

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/student-experience/student-forms>.

LABORATORY ROTATIONS (FIRST YEAR STUDENTS)

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

- 1) Lab rotation form:** Students must complete 3 lab rotations. However, they can do a fourth rotation. Students should initiate a lab rotation form in LEARN at the beginning of each rotation. Students must complete the lab rotation form within two weeks of completing their rotation. It is the student's responsibility to make sure that the forms are fully submitted in LEARN including reaching out to their Preceptor. Contact the Program Administrator if problems are encountered. Submission of laboratory rotation forms is required for a student to maintain good academic standing.
- 2) Laboratory rotation expectations:** Students are expected to spend at least 15 hours per week in the lab. Each rotation should be 8 weeks minimum but no longer than 12 weeks. Students are expected to provide 1-2 page writeup 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.

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

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

- 1) ACE deadline:** 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. 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, Nora McCall (Office of Fellowships and Scientific Writing) will provide an instructional workshop of the preparation of the ACE proposal. This includes instructions in preparation of the Specific Aims page and in the Approach.
- 5) ACE committee:** Students should assemble their ACE committee and send the names of their committee members to the Program Administrator by January 31st. The committee consists of the Major Sponsor and 3 or more faculty members. Three of the Faculty (including the sponsor) must be members of a Program in the Weill Cornell Graduate School, 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 as soon as they have been selected.

- 6) **Meeting with the Chair:** 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. Students should submit their ACE date (established with the ACE committee approval) to the NS Program Administrator by March 1st.
- 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 Program Administrator. Students should meet frequently with their committee members to get feedback on 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.
- 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 Master's degree only (for details see the WCGS policy guidelines).

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 including the Chair must be selected, approved by the Program Directors or Chair and submitted to the WCGSMS office within 3 months after completion of the ACE. (WCGSMS Code of Legislation, pgs. 15-16). Instructions for Thesis Committee protocol will be sent to Major sponsor and committee members as soon as they have been selected.
- 2) **Frequency:** Thesis committee meetings must be scheduled at least every 12 months. More frequent meetings (e.g., every 6 months) are encouraged and are required after

year 5 of graduate training. Students can meet as frequently as needed. Meetings can be in-person, remote or hybrid.

- 3) **Scheduling:** Schedule meetings at least 3 months in advance. Schedule thesis committee meetings for 1.5 hours, unless committee requests additional time. Contact the Program Directors or Chair if you are having difficulties scheduling the meetings.
- 4) **Communication:** Maintain communication with the committee members throughout the conduct of the thesis work.
- 5) **Preparation:** The student must send a 1-2 page summary of their work ≥ 1 week ahead of the thesis committee meeting. The summary should include plans for future experiments and how their work will be organized into potential manuscripts.
- 6) **Thesis Committee Form:** Students must initiate the thesis committee form in LEARN at least one-week ahead of the meeting. The student should alert the Thesis Advisor and the Chair of the Committee to expect the form to be routed to them.

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. Completing the IDPs is necessary to remain in good academic standing.
- 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).

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 description of thesis defense. Details for the format of the thesis can be obtained from (contact person in WCGSMS).
- 2) **Dissertation deadlines:** Students must submit their dissertation at least 30 days before their Final Examination (thesis defense) to committee members.
- 3) **Thesis defense committee:** The thesis defense committee and chair are typically the same faculty as the thesis committee members. 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)
- 4) **Dissertation defense:** Schedule 1 hour for thesis defense presentation and 1.5 hours for 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 (1st and 2nd year students) or the thesis advisor (students 3rd year 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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