

Molecular Microbiology and Immunology Graduate Student Guidelines 2025

Welcome to the Molecular Microbiology and Immunology (MMI) Graduate Program! We hope that you are excited to begin your graduate career with us. The MMI leadership are here to help guide you through the program and support your training towards earning your doctoral degree. Program Director, Dr. Eileen Barry is available for student concerns and to provide an environment of scholarship, collaboration, and community within the program. As part of the MMI Program, you will be learning in innovative courses, attending journal clubs, engaging with internationally known seminar speakers, presenting your research at our annual symposium, helping your fellow students at research-in-progress meetings, and conducting your own world class research.

Our program has over 80 faculty of diverse research interests. They are part of the Microbiology and Immunology Department, School of Dentistry, School of Pharmacy, Marlene and Stewart Greenebaum Comprehensive Cancer Center, Institute of Human Virology, Institute for Genome Sciences, Center for Vaccine Development and Global Health, Institute for Marine and Environmental Technology, and several other departments at the School of Medicine. In addition to maintaining their research programs, they are also leaders within their fields serving as journal editors, conference organizers, society officers, entrepreneurs, and study section members.

The following guidelines will provide the program requirements and rules for maintaining good standing in the MMI PhD program. You will also find the necessary forms to be submitted to document your progress. The policies stated are subject to change and you will be notified of any revisions in writing. These guidelines, in addition to the [Graduate Assistant Guide](#) and the [Graduate School Catalogue](#), will provide the policies that govern the MMI Program.

Graduate Student Responsibilities

- University of Maryland Baltimore graduate students supported by Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) stipends are not permitted to hold outside employment. They may be compensated for teaching opportunities, internships, or other work during the summer semester only. This must be approved by the Mentor, Program Director, and Dean of the School of Graduate Studies.
- It is expected that students pursuing a Ph.D. in our program will attend all of their classes and required events and arrive on time except in the case of illness. If a student must miss a class, the student should email the course director or Victoria Kutnick for the Core Course. Her phone number is 410-706-6042 and her email is vkutnik@som.umaryland.edu. The correct person should be notified before the start of the class.
- In addition to classes, new students are also required to perform three laboratory research rotations. They are expected to be in lab when not in classes for at least 20 hours per week. If a student is not enrolled in a course, time invested in research will be full time, approximately 40 hours a week. Laboratory research requires schedule flexibility and is not necessarily a 9am to 5pm job. Students should discuss their class/work schedule with the lab mentor.
- Students have the responsibility of informing their research mentor in advance if they require leave to study for an exam, appointments, etc., or if they are ill and unable to come to lab. Students who need to take leave while enrolled in a course should make arrangements and receive prior approval from the course director. Students who need to take leave during lab rotations or thesis work, need approval from their mentor. Vacation and sick leave are outlined in the [Graduate Assistant Guide](#) and lab policies should be discussed at the beginning of the rotation and when the mentor agreement is signed. Graduate Research Assistants (GRA) are allotted 10 business days for vacation, 5 days for short term sick leave, and UMB holidays/campus closures. Additional leave is at the discretion of the mentor.
- Students must adhere to all guidelines in this handbook or future amendments.

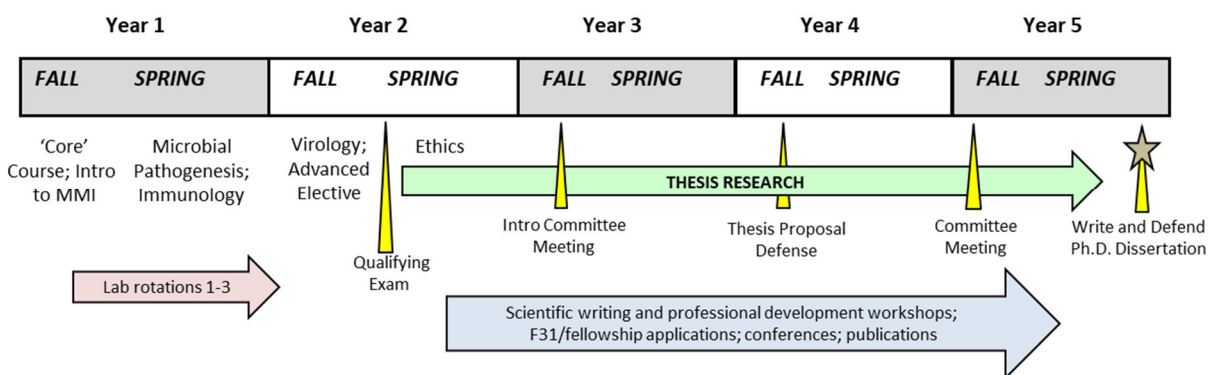
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In an effort to ensure that all Program and University mandated documentation is completed in a timely manner and that MMI student records are kept current, there is a policy entitled “Administrative Probation” in place. Under this policy, students who have not fulfilled administrative requirements such as turning in mandatory forms and documents, completing Title IX training etc., will be placed on Administrative Probation such that administrative support on the student's behalf (e.g. course registration, letters of recommendation, submission of Graduate School documents etc.) will be suspended until the outstanding matters are resolved. The Administrative Probation approach has helped to enhance accountability in other programs and we hope that it will be a rarely implemented incentive with the same effect for the MMI program.

Timeline

A general timeline is provided below for PhD students. MD/PhD students follow a slightly amended schedule beginning in either their thesis lab or last rotation in July, followed by Principles of Virology and an elective in the fall, Basic Immunology and Principles of Microbial Pathogenesis in the spring, and the qualifying exam the following summer.

Timeline of MMI Curriculum and Milestones



Seminars, journal clubs and student research presentations occur throughout the program and are not shown. The time for thesis research is not fixed but most students complete the program in five years.

Classes

Students are required to maintain a 3.0 overall GPA (B average). A “C” in any course other than the Core Course will require retaking the class. A “C” in the Core Course will result in a dismissal from the Program.

Required First Semester Courses

Core Course (GPLS 601 Section 01, 8 credits)

Microbiology and Immunology Seminar (GPLS 608 Section 03, 1 credit)

Introduction to Molecular Microbiology and Immunology (GPLS 693, 1 credit)

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Required Second Semester Courses

Principles of Microbial Pathogenesis (GPLS 710, 3 credits)

Basic Immunology (GPLS 702, 4 credits)

Laboratory Rotation starts in November (GPLS 609, Section 03, 2 credits)

Microbiology and Immunology Seminar (GPLS 608 Section 03, 1 credit)

Required Third Semester Courses

Principles of Virology (GPLS 704, 3 credits)

Microbiology and Immunology Seminar (GPLS 608 Section 03, 1 credit)

and every semester thereafter until the semester before the Dissertation Defense

Pre-candidacy Research (GPLS 898, Section 03, 2 credits)

Elective Third Semester Course (required) a partial list of electives:

Advances in Immunology (GPLS 769, 2 credits)

Systems Level Research in Microbial Pathogenesis (GPLS 725, 3 credits)

Advanced Parasitology (when warranted)

Non-MMI courses require approval from the Program Director

Required Fourth Semester Course

Research Ethics (CIPP 907, 1 credit)

Additional Electives can be taken after requirements are fulfilled with mentor approval.

Laboratory Rotations Rules and Timing (GPLS 609 Section 03)

Only one MMI rotation student per laboratory is allowed at a time. Three separate laboratory rotations are required during the student's first year. A student may request a 4th rotation which can be completed in the summer or fall of 2026.

Approval from the PD or coordinator for the rotation lab is required prior to committing to the faculty mentor. A Laboratory Rotation Form is required *before the start* of each rotation. The form should be completed with the chosen mentor. The completed and signed form is submitted to the MMI Academic Services Specialist, HH 324C.

The first laboratory rotation (2nd for Summer Bridge students) begins immediately following the completion of the Core Course, Monday, November 24, 2025 and ends approximately Friday, February 06, 2026.

Laboratory Rotation 2 (3rd for Summer Bridge students) begins approximately February 09, 2026 and will end on April 17, 2026.

Laboratory Rotation 3 (optional 4th for Summer Bridge students) starts April 20, 2026 and will end June 12, 2026

Laboratory Summaries are due *within 3 weeks* after the end of each rotation. Summaries must be 2-4 pages in length and must have the following sections: Title, Background and Hypothesis, Approach and Results, Conclusions and Future Directions, and References. After completing the summary, attach the required cover page summary which needs to be signed by student and mentor and submit to the MMI Academic Services Specialist, HH 324C.

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Core Course (GPLS 601)

Attendance is informally taken each day, however, if you begin missing classes or are constantly late it will be noted and you will be counseled by our program and/or GPILS. *If you are going to miss more than a day for illness or a required event such as the small group meetings, please notify the class coordinator.*

Introduction to Molecular Microbiology and Immunology (GPLS 693)

This course combines lecture and discussion to lay the foundation for advanced study of molecular microbiology and immunology. Lectures will include focus on Professional Development (mentorship, funding, publishing, career paths, study approaches, and lab protocol) needed to successfully navigate the MMI Program and PhD training. Lectures will include open forums for active discussion and integrated learning. This course meets once weekly and is required for all students in the Molecular Microbiology and Immunology Program.

Program Subject Courses

Class attendance is required as participation is a major component of the advanced courses. If a student is ill, an email must be sent to the course director. Course guidelines are provided in the syllabus which is provided by the course director and available on Blackboard.

Ethics Course (CIPP 907)

The Ethics Course will consist of weekly discussions during the second Spring semester. This is a required course that is graded Pass/Fail. A certificate will be awarded when the course is successfully completed which needs to be submitted to the Academic Services Specialist.

Microbiology and Immunology Department Seminar (GPLS 608)

Students are encouraged to attend Department Seminars in the GPLS 608 Seminar Series in order to fulfill their monthly Program attendance requirements (see below under Attendance Requirements). All speakers from outside the University have lunch with a small group of graduate students to discuss research, careers, and general advice. Students are strongly encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to network with leaders in the field (lunch is provided).

Other Program Requirements

Professor Rounds

Many of the faculty who would like to host a rotation student will present their work at Professor Rounds beginning in September and ending before the end of your 1st semester. Some faculty who can fund a student but are not actively seeking a student may opt to not present here, therefore if you are interested in working with a particular faculty member, you are highly encouraged to contact them even if they did not present at Professor Rounds. Attendance is *mandatory* for all Ph.D. students but optional for MD/PhD students.

Student Research-in-Progress Seminar Series/MLM

Micro Lab Meeting (MLM) will be held monthly in HSF3 1st floor seminar room. Each student gives an informal but organized presentation about their current work. These are not “polished,” conference-style presentations, but should generate discussion about lab successes and challenges – a place for receiving ideas to make projects stronger or more successful. Second year students and above are assigned a presentation date by the third year student organizers. Presenters will be contacted by the organizers at least one week ahead of their presentation and must provide a brief description of their project and the questions/problems they hope to address. Presenters should also notify their thesis committee of their presentation in advance so that they may attend. This is an excellent opportunity for committee members

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to be updated on your progress. These meetings are part of the Program attendance requirements detailed below.

Journal Clubs

All second year students and above should present in one of the three journal clubs organized by the third year MMI students. These meetings are part of the Program attendance requirements detailed below.

Immunology Journal Club (IJC) – Tuesdays, 12:00p.m in HSF3 rm 4020. Students, faculty, and postdocs present current, impactful, and engaging papers for discussion. Papers should be explained with a formal Powerpoint presentation. Presenters will be contacted by the organizers at least one week ahead of their presentation and must provide a pdf of the paper to be discussed as well as a brief explanation of the paper's significance.

Microbial Pathogenesis Journal Club (MPJC) – Every other Thursday at noon in either HSF2 431 or HH317. Students, faculty, and postdocs present current, impactful, and engaging papers for discussion. Papers should be explained with a formal Powerpoint presentation. Presenters will be contacted by the organizers at least one week ahead of their presentation and must provide a pdf of the paper to be discussed as well as a brief explanation of the paper's significance.

Virology Journal Club (VJC) – Alternating Thursdays with MPJC at noon in either HSF2 431 or HH317. While this journal club is heavily attended by the Frieman, Jackson, and Coughlan labs, it is open to everyone and is included amongst the Program attendance options. Presenters will be contacted by the organizers at least one week ahead of their presentation and must provide a pdf of the paper to be discussed as well as a brief explanation of the paper's significance.

Program Attendance Requirements

All students are required to attend the Research-in-Progress/MLM, journal clubs (JC), and/or Microbiology Dept Seminars each month. The guidelines are as follows.

- 1st year students – Fall semester: journal clubs and seminars are encouraged but not required, 2 MLMs are required for the semester. Spring semester: same requirements as all other students below.
- 2nd year+ students – 2 JCs per month; 75% of Micro Dept Seminars (3/4 per month); only 1 MLM can be missed per semester.

If a student does not meet the monthly attendance minimums, a makeup assignment will be required. Attendance is required for successfully passing the Microbiology and Immunology Department Seminar course, GPLS 608. Our program cannot graduate a PhD student with a Fail on their transcript.

A make-up assignment for each missed meeting consists of:

1. Choose one of the speakers/paper authors that was missed for every absence.
2. Read 3 papers by said speaker/author
3. Write a 3 to 4 page, double-spaced paper summarizing what was read and demonstrating that the material was understood.
4. Paper summaries are due the same semester as the missed seminars or a due date set by Dr. Barry.

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Graduate Research Conference (GRC)

Each year the Graduate Student Association sponsors the Graduate Research Conference in March. This is a chance for students across all of the UMB schools to enter a poster or an oral presentation of their work. Posters and presentations are judged and awarded. All Molecular Microbiology and Immunology Students are strongly encouraged to participate.

PhD Candidacy Ceremony

As part of the GRC, students who reached candidacy the year prior to the spring semester can participate in the PhD Candidacy Ceremony where their achievement is recognized by the Dean of the Graduate School. Students interested in participating must RSVP to the School of Graduate Studies.

Student Selected Seminar Speakers

Each academic year speaker nominees will be solicited and the student who nominates the agreed upon speaker will serve as the host. First year students may vote, but cannot host a speaker. The chosen speaker must receive approval of the Program Director, Dr. Eileen Barry and seminar committee chairperson, Dr. William Jackson. Available dates should be obtained from Dr. Jackson *before* the speaker is invited. The student host, with the assistance of the committee, organizes the dinner with the speaker by making the reservations; inviting students to attend the dinner, making sure the State guidelines are followed for reimbursement (currently \$54 a person) and alcohol (see Program Coordinator). The host works closely with the Microbiology and Immunology Seminar Coordinator, Ms. Jasmine Hawkins, who will make the travel and honorarium arrangements, contact suggested faculty to meet the speaker, organize the schedule, and order the lunch for the students. All students are invited to have lunch or dinner with the speaker but there will be a limit on the number of attendees – lunch attendees should be different than the dinner attendees whenever possible. The receipt for the dinner should be turned in to Olu Adewunmi, the Administrator in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology or Vernon Markland.

Graduate Student Presentations

The MMI Graduate Student Symposium is held annually in the beginning of June, thus they are commonly referred to as “June Presentations”. Attendance and participation is mandatory for each student. Presentations are on a student’s thesis project or first year students can present on any completed laboratory rotation project. First year students should contact their rotation mentor for approval. The primary purpose of these presentations is to improve students’ presentations skills and construction of an abstract; it is not an evaluation of their research project. Fourth year students organize this activity each year in coordination with the Academic Services Specialist.

Abstracts will be due in May and are generally submitted to a shared drive established by the organizers. They will be assembled into a symposium abstract book.

Presentations are approximately 5 min. Additional time of about 5 minutes should be allocated for questions from the audience.

Each student will receive written evaluations of their abstract and presentation from 2-3 non-anonymous reviewers. Reviewers are faculty members, postdoctoral fellows, and senior students who have submitted their Final Committee Nomination Form to the Graduate School.

Advisor Meetings

The Program Director has assigned a faculty member to be your academic advisor for your first year. The student and advisor should meet each semester to discuss classes, career development, rotations, mentor selection, and skills for being a successful scientist and student. The student is responsible for organizing the meetings in a timely fashion as well as returning the required form (due each semester), completed and signed, to the MMI Academic Services Specialist.

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Suggested semester meeting topics, in addition to coursework, rotations, and general progression are below.

Fall 2024

September/October- introductions, background bios and interests; rotations. Feel free to discuss topics covered in the Intro to MMI course such as: how to do a rotation and choose a lab/mentor; how to learn: "Grad School Style"; the Qualifying Exam (note a full description of the exam will be provided in December of your second year).

Spring 2025

February/March – discuss progress in your first rotation and upcoming second rotation; MMI courses – Basic Immunology and Microbial Pathogenesis. Feel free to discuss topics covered in the Intro to MMI course such as: Grants: how/why are you paid, F31s, foundation grants etc.; how publishing works; writing a paper and responding to reviewers; negotiating issues/conflicts with colleagues

April/May – discuss progress in your second rotation and upcoming third rotation; MMI courses – exam results. Feel free to discuss any of the topics above.

Summer 2025 (optional)

June/July- discuss semester grades and selection of Fall elective, rotation #3, and selecting a thesis mentor. Feel free to discuss topics covered in the Intro to MMI course such as: posters/meetings; how to pick a career: Academia, Industry, Government, and Other; how to pick a postdoc lab and be a competitive applicant

Individual Development Plan (IDP)

To further support the development of graduate students in their trajectory towards independent careers, the Graduate Program in Life Sciences issued the Individual Development Plan (IDP) as a mentoring guidance document. Each student is required to complete an IDP with their mentor each year. First year students will meet with their faculty advisor to discuss this if they do not yet have a mentor. Please turn in this completed and signed form to the MMI Academic Services Specialist when requested in the spring semester.

Academic Progress

Selecting a Thesis Mentor

Selection of a thesis lab is a consensus decision between the student and faculty mentor. Numerous considerations go into choosing a thesis mentor, including their temperament, mentoring philosophy, the other lab personnel, their supervisory style, the project and more. Lab rotations are a time to explore these and decide whether the lab and mentor are a good fit for both student and mentor. Students are encouraged to communicate their level of enthusiasm for the lab and mentor during and at the end of the rotation.

Selecting Rotations

First year students must have the approval of the Program Coordinator or Dr. Barry before they begin a rotation. Rotation mentors should meet the mentor funding requirements (2 years of student stipend support beginning in the Fall of the student's second year) until they identify a thesis mentor.

Once a student finds the right combination in a mentor and decides on a lab, they should meet with the faculty member and confirm they can support a student financially. The mentor must be willing and able to provide at least 2 years of support beginning 15 months (12 months for MD/PhD students) after the

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student begins in the program. Projects, expectations (for both parties), and lab rules (attendance, meetings etc) should also be discussed. If more than one student wants to join the lab as a thesis student at the same time, the mentor will choose the student able to join, or if the mentor has enough funding, both students can be accepted. Having rotated first does not automatically mean someone has priority for joining the lab, nor does being a member of a particular GPILS program.

After a thesis lab is decided, the Mentor Agreement to be reviewed and signed. This form confirms the expectations of the mentor's financial obligation to the student and that the mentor accepts the student into their lab for their thesis work. If a mentor cannot afford to support the student for 2 years, they cannot serve as a mentor.

Further advice on picking a thesis mentor can be sought from other students, a student's first year advisor, the Program Director, or the MMI Academic Services Specialist.

Qualifying Exam, approximately late-March 2027 (or late-July 2026 for MD/PhD students)

Qualifying Exam Committee Chair, Dr. Matt Frieman will meet with students approximately 3 months prior to the anticipated exam to provide instructions, deadlines, and expectations for the exam. The Qualifying Exam is both a written and oral exam. The written exam is a grant proposal formatted as an NIH F31 fellowship Specific Aims and Research Plan sections and can be based upon the student's thesis work. The Specific Aims and Research Plan are due to the QE Chair by the assigned date for approval by the student's exam committee. The student will be notified within two weeks whether the written proposal is acceptable and they can proceed to the oral exam. If the proposal is deemed unacceptable, the Chair will determine the timeframe in which the student can revise the proposal and resubmit. The oral exam is approximately 2 hours in length. The student's fundamental scientific knowledge and ability to interpret data, draw conclusions, formulate hypotheses and design experimental approaches is tested utilizing the written proposal as a basis for questioning, but the examination is not restricted to it. The purpose of this exam is to ensure the student's mastery of basic course material and scientific thinking. Successful completion is required for continuation in the graduate program. Only three grades are possible, Pass, Fail, and Remediation with possible re-take. At least 3 of the examining committee members must approve a passing grade. If the student does not pass a required retake exam or refuses to retake the exam, the student will be dismissed with a master's degree (provided they have fulfilled all MS requirements).

In preparation for the exam, students may devote dedicated time to studying once the proposal has been deemed acceptable. This arrangement should be discussed with the mentor, however program leadership can be consulted. It is permissible and typical that senior post-candidacy students distribute study guides and hold "practice" oral exams. Senior students help prepare their younger peers for being tested by the faculty examination panel. The student's primary thesis mentor may also help with preparing the student for the exam.

Admission to Candidacy

Admission to candidacy is applied for after passing the Qualifying Exam. The application will be completed by the MMI Academic Services Specialist; the Student will obtain their Mentor's signature and then return the form to the MMI Academic Services Specialist with their annotated transcript. The Academic Services Specialist who will then submit it to the School of Graduate Studies.

After passing the Qualifying Exam and receiving admission to candidacy, the student's annual stipend will be increased by ~\$2,000.

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Thesis Committee Selection and Introductory Meeting

A thesis committee consisting of at least five faculty members is selected by the student and their mentor after passing the Qualifying exam and no later than the summer of 2027. A minimum of 3 members must have regular membership on the University of Maryland Graduate Faculty. One member must have *no* affiliation with the Molecular Microbiology and Immunology Graduate Program and should not be part of the University of Maryland Baltimore campus if possible. MD/PhD students must have a member of the MSTP Advisory Committee. The thesis committee cannot exceed 7 members. After the Committee Nomination form is completed, it should be turned in to the Academic Services Specialist.

An introductory meeting of the thesis committee should take place by the end of the calendar year, 2027, for PhD students, and by October 2026 for MD/PhD students. At this meeting, the student introduces themselves and their project(s) to the committee through an oral presentation. Research may still be in the preliminary stage or multiple projects may be candidates for the final thesis work. The committee will help determine whether the research project will be a viable dissertation and what experiments are necessary to prepare the student for the thesis proposal meeting. The introductory meeting will be followed by mandatory annual meetings of the thesis committee and student. MD/PhD students must meet with their committee every six months per MSTP guidelines. The student is responsible for organizing the meeting in a timely fashion as well as providing and returning the completed, signed form to the Academic Services Specialist.

Proposal Defense Guidelines

The Proposal Defense is intended to allow the student to formulate a sound plan for the final phase of their PhD research project, and to have the student's thesis committee approve that plan. The student should emerge from this meeting with clear goals for the research plan, allowing for possible alternative approaches if necessary. This is a formal exam in which the student must demonstrate strong knowledge of the background material and relevant literature, and clear understanding of other aspects of the project and proposal.

1. The proposal defense should take place by the end of the student's third year in the program, and no later than 12 months after the introductory thesis meeting at the latest. MD/PhD students should hold their proposal within 12 months after their qualifying exam.
2. The proposal document is prepared by the student with advice from the mentor
3. The proposal document should follow guidelines for an NRSA (NIH) F31 (Individual Student Fellowship) application:
 - a. Maximums of 1 page for the Specific Aims and 6 single line spaced pages, including figures and tables, for sections ii-iv below (excluding list of references). Sections ii-iv are the Research Strategy of an F31
 - b. Arial 11 pt font (or similar size font)
 - c. Sections headed:
 - i. Abstract and Specific Aims (0.5-1 page)
 - ii. Significance (~1-1.5 pages)
 - iii. Innovation (~0.5 pages)
 - iv. Approach (~3-4 pages))
 - v. References Cited
 - d. For content descriptions of these sections, see pages 84-86 of the [NIH Research Instructions](#)
4. The document should be sent electronically (with hard copy if requested) to each member of the thesis committee at least 1 week prior to the oral defense date. For the oral defense, the student should prepare a presentation lasting 30-45 minutes describing all aspects of the proposal.

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5. Although the major purpose of this meeting is for the thesis committee to approve the proposed project and provide suggestions and guidance to the student, this is also an examination that the student must pass to continue in the program. The thesis committee members will ask questions throughout the presentation, testing the student's knowledge of the background material and their understanding of the project significance and approaches used, and will advise on the feasibility of the aims and research design. It is strongly suggested that, within a reasonable time, the student prepares a response to all of the committee suggestions, to be used in subsequent meetings to show that concerns by members of the committee have been properly addressed.
6. For the student to pass the defense, the majority of the committee members must vote to pass (3 votes for a 5-member committee, 4 votes for a 6-member committee).
7. If there are insufficient pass votes, the student will be given one more opportunity to revise the document (if necessary) and retake the oral proposal defense within 6 months of the first date.
8. The Proposal Defense Record form must be signed by the committee members and completed at the defense meeting – the student then returns the form to the MMI Academic Services Specialist.
9. Where possible, the proposal document can be submitted as an F31 Individual Predoctoral Fellowship application to the NIH (or equivalent funding agency).
10. The student must meet with the thesis committee at least annually after this defense to update the committee and seek further advice (every six months for MD/PhD students).
11. The student may meet more frequently with individual members of the committee or the whole committee.
12. The thesis committee may request to meet with the student in 6, 9, or 12 months depending on the student's progress. If the thesis committee requests to meet in less than 12 months, they must indicate what concerns they had at the committee meeting and their expectations for the next meeting.

Dissertation Defense

At least six months before the Doctoral Dissertation Defense, submission of the "Nomination of Members for Final Doctoral Examination Committee" form must be completed and submitted to the Graduate School. Usually the members are the same as the Thesis Committee, however some adjustment of the committee is allowed. The student should also consult the School of Graduate Studies [website](#) for graduating students.

Students are *required* to have an accepted first author paper before setting the Defense date. This is a GPILS requirement unless special permission is granted by the Program Director. Students should also consult the School of Graduate Studies [website](#) for the last day to defend in any given semester in order to graduate that semester. If you will be a summer graduate, please consult the Academic Services Specialist as tuition costs must be considered for summer graduates.

Students are responsible for reserving a venue for both the public and private defense of their dissertation. The public defense is a **one hour oral presentation** that is open to the UMB community at which the audience is able to ask questions. Traditionally, the committee members hold their questions until the private defense immediately following. Potential public defense venues must be of a reasonable size to accommodate an audience of faculty and students. Family and friends are also welcome to attend. Potential rooms include the HSFII auditorium, Leadership Hall, Hosick Lecture Hall, HSF-3 rm 1010, various lecture halls in the School of Dentistry, and Davidge Hall. The private defense can either be in the same location or a smaller conference room.

At least one month before the Defense date, the student's readers are given the document for review. The Reader's must approve that the document is sufficient for defense and they may provide comments and edits to the student. When the thesis is returned to the student, and at least two weeks before the defense, each reader must sign the "Certification of Completion of the Doctoral Dissertation" form. This form is

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then submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, 620 W. Lexington Street, 5th Floor. It can be scanned and emailed to GradForms@umaryland.edu.

Two weeks before the dissertation defense, each member of the thesis committee must be presented with the amended document.

Also two weeks before the Defense, the student must submit the “Announcement of Doctoral Dissertation Defense” [online form](#) to the School of Graduate Studies, and provide a copy of the announcement information to the Academic Services Specialist.

Several days before the Defense, the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies will assign one of the committee members to be the Dean’s representative. They will receive and be responsible for collecting the signatures of the committee, recording the final grade (pass/fail), and submitting the form to the Graduate School within two days of the Defense.

After successfully defending, the student is required to submit an electronic version of their thesis to the School of Graduate Studies through ProQuest before the deadline as detailed on their [website](#). Bound copies of the completed thesis can be purchased by the student.

A checklist of these steps and the necessary links are located in the Forms section of the Handbook.

Doctoral Hooding Ceremony

This is held as part of the University commencement ceremonies at the end of the spring semester. All students who defended in the 3 preceding semesters (Summer, Fall, Spring) are invited to participate in the ceremony. The student’s mentor and the director of the program participate in the conveyance of the doctoral hood. A reception follows for the faculty, students, and their families.

Graduation Ceremony

Students must apply to graduate at the beginning of the semester they intend to graduate. Defense and application deadlines can be found on the School of Graduate Studies [website](#). This campus-wide ceremony is held the last day of the semester at the Baltimore Arena. Graduates can attend this ceremony in addition to the Doctoral Hooding Ceremony. Communications regarding the ceremony, tickets, and regalia will come from the Graduate School.

Other Opportunities

University & Community Service

For students interested in university & community service, several opportunities are available. These activities can also be noted on a student’s CV, demonstrating that the student is engaged, adds to their transferable skills, and is a valuable member of the program, university, and community at large. Below are just some of the campus service opportunities.

Teaching

We recognize that teaching experience is an important skill for MMI students on both academic and non-academic professional paths. Towards this goal, students who have successfully completed their qualifying exam have the opportunity to serve as small group preceptors in the medical school curriculum and/or teach in MMI classes (e.g. Basic and Advanced Immunology, Microbial Pathogenesis). Any teaching activity requires prior approval of the student’s primary research mentor and should not adversely impact their thesis research.

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Opportunities for undergraduate teaching may be available at affiliated UM System and private local universities (e.g. Towson, Loyola) and MMI faculty may help identify such opportunities as requested on a case-by-case basis.

Jennifer Aumiller is the Director of the Office of Professional Development in GPILS and organizes pedagogy seminars each year. Interested students can also apply for the Collaborative Teaching Fellowship Program in conjunction with Johns Hopkins University that provides hands-on teaching experience with mentorship and coaching from faculty at local institutions. The program is 6 to 8 weeks. The program is offered at least once a year. Students must apply directly to the program and approval is needed from the mentor and Program Director.

UMB is also part of the [Center for Integration, Research, Teaching, and Learning \(CIRTL\)](#) Network, which aims to advance the teaching of STEM disciplines in higher education. Students can participate in online seminars and workshops on teaching and learning. CIRTL certification is available.

The [Future Educators Academy \(FEA\)](#) is an innovative program designed for graduate students. Developed in collaboration with Academic Affairs, the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning (FCTL), and UMB schools, the FEA is committed to providing a tailored educational development experience for graduate students pursuing careers in education and research. Participants receive stipend support.

Recruitment

The participation of current students is needed in order for our program to attract the BEST applicants to join our Program. Each January and February, volunteers will be requested to help host applicants and be ambassadors for our program. Our students are our best recruitment tools and this is an excellent opportunity to share your experience with applicants and help MMI identify the students with the most potential for success as members of future MMI classes. Our program also hosts prospective students throughout the year and volunteers will be needed for these smaller events as well.

Select campus-wide service opportunities

Graduate Student Association (GSA, <http://graduate.umaryland.edu/gsa/>)

University Student Government Assoc. (USGA <http://www.umaryland.edu/usga/>)

GPILS Student Advisory Committee (SAC,

<https://www.lifesciences.umaryland.edu/molecularmedicine/student-life/student-advisory-committee/>)

GSA and SAC all have student representatives from MMI.

Community Outreach

Public service and education are important components of professional development and many opportunities exist for students on campus.

The UMB CURE Scholars Program is a STEM education and outreach program seeking volunteers to mentor middle and high school youth from West Baltimore (<https://www.umaryland.edu/cure-scholars/>).

The Office of Community Engagement (<https://www.umaryland.edu/oce/>) is a good resource for service opportunities.

GSA, USGA, and SAC also provide volunteer opportunities throughout the year.

Resources and Assistance

Molecular Microbiology and Immunology Graduate Student Guidelines 2025

The path to a doctorate is long and can be both mentally and emotionally taxing. Whether stressed from experiment challenges or conflicts in the lab, there are many resources available to you. Reaching out to your fellow students, mentor, labmates, program coordinator, or director can help clarify guidelines, policies, or expectations which may be helpful. In addition, following are some resource guides and links