5.00 origination fee.
  - A late fee charge of \$25.00 will apply if outstanding debt is not paid in full by due date.
  - The deferment is due and payable no later than the 30th calendar day of a short term such as the summer or other special terms; or the last day of the session, whichever occurs earlier.
  - Requires that any credits to the account (financial aid, etc.) must first be applied to the unpaid balance of the deferment.

### Bill Payment Deadlines

- It is very important for students to pay attention to the payment deadlines! Should bills not be paid, students can be dropped from their courses.
- Follow this link to check payment deadlines: <http://www.uh.edu/financial/payment/billing-due-dates/>

## HEALTH INSURANCE

### Domestic Students

- Domestic students are not required by the University to obtain health insurance through the University of Houston. However, it is highly encouraged for all students to have some form of health insurance.
- To enroll in health insurance through the University of Houston, you have 3 options:
- Option 1: Direct Pay by mailing enrollment card to Macori Administration – see enrollment card and benefit book for requirements and deadlines.
- Option 2: Direct Pay by enrolling online at [www.studentinsurance.com/Schools/TX/UH/](http://www.studentinsurance.com/Schools/TX/UH/) - see online enrollment information for requirements and deadlines.
- Option 3: Sign up through *myUH* (PeopleSoft) to have your premium charged to your student account (Fall and Spring Semesters only – Use Option 1 or 2 to enroll for Summer only coverage). See benefit book or online enrollment information for requirements.
  - **ENROLLMENT DEADLINE: Official Reporting Day as posted in the Academic Calendar.**
  - **ENROLLED IN ERROR:** Come to the Health Center to request a credit to your student account during the posted insurance waiver period. Requests for credit will not be accepted after the Official Reporting Day as posted in the Academic Calendar.
- *NOTE: A copy of the University of Houston endorsed Health Insurance Plan brochure and identification card for the current Academic year may be obtained at [www.studentinsurance.com/Schools/TX/UH/](http://www.studentinsurance.com/Schools/TX/UH/) or the University Health Center. You should read and understand the policy's coverage, limitations, claim processing and your responsibilities. The brochure also provides information about medical emergencies, vision care discounts, 24/7 nurse line, optional dental insurance and medical evacuation/repatriation. You should carry the identification card with you at all times. The card contains your policy number and contact information for the insurance company and provider network for the current Academic Year.*

### International Students

- Non-immigrant International students, who are carrying hours, will be **automatically enrolled** and charged for health insurance each semester to satisfy the University policy regarding maintaining acceptable health insurance coverage. The amount during Fall 2016 was approximately \$750.
- A waiver of the health insurance fee may be requested online with proof of acceptable alternate insurance. The insurance plan and University's criteria are reviewed periodically and may be subject to change.

### Insurance Resources

- UH Health Center, Student Health Insurance Office Website: <http://www.uh.edu/healthcenter/insurance/>
- UH Health Center, Student Health Insurance Office Phone: 713-743-5151
- UH Health Center, Student Health Insurance Office Email: [UH@studentinsurance.com](mailto:UH@studentinsurance.com)

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

### Arriving On Campus

- All international students attending the University of Houston must contact the International Student and Scholars Services Office (ISSSO) upon campus arrival. In addition, international students are required to attend an orientation program. For more information contact ISSSO at:

Student Center North  
Room 203

4465 University Dr.

Houston, TX 77204

713.743.5065 voice

713.743.5079 fax

<https://ssl.uh.edu/oisss/>

### Maintaining F-1 Status

- Students must be enrolled full-time (9 hours for graduate students).
- Students are not allowed to work, unless they have CURRENT permission from an International Student Counselor or the Department of Homeland Security (Pg. 3 on the I-20 or an Employment Authorization Card)
- Students must carry current documentation (i.e. passport, I-20)
- Keep the ISSSO up to date on address/contact information/ major life changes.

### Optical Practical Training (OPT)

- Optional Practical Training is **not** permitted for students during their first semester at the University of Houston or for students with a GPA below 3.0.
- **Post-Completion OPT** is allowed for students who have completed their degrees, including submission of their thesis/dissertation for binding for MS and PhD degrees.
- **Pre-completion Part-time OPT** is allowed for unsupported F-1 students during any semester but is limited to 20 hours per week. Time used is deducted from the one year eligibility at half the rate. Students must meet all applicable INS regulations regarding their status as a student.
- **Pre-Completion Full-time Summer OPT** is allowed but students can work full-time during the summer only. Time used is deducted from one year of eligibility. Students cannot hold a full-time OPT and be a supported student simultaneously.
- **Pre-completion full-time OPT** with only thesis or dissertation remaining is allowed for non-supported students, with approval of thesis/dissertation advisor. All coursework, along with department requirements, like screening exams, qualifying exams, and thesis/dissertation proposals must be completed for students to be eligible.
- For students wanting to participate in OPT, they will need to:
  - Submit a copy of their EAD card to ISSSO.
  - Actively search for employment (Visit UCS for resources and information).
- Update ISSSO and UH PeopleSoft "SEVIS" address type of their new address when they move.
  - Using the OPT Self Report, submit the employer's information including name, address, and the duration of employment to ISSSO.
  - Create a folder for the student's records only to maintain their "Personal Portfolio". In this folder, keep evidence of OPT employment that is:
    - Directly related to major
    - A minimum 20 hours/week
    - Paid or unpaid



- According to the federal regulations [8 CFR 214.(f)], F-1 students are responsible for reporting the address, employer's name and address, and any periods of employment and unemployment while on OPT. ISSSO is responsible for updating the student's SEVIS record to reflect these changes. This reporting responsibility is an on-going requirement.

#### Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

- CPT as practicum/internship or COOP will not be allowed. CPT as Dissertation or Thesis Research will be allowed, but to be eligible, a student must provide a letter from the employer verifying that the corporation is involved in the research and that the offer of employment is predicated on the need for access to their facility for purposes of data collection. The letter must be countersigned by the student's advisor to show approval of the CPT.

## MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

### Student Travel

- **Domestic Travel**
  - Students planning to travel for the department to conferences or events, must submit the following to the Program Coordinator AT LEAST 2 (two) weeks before the travel date:
    - TRAVEL REQUEST CHECKLIST
    - TRAVEL REQUEST
    - Supporting documents
- **International Travel**
  - Students planning to travel for the department to conferences or events, must submit the following to the Program Coordinator AT LEAST 1 (one) month before the travel date:
    - TRAVEL REQUEST CHECKLIST
    - TRAVEL REQUEST
    - EXPORT CONTROLS AND EMBARGO FORM
    - Supporting documents
- Should these deadlines not be followed, there is a chance travel will not be approved.
- Students should be aware of the University policies related to Travel. They can be reviewed here:
  - <http://www.uh.edu/af/universityservices/policies/mapp/04/040204.pdf>

### Travel Reimbursements

- Students returning from travel and needing reimbursements must submit the TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT CHECKLIST and supporting documents to the Program Coordinator. Please, allow up to one month for processing.

### Purchase Reimbursements

- Students needing reimbursements for purchases they made for their lab must submit the REIMBURSEMENT FORM and all receipts.
  - Please, allow up to one month for processing.

### Mileage Reimbursements

- Students using their own vehicles and asking for mile reimbursement must fill out the MILEAGE REPORT FORM
  - Please, allow up to one month for processing.

### Space Reservations

- Students can reserve space within the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor SERC for presentations and academic milestones. Please, speak with the Graduate Advisor to check space availability.

## Resources

Department or Service	Website	Phone	Location
A.D. Bruce Religion Center	<a href="http://www.uh.edu/adbruce/">http://www.uh.edu/adbruce/</a>	713-743-5050	3801 Cullen Boulevard
Athletics	<a href="http://www.uh.edu/athletics/">http://www.uh.edu/athletics/</a>		
Bookstore	<a href="https://www.bkstr.com/houstonstore/home">https://www.bkstr.com/houstonstore/home</a>	713-741-7095	UC, Calhoun Lofts, and Stadium Garage Retail
Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD)	<a href="http://www.uh.edu/csd">www.uh.edu/csd</a>	713-743-5400	106 Student Service Center I
Counseling and Psychological Services	<a href="http://www.uh.edu/caps/">http://www.uh.edu/caps/</a>	713-743-5454	Student Service Center I- 226
Engineering Career Center	<a href="http://career.egr.uh.edu/">http://career.egr.uh.edu/</a>	713-743-4230	Engineering Bldg. I- 302
International Student and Scholar Services Office (ISSSO)	<a href="http://www.uh.edu/oisss">http://www.uh.edu/oisss</a>	713-743-5065	203 Student Service Center North
Learning Support Services (LSS)	<a href="http://www.las.uh.edu/lss">www.las.uh.edu/lss</a>	713-743-5411	321 Graduate College of Social Work Building
Library	<a href="http://info.lib.uh.edu/">http://info.lib.uh.edu/</a>	713-743-1050	M.D. Anderson Library
Parking and Transportation Services	<a href="http://www.uh.edu/parking">www.uh.edu/parking</a>	832-842-1097	112 Welcome Center Parking Garage
UH Police Department	<a href="http://www.uh.edu/police">www.uh.edu/police</a>	Emergency Line: 713-743-3333 Non-Emergency Line: 713-743-	
University of Houston	<a href="http://www.uh.edu">www.uh.edu</a>	Main Line: 713-743-2255	Campus Map: <a href="http://www.uh.edu/maps/">http://www.uh.edu/maps/</a>