

RULES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR NEUROSCIENCE PROGRAM STUDENTS

Details for the rules and regulations for all graduate students are in the Code of Legislation (COL) of the Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences of Cornell University. Below are additional rules and responsibilities for the Neuroscience (NS) Program. These and other important guidelines and forms are available at:

<https://gradschool.weill.cornell.edu/codeandpolicies>

<https://gradschool.weill.cornell.edu/student-experience/student-forms>

The SLATE Academic Progression Portfolio link is here:

[Academic Progression Portfolio](#)

LABORATORY ROTATIONS (FIRST YEAR STUDENTS)

(WCGSMS Code of Legislation, pgs. 19, 21)

- 1) Lab Rotation form:** G1 students must complete 3 lab rotations. However, they can do a fourth rotation. Students must register for pre-ACE Research (REST 9003) for each semester in LEARN to receive credit for the rotation and to be listed on their transcript. Lab Rotation forms (Rotation Agreement, Student evaluation and Faculty evaluation) are in SLATE. Students and faculty must complete the lab rotation evaluation forms within two weeks of completion of the rotation. Contact the Program Coordinator if problems are encountered. Completed laboratory rotation forms are required for a student to maintain good academic standing.
- 2) Lab rotation timing.** We recommend that rotations be taken at the following times: rotation 1 - November to Mid-January; **rotation 2** mid-January to March; **rotation 3** – April to early June. Students wishing to deviate from these time periods should consult Program Directors.
- 3) Laboratory rotation expectations:** Students are expected to spend at least 15 hours per week in the lab. Each rotation should be about 8 weeks long but no longer than 10 weeks. Students are expected to provide a 1-2 page write-up or a copy of their final lab presentation slides summarizing their lab experience with the lab rotation form. The content should include specific aims with background, hypothesis, goals as well as results and a discussion of their interpretation. Write-ups and/or slides should be uploaded into SLATE.
- 4)** G1 students will meet individually with the Program Directors in June of their first year.

ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY EXAM (ACE) GUIDELINES (SECOND YEAR STUDENTS)

(WCGSMS Code of Legislation, pgs. 15-17)

- 1) ACE deadline:** G2 students must take their ACE exam prior to June 30th of their second year.
- 2) ACE procedures:** In October of the 2nd year, the NS Program Directors will review ACE procedures with the students.
- 3) Advisor selection:** The student must send their Major Sponsor's name as soon as it is known and no later than December 15th to the NS Program Administrator and Directors. If more time is needed to select a Major Sponsor, the student should contact the Program Directors or Program Chair.

- 4) **Proposal instruction workshop (required):** In early January, Anastasia Efthymiou (Office of Fellowships and Scientific Writing) will provide an instructional workshop that includes preparation of the Specific Aims and Research Strategy for an NIH fellowship, useful for the ACE preparation.
- 5) **ACE committee:** G2 students should assemble their ACE committee and send the names of their committee members and the chair of their committee to the NS Program Administrator by January 31st of their second year. The committee consists of the Major Sponsor and 3 or more faculty members. Three of the Faculty (including the sponsor) must be members of any Program in the Weill Cornell Graduate School (not necessarily NS), as only WCGS faculty may vote to pass the student. Instructions for the ACE protocol will be sent to the Major sponsor and committee members once they have been selected.
- 6) **Meeting with the Chair:** G2 students will be individually meeting with the Program Chair to discuss their ACE progress in February.
- 7) **ACE date:** ACE meetings are scheduled for 2 hours. This time period allows for the ACE pre-meeting of the committee, a 45-60 minute presentation by the student, and a post-ACE discussion by the committee. Students should submit their ACE date (determined with the ACE committee approval) to the NS Program Directors, Chair and Coordinator by March 1st. Students must register for the "Admission to Candidacy Exam (ACEX 9003) in LEARN (spring session if exam date is prior to May 5; summer session if their exam date is May 5 or later). Students also must complete the ACE application form in SLATE at least two weeks prior to their scheduled exam date.
- 8) **ACE proposal first draft:** Students should submit an approximately 1-page summary of their research proposal to their committee members by end of February. Committee members have 2 weeks to provide feedback on the proposal. However, faculty are asked not to provide detailed edits to the proposal. Students have 2 weeks to revise if needed. If extensive revisions are needed, the ACE should be postponed (no later than June 30th). Approval from the committee chair should be sent via email to the NS Program Coordinator. Students should meet frequently with their committee members to get feedback on aspects of their proposal!
- 9) **ACE proposal format:** Students are highly encouraged to submit their ACE proposal in the format of a fellowship application (e.g., F31). The proposal should be 7 pages total, including one specific aims page and a 6-page research plan including summary figures and preliminary data if existing (but not required) and excluding references.
- 10) **Full ACE proposal:** The full proposal is due to be distributed to the committee 4 weeks before the scheduled ACE. The committee will provide feedback within 1 week after submission. A final version after incorporating edits from the committee is due no later than 2 weeks prior the scheduled ACE to the graduate school. A final copy of the ACE proposal must be given to the Graduate School (Denise Jenkins djenkins@med.cornell.edu) as well as to the ACE committee faculty.
- 11) **ACE:** On the day of the ACE, the committee members will excuse the student and vote as to whether or not the written document is acceptable. The committee will not proceed with the oral exam if the written ACE does not receive a PASS. If the written document is tabled, the student will revise the document with assistance from the committee, and re-schedule the ACE. If a student passes the ACE, they are admitted to PhD candidacy. Students can pass the ACE for a Master's degree only (for details see

the WCGS policy guidelines). All finalized and signed ACE paperwork and the ACE proposal will reside in SLATE.

- 12) **Post-ACE.** Post-ACE students must register for “Dissertation Research: NEURO” (REST 9105) in LEARN to receive credit for the research portion of their degree

Brief timeline

- Advisor Selection: by **December 15, 2024**
- ACE proposal workshop: in **January**
- Assemble ACE committee: by **January 31**
- Meeting with Chair (Betsy Ross): in **February**
- ACE date: Submit by **March 1**
- ACE proposal 1 page summary: to committee by **end of February**; committee gives feedback within 2 weeks; then 2 weeks to revise if needed. Chair will send approval to program administrator.
- Full ACE proposal: **Meet with committee members as frequently as needed**. Format is that of F31 proposal and includes 7 pages (1 specific aims page, 6 pages of research plan). Due to committee **4 weeks before scheduled ACE date**. Committee will provide feedback within 1 week. **Final version is due 2 weeks before scheduled ACE**.
- ACE date: Must be completed **no later than June 30th** of Year 2.

THESIS COMMITTEE MEETINGS (POST ACE STUDENTS)

(WCGSMS Code of Legislation, pgs. 15, 18, 19)

- 1) **Special committee:** The Special thesis committee members do not have to be the same faculty who were on the ACE committee. The committee consists of the sponsor and 3 or more faculty members. Three of the faculty (including the thesis advisor) on the committee must be members of the Weill Cornell Graduate School. The selection of the Special Committee (Thesis Committee) including the Committee Chair must be selected, approved by either Program Director or Program Chair and submitted in SLATE within 3 months after completion of the ACE (WCGSMS Code of Legislation, pgs. 15-16). Instructions for the Thesis Committee protocol will be sent to the Major sponsor, Committee Chair, and committee members once they have been selected. G3 students must submit their “Nomination for Special Committee” forms in SLATE at least two weeks prior to their first committee meeting. G4 students and beyond must make changes to the members of the committee on the “Nomination for Special Committee” form prior to initiating Thesis committee meetings.
- 2) **Frequency:** Thesis committee meetings must be scheduled at least every 12 months (G3 and G4) or every 6 months (G5 and beyond). More frequent meetings are encouraged for all years. Students can meet as frequently as needed. **Meetings are in-person.** Exceptions for committee members who can only attend remotely must be pre-approved by the Associate Dean.
- 3) **Scheduling:** Students are encouraged to schedule meetings at least 3 months in advance. Thesis committee meetings should be scheduled for 1.5 hours, unless the committee requests additional time. Contact the Program Directors or Chair if you are having difficulties scheduling the meetings.
- 4) **Communication:** The student should maintain communication with the committee members throughout the conduction of the thesis work.
- 5) **Preparation:** The student must send a 1-2 page summary of their work \geq 1 week ahead

of the thesis committee meeting. The summary should include accomplishments so far, plans for future experiments and how their work will be organized into potential manuscripts. These reports are to be uploaded in SLATE.

- 6) **Thesis Committee Form:** Students must initiate the thesis committee form in SLATE at least one-week prior to the scheduled date of the meeting. The student should alert the Major Sponsor that the form has been initiated in SLATE so that the “Major Sponsor comments on student progress” can be completed prior to meeting. The student should also alert the committee chair that the form has been initiated in SLATE.

OTHER POST-ACE REQUIREMENTS

- 1) **Individual Development Plans (IDPs):** Students should update IDPs annually by July 1st (<https://gradschool.weill.cornell.edu/student-experience/student-forms>). Note that this requires a discussion with the mentor. The IDP form will be part of the student’s file.
- 2) **Presentations:** Students are required to give at least one poster or oral presentation annually. Presentations could be local (e.g., BMRI Work-in-Progress, Appel Work-in-Progress, Du Vigneaud Symposium, Program Retreat) or external (e.g., scientific meetings).
- 3) **Post-ACE evaluations.** Students will be evaluated 3 times/year (Fall, Spring and Summer) by the Program Directors. The post-ACE evaluation will be based on lab research performance. However, this evaluation will take into account completion of thesis committee forms, annual IDP and attendance at the annual retreat.

THESIS DEFENSE

(WCGSMS Code of Legislation, pgs. 17, 18)

- 1) **Guidelines for dissertation preparation and final submission:** See the WCGSMS Code of Legislation (pgs.17-18) for a description of the thesis defense. Details for the format of the thesis can be obtained from: <https://gradschool.weill.cornell.edu/student-experience/student-forms>
- 2) **Dissertation deadlines:** Students must submit their dissertation at least 30 days before their Final Examination (thesis defense) to committee members. The “Application for Final Examination for the PhD Degree” also must be submitted in SLATE at least 30 days in prior to the thesis defense date. Students must send a copy of the dissertation to the NS Program directors at the time they submit the final examination form.
- 3) **Thesis defense committee:** The thesis defense committee and chair are typically the same faculty as the thesis committee members. However, the thesis defense chair must be different from the thesis committee chair(s). The committee must consist of at least 4 members. Three of the faculty on the committee must be members of the Weill Cornell Graduate School. If needed, additional faculty can be added. (WCGSMS Code of Legislation, pgs. 15-16). Changes to the members of the committee must be made on the “Application for Final Examination for the PhD Degree” form (above).
- 4) **Dissertation defense:** Students should schedule 1 hour for the thesis defense presentation and 1.5 hours for the thesis defense meeting with the committee. The oral presentation and closed session examination may take place in different rooms.
- 5) **Publications:** Students should have a body of work that is either accepted, submitted or soon to be submitted for publication.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS (ALL STUDENTS)

- 1) **Laboratory work week:** In-person work in the laboratory is not limited to Monday-Friday 9am-5pm. However, if students will be working in the laboratory alone, they must obtain a NY Fire Department C-14 Certificate of Fitness (COF). Details for obtaining the COF are available at: <https://ehs.weill.cornell.edu/safety/chemical-safety/certificate-fitness-c-14>.
- 2) **Vacations/extended absences:** Students are expected to do lab work during times outside of the academic year. Planned vacations should be approved by either the Program Directors or Chair (G1 and G2 students) or the thesis advisor (G3 students and beyond) at least 1 month prior to the departure date and should be no longer than two weeks. Exceptions require petition to the Directors. The Program Directors or Chair should be notified of extended leaves or emergency leaves as soon as possible (WGSMS Code of Legislation pgs. 14-15).

Contacts

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