



## **Doctoral Student Handbook**

Revised: June 2017

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## 1. Introduction

This **Doctoral Student Handbook Supplement** is intended to provide supplemental information to that contained in the official **Graduate Policy Document**.

Graduate students at SUNY Optometry may work towards either a **Ph.D.** degree or **M.S.** degree in Vision Science. The **Graduate Center for Vision Research (GCVR)** administers these programs, which are designed for individuals holding a professional degree in a health science or a bachelor's degree in any discipline.

The Offices of the GCVR are located at: SUNY College of Optometry, Room 1738, 33 West 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, New York, NY 10036

**Dr. Stewart Bloomfield is the Director of the GCVR and the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research.** The GCVR staff includes Mr. Cyrus Vivar, GCVR Program Coordinator and Ms. Debra Berger, Graduate Program Coordinator. The GCVR staff is available to assist you and should be contacted with any questions concerning the graduate program.

## 2. Orientation

Generally, new Ph.D. students begin their matriculation in the Fall Semester. Before the start of classes, students meet with the Associate Dean and GCVR staff for orientation where they are provided with information regarding:

1. Registration for graduate courses for the Fall and Spring Semesters
2. Assignment of shared student office space (Room 1403), office keys, email and internet accounts, copy machine cards, and library privileges.
3. In addition to this **Graduate Student Handbook**, graduate students are expected to be familiar with the following two documents:
  - a. **The Graduate Policy Document**, which outlines all current policies including: Admissions, Financial Aid, Awards, and Assistantships, Advisors, Registration and Maintenance of Matriculation, Grades and Probation, and Dismissal, Graduate Courses and Credit, Requirements for the PhD Degree
  - b. **SUNY College of Optometry's general Student Handbook** ([http://www.sunyopt.edu/pdfs/academics/Student\\_Handbook.pdf](http://www.sunyopt.edu/pdfs/academics/Student_Handbook.pdf)),
  - c. which provides information about SUNY Optometry policies and facilities, including grievance procedures.

4. Students receiving Graduate Assistantships will meet with Personnel Office staff to complete payroll forms and receive benefits information.
5. Students will report to Media Center, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor to get a photo ID card. The photo ID must be presented to the Campus Police to enter the building and must be worn at all times when at the College.

### **3. Registration**

To maintain full-time status, Ph.D. students are generally required to register for **12 credits** per academic semester. Students may **add** courses during the first two weeks of the semester, and may **withdraw** from courses during the first four weeks of the semester. Students consult with and obtain the approval of their advisor before registering. Students are responsible for checking to see that they have prerequisites for each course they register for. The Registrar, Jacqueline Martinez, is located in the Office of Student Affairs, 11<sup>th</sup> floor, and is responsible for maintaining the official transcript for each graduate student.

### **4. Graduate Assistantships**

Doctoral students awarded a Graduate Assistantship receive an annual stipend and a tuition waiver. Graduate students on a full assistantship are expected to provide approximately 20 hours of service per week either as a teaching assistant, research assistant, or general service assistant. The graduate assistantship is awarded on an annual basis. Continuation of the assistantship is contingent upon annual reviews that include, in part, satisfactory performance of assigned assistantship obligations and maintenance of good academic standing as a full-time student in the Graduate Program. Assistantship assignments are made before the start of each academic year.

This assistantship is in the bargaining unit represented for purposes of collective negotiations by the Communications Workers of America Local 1104 / Graduate Student Employees Union (GSEU) and is covered by a collective bargaining agreement between the State University of New York (SUNY) and GSEU.

As a Graduate Assistant you are eligible to enroll in the health, dental and vision benefit plans. More information on these plans can be obtained at the website:

<http://www.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/benefits/benefit-summaries/GSEUbenefitsummary-January-2017.pdf>. For benefits and enrollment information contact Ms. Guerda Fils, in the Personnel Office on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor (212-938-5883).

## 5. Doctoral Program Requirements

There are several requirements that must be fulfilled to attain the doctoral degree in Vision Science (see attached **Graduate Policy Document** Section IX for the specific requirements). These include completion of 80 semester hours of course credit. The Core Curriculum requirements include:

1. A year-long Proseminar divided into Part 1 (Fall) and Part 2 (Spring), which provides a comprehensive introduction to vision science.
2. A minimum of five seminars/tutorials in different designated "Option List" areas.
3. Introduction to Statistical Methods
4. Ethics in Research
5. Students are required to register for Vision Science Journal Club (GM245) each semester
6. Students are required to attend at least 75% of the seminars and talks given at the College throughout the school year. These include the **SIVR Colloquia and VisionNYC seminars**.
7. Students must complete a minimum of two **Laboratory Rotations** during the first year.

## 6. Laboratory Rotations

Doctoral students are required to complete a **minimum of two lab rotations** during the first year of the program, normally one during the Fall semester and a second in the Spring semester. During the rotations students develop technical laboratory skills needed for research. Students also gain experience interacting with a variety of researchers in different laboratory settings, which is critical to their selection of a research advisor. The student must select the thesis advisor by the **end of his/her third semester** in the program. At the end of each lab rotation, the student's supervisor completes an evaluation form (see **Research Lab Rotation Evaluation Form** in the Appendix), which is shared with the student and filed with the GCVR Office.

## 7. Annual Research Open House

To help students begin the process of selecting Lab Rotation Supervisors and ultimately Dissertation Research Advisors, the GCVR sponsors a Research Open House for new Ph.D. students and potential O.D.-M.S. students in early September. Graduate faculty, postdoctoral fellows, and graduate students meet with the new students and give

presentations about their research and discuss opportunities for students in their laboratories.

## **8. Selecting a Graduate Research Advisor**

Every graduate student must have a graduate research advisor, whose role is to help the student plan her or his course of study, to direct the student's doctoral thesis research, and assist in providing periodic assessments of the students' progress. The research advisor is selected by the student from a list of qualified graduate faculty and is normally one of supervisors of the student's first year lab rotations. A written statement indicating the student's choice of advisor, signed by both the student and the advisor, must be filed with the GCVR Office. For students in the Ph.D. program, an advisor should be selected no later than the end of the student's third semester in the program. The Associate Dean, or his designee, is the interim advisor to students who have not yet selected an advisor. Student may change their advisor with the consent of the Associate Dean.

## **9. Dissertation Committee**

Each student, in consultation with his/her advisor, will select a Dissertation Research Committee (see Graduate Policy Section IX. E. ). The Dissertation Committee consists of the student's advisor, and at least two qualified faculty who have agreed to serve. Since one role of the Dissertation Committee is to resolve any conflicts between the student and his/her advisor, the advisor cannot be the chairperson of the committee. The Dissertation Committee must be created prior to the Qualifying Examination. Students submit a Dissertation Committee Form to for the Associate Dean's Approval. (See Appendix) Doctoral students must formally meet with the Dissertation Committee a minimum of once a year to give a progress report. However, a student can call a meeting of the Dissertation Committee at any time if he/she deems it necessary. At the annual meetings the committee will determine whether adequate progress has been made by the student and report this to the Associate Dean (see **Dissertation Committee Report** in the Appendix). Any changes in the aims of the project as detailed in the Dissertation Proposal (see 10) should be provided to and approved by the Dissertation Committee at these meetings. At the last progress report meeting, the committee will certify that all aims proposed by the student have been completed and that the student can begin writing the dissertation.

## 10. Qualifying Examination

The Qualifying Exam should be completed by the fall of the third year; it must be completed by the end of the third year (see Graduate Policy Section IX. F. ). Completion of the Qualifying Exam marks the official entry of a student into the dissertation research phase of his/her graduate career. The Qualifying Exam has two parts, consisting of the submission of a written **Dissertation Proposal** to the Dissertation Research Committee followed by an oral defense of the proposal. The Dissertation Proposal takes the general form of a National Institutes of Health National Research Service Award (NRSA) predoctoral fellowship application, which includes the following sections: Specific Aims, Background and Significance, Preliminary Data, Materials and Methods and a Timetable. After submission of the written proposal, the student will orally defend it in front of the Dissertation Research Committee. The committee may : (i) pass the proposal indicating that the detailed aims are sufficient for an acceptable doctoral thesis; (ii) conditionally pass the proposal calling for remedial changes; or (iii) fail the proposal. Failure of the Dissertation Proposal may result in a student's termination from the graduate program as decided by the Associate Dean. The Dissertation Committee will report their decision to the Associate Dean with a copy forwarded to the student (see **Qualifying Exam Report** in the Appendix).

## 11. Annual Oral Presentations

Each year, Ph.D. Students are required to make an oral presentation, which consists of a 15-minute slide presentation followed by a 5-minute question period at the end of the Spring semester. The Annual Oral Presentations serves to assess students' proficiency in communicating the knowledge they have gained during their lab rotations or thesis research to an audience, much like at ARVO, VSS or any major conference. The presentation should focus on a single problem. The goal is not to explain everything that you did, but rather to describe clearly the problem you studied, its significance, the methodology you employed, the results, and the conclusions you draw from them. If you did two rotations and they were quite different, plan to discuss only one of the projects. However, if the two research lab rotations were thematically related, then describing the unified problem and the approach taken in each rotation would be appropriate. All members of the Graduate Faculty attending the presentations will evaluate each student's performance. Based on these evaluations, students' advisors will provide individual feedback to each of their students and submit a grade of Pass or Unsatisfactory, which will be recorded on the official graduate student transcript.

## **12. Institutional Review Board (IRB), Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) and Conducting Research**

All graduate students who are involved in human subjects research, either working directly with subjects or with data or biological specimens derived from subjects, are required to be trained in the protection of human subjects in research activities. The Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research has determined that this requirement may be met by successful completion of the CITI (Collaborative IRB Training Initiative) Web-based training program. The State College of Optometry offers access to the CITI program to all State College of Optometry students, who can register for CITI certification by proceeding to the webpage: <https://about.citiprogram.org/en/homepage/>.

All graduate students working with animals as research subjects must complete all Biological Research Facility (BRF) requirements, including a health exam (see Ms. Xiamara Santiago, BRF Manager, 17<sup>th</sup> floor, x5895)

## **13. Graduate Student Travel Support**

Graduate students may request support from the GCVR for a maximum of two scientific conferences per year at which they are presenting as 1st or 2nd author. A maximum of \$750 for travel/lodging/registration costs may be reimbursed per conference. To be eligible for intramural travel support, students must first apply for any extramural funding sources available for the meeting they are attending. Travel reimbursement will be contingent on availability of funds. A Graduate Student Travel Funds Request Form (see Appendix) should be submitted in advance.

## **14. Dissertation Format**

The dissertation is expected to represent approximately three peer-reviewed publications worth of work. If these are actual publications co-authored with the advisor, the dissertation must in some way demonstrate the candidate's own ability to write, think and contribute to science. This can be done through an introduction and conclusion that are written by the candidate. The suggested format for the dissertation is as follows:

Title Page with committee signatures

Abstract (300 - 600 words)

Dedication (if any)

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments



Introduction

Chapters 1- 3 (if you are incorporating published papers, these can be substituted for the Chapters)

Discussion

Conclusion

Optional Appendices

The introduction lays out the rationale for the research. It provides a context within which the following chapters are integrated into parts of a single project. It would typically be between 6 and 20 pages long, possibly including a few figures.

The discussion is the student's chance to speculate about material that did not make it into any publication, but that you as an expert in the field would like to have recorded. The student may include unpublished data here or in an additional chapter(s). The conclusion summarizes the student's findings in the context of questions posed in the Introduction. The introduction and conclusion can be combined. This section can be of any length.

**Formatting:**

Double-spaced throughout

Figures or figure legends embedded in the text

References either at the end of each section or collected at the end of the document

Successive page numbers

Singled sided document with 1.5 inch left margin and other 3 margins at 1 inch

Paragraphs indented

Quotes - single spaced

Start each chapter on new page

Title page is page i, but the number is not shown

Number ii, iii, iv, through table of contents

Number 1, 2,... for all pages of the rest of the dissertation.

## **15. Dissertation Defense**

The written dissertation must be submitted to all members of the Dissertation Committee at least three weeks in advance of the Dissertation Defense. The **Approval of the Written Doctoral Dissertation Form** must be signed by all members of the Dissertation Committee, indicating their approval of the **written** Dissertation before the oral Dissertation Defense. (See Appendix, Page 19).

The final Dissertation Defense consists of a seminar open to the College community followed by a private question and answer period with the Dissertation Committee (see Graduate Policy Section IX. H). The student, in consultation with his/her advisor, will choose a faculty member from an outside institution to join the Dissertation Committee to both read the dissertation and attend the defense. Successful completion of the dissertation defense is the final requirement of the doctoral degree. Following the Defense, all Committee members sign the Dissertation Cover Page (see Appendix, Page 20) indicating their approval of the oral defense of the dissertation.

## **16. DSpace**

DSpace is digital repository at the College, which collects, preserves, and distributes submitted Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations. It is a helpful tool in that it facilitates digital preservation and scholarly communication while promoting open access. Students submit final copies of dissertations to Ms. Jill Locascio, Assistant Librarian.

## **16. Doctoral Student Sample Plan of Study**

### **Year 1**

#### Fall Semester

GM230 – Proseminar: Intro to Vision Science Part I (6 credits)

GM215 – Predissertation Research Lab Rotation (5 Credits)

GM245 – Vision Science Journal Club for Doctoral Students (1 credit)

#### Spring Semester

GM231 – Proseminar : Intro to Vision Science Part II (6 credits)

GM201 – Intro to Statistics (2 credits)

GM215 – Predissertation Research Lab Rotation (3 credits)

GM245 – Vision Science Journal Club for Doctoral Students (1 credit)

Annual Oral Presentation

Minimum of 75% attendance at VisionNYC and SIVR Colloquia during Year 1

### **Year 2**

#### Summer Session

GM219 – Ethics in Research (1 credit)

GM215 – Predissertation Research (variable credits)

GM200 Level Tutorial/Seminar (2 credits)

GM245 Vision Science Journal Club for Doctoral Students

#### Fall Semester

GM215 – Predissertation Research (variable credits)

GM200 Level Tutorial/Seminar (2 credits)

GM200 Level Tutorial/Seminar (2 credits)

GM245 Vision Science Journal Club for Doctoral Students (1 credit)

Selection of a research advisor

#### Spring Semester

GM215 – Predissertation Research (variable credits)

GM 200 Level Tutorial/Seminar (2 credits)

GM 200 Level Tutorial/Seminar (2 credits)

GM245 Vision Science Journal Club for Doctoral Students

Annual Oral Presentation

Minimum of 75% attendance at VisionNYC and SIVR Colloquia during Year 2

### **Year 3**

#### Summer Session

GM215 – Predissertation Research (12 credits)

#### Fall Semester

GM215- Predissertation Research (11 credits)

GM245- Vision Science Journal Club for Doctoral Students (1 credit)

Submission of Dissertation Proposal and Qualifying Exam

#### Spring Semester

GM215 – Predissertation Research (11 credits)

GM245 – Vision Science Journal Club for Doctoral Students (1 credit)

Oral Presentation

Annual Meeting with Dissertation Committee

At least one or more conference presentations during Year 3

Minimum of 75% attendance at VisionNYC and SIVR Colloquia during Year 3

### **Year 4**

#### Summer Session

GM401- Dissertation Research (12 credits)

#### Fall Semester

GM401- Dissertation Research (11 credits)

GM245 - – Vision Science Journal Club for Doctoral Students (1 credit)

#### Spring Semester

GM401- Dissertation Research (11 credits)

GM245 - – Vision Science Journal Club for Doctoral Students (1 credit)

Oral Presentation

Annual Meeting with Dissertation Committee

At least one or more conference presentations during Year 4

Minimum of 75% attendance at Journal Club, VisionNYC and SIVR Colloquia during

## **Year 5**

### Summer Session

GM401- Dissertation Research (11 credits)

GM245 - Vision Science Journal Club for Doctoral Students (1 credit)

### Fall Semester

GM401- Dissertation Research (11 credits)

GM245 - – Vision Science Journal Club for Doctoral Students (1 credit)

Submission of Dissertation

Schedule Dissertation Defense

### Spring Semester

GM401- Dissertation Research (12 credits)

Submission of Approved Dissertation

Dissertation Defense

At least one or more conference presentations during Year 5

Minimum of 75% attendance at VisioNYC and SIVR Colloquia during Year 5



**Research Lab Rotation Evaluation Form**

Student's Name:

Rotation Start Date:

Rotation End Date:

Please evaluate the student in each of the areas listed below, applicable to your laboratory. When you have completed the form please share this form with the student and submit to GCVR Office.

<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
1	2	3	4	5	NA

<b><u>Performance</u></b>	<b><u>Rating</u></b>
Effort in the Laboratory	
Bench Skills	
Ability to Learn New Techniques	
Ability to Learn Relevant Literature	
<b><u>Ability</u></b>	
Problem Solving	
Interpretation of Experimental Results	
Communication with Advisor & Colleagues	
Capacity for Independent Research	
<b><u>Dependability &amp; Commitment</u></b>	
Initiative	
Assumption of Delegated Responsibilities	
Carries out Assignments with Dispatch	
Thoroughness	
Participation in Lab Meetings	
Extent of Preparation for Lab Meetings and Conferences	
<b>Based on your experience with this student, would you be happy having him/her carry out his/her research under your mentorship?</b>	
<b><u>Overall Evaluation:</u></b>	

**Research Lab Rotation Evaluation Form (continued)**

**Additional Comments:**

**This evaluation was completed by:**



**Dissertation Committee Form**

This form should be submitted for the approval of the Associate Dean.

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Dissertation Area: \_\_\_\_\_

The following Graduate Faculty members have agreed to serve on my Dissertation Committee.

Dissertation Advisor (print): \_\_\_\_\_ (signature): \_\_\_\_\_ C

Committee Chairperson (print): \_\_\_\_\_ (signature): \_\_\_\_\_ C

Committee Member: (print): \_\_\_\_\_ (signature): \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Member: (print): \_\_\_\_\_ (signature): \_\_\_\_\_

Associate Dean's Approval:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_





**DISSERTATION COMMITTEE REPORT**

This form is to be completed by the Chairperson of the student's Dissertation Committee immediately after the committee meeting and sent to the Associate Dean. A copy of this report should be given to the student.

STUDENT:

DATE OF COMMITTEE MEETING:

DISSERTATION ADVISOR: \_\_\_\_\_

COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON: \_\_\_\_\_

COMMITTEE MEMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

OVERALL IMPRESSION OF PROGRESS OVER LAST 12 MONTHS:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WORK OVER NEXT 12 MONTHS:

The student has accomplished the aims of his/her dissertation research and should begin writing his/her thesis. Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

Committee Members' Signatures:

\_\_\_\_\_



**Qualifying Exam Report**

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Qualifying Exam**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Accepted/Not Accepted: \_\_\_\_\_

Recommendations/Comments:

**Dissertation Research Committee Members:**

Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_

Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

Research Advisor:

\_\_\_\_\_

Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

Committee Member:

\_\_\_\_\_

Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

**Submit to Dr. Stewart Bloomfield, Associate Dean, with a copy of written Qualifying Exam attached.**



Sample Dissertation Cover Page

(Title of Dissertation)

Submitted by

(Name of Student)

DISSERTATION

In partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

SUNY College of Optometry

(Month,Year)

Approved by the Dissertation Committee:

Name of Committee Member

Signature

Date

Name of Committee Member

Signature

Date

Name of Committee Member

Signature

Date

Name of Outside Committee Member

Signature

Date

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Stewart Bloomfield, PhD  
Associate Dean for Graduate Studies  
and Research

**GRADUATE STUDENT TRAVEL FUNDS REQUEST FORM**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name Date Submitted

\_\_\_\_\_  
Purpose of Travel Destination Dates of Travel

Total Estimated Cost: \_\_\_\_\_ (Include registration fee, per diem and transportation costs.) *To be reimbursed:*

1. Please explain your planned participation in meetings. **Documentation that you are presenting as a first or second author must accompany this request (copy of program or abstract)**

2. To be eligible for intramural travel support, students must first apply for any extramural funding available for the meeting they are attending.

*Indicate if you have applied for or have received a conference travel award.*

**Yes/No** (please circle) *I have applied to:* \_\_\_\_\_

**Yes/No** (please circle) *I have received an award of \$*\_\_ *from:* \_\_\_\_\_

3. All travel receipts (including air travel) are required for reimbursement.

Recommend \_\_\_\_\_  
Do Not Recommend \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Associate Dean for Graduate Studies Date  
And Research

Approved (max. \$750) \_\_\_\_\_  
Not Approved \_\_\_\_\_

If NOT recommending, reason: