

Brandeis University
Biochemistry and Biophysics PhD Program Handbook
 Effective Fall Semester 2024-25

The purpose of this handbook is to help students navigate the various requirements and expectations of the PhD Program in Biochemistry and Biophysics. It summarizes the requirements for the Ph.D. degree and provides general information about the procedures to be followed in satisfying these requirements. You will need to consult the instructions and forms contained here at various times during your graduate studies, so please save your copy or select “Student handbook” on the [website](#).

The Biochemistry & Biophysics Graduate Program (BCBP) is an interdepartmental graduate training program with training faculty drawn from the Biochemistry, Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics departments. An up-to-date listing of Training faculty associated with the program are listed on the Biochemistry & Biophysics Graduate [program webpage](#).

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Program administration

The program is directed by the BCBP Director of Graduate Study (DGS), who is appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) on advice from the Biochemistry Dept. Chair.

BCBP DGS: Jeff Gelles, Kosow 208 gelles@brandeis.edu, 781-736-2377.

Biochemistry Chair: Douglas Theobald, Kosow 308, dtheobald@brandeis.edu, 781-736-2303.

Faculty responsible for various aspects of BCBP operation (e.g., Rotations, Retreat, Admissions) are appointed jointly by the DGS and Biochemistry Department Chair.

Program administration and record keeping are the responsibility of the Division of Science Graduate Affairs Office, scigradoffice@brandeis.edu, Ros/Kos 3-RK02, 6-2369

The Graduate Affairs Office consists of:

Maryanna Aldrich, maldrich@brandeis.edu 6-4850

Anna Miamis, aesposito@brandeis.edu, 6-2311

Anne Lazerson, lazerson@brandeis.edu 6-2327

Jane Theriault, jtheriault@brandeis.edu 6-2302

Anna Miamis is the primary administrative contact for BCBP, but feel free to contact other members of the Graduate Affairs Office if she is not available and an immediate response is needed (scigradoffice@brandeis.edu)

Students in the BCBP program elect Graduate Department Representatives (GDRs). The current GDRs are:

Neerja Garikipati ngarikipati@brandeis.edu

Trent Quist trentquist@brandeis.edu

Degree requirements

The Brandeis [Bulletin](#) is the authoritative document that describes Brandeis academic regulations. If anything in this handbook contradicts the Bulletin, the Bulletin will take precedence.

To obtain the Ph.D. degree, students must satisfy both the general requirements of the graduate school and the specific requirements of the Biochemistry & Biophysics Graduate Program. Both sets of requirements are summarized in the [Bulletin](#).

The Handbook sections that follow contain additional details about the program requirements and how to satisfy them.

The student is responsible for fulfilling each requirement before the stated deadline. Students failing to complete requirements on time may be required to leave the Program.

Students in BCBP are expected to work full time towards the degree throughout the full

calendar year, including Summer. Students should be aware that scientific research is a demanding occupation and that researchers often find it necessary to do work on nights, weekends, and holidays in addition to that during "normal working hours." This precludes students undertaking outside employment or outside academic activities that would require a significant amount of time.

The Biochemistry & Biophysics Graduate Program expects students to complete the requirements for the Ph.D. (including thesis completion and defense) within 5.5 years of entry into the program. This program requirement is *in addition to* the GSAS requirement that "Students entering Brandeis with no previous graduate work must earn the doctorate within eight years from the inception of study."

Communications and first-year orientation

All students will be assigned a brandeis.edu email account. This is the official way that the university and the program communicate with you; please check your email daily. You will also have a mailbox located in the hallway outside the Biochemistry/Division of Science Graduate Affairs Office; please also check this regularly.

It is mandatory that first-year students arrive on campus in time to attend the first-year BCBP Orientation Meeting. The orientation meeting will be well before classes start; please plan your travel so that you can be on campus on the day of the meeting.

Lecture/seminar courses

Students working toward the PhD degree must complete seven one-semester lecture or seminar courses, each with a grade of B- or higher. Four of these courses are required and must be completed during the student's first year in the program. Ordinarily, the four required first-year courses are BCHM 101a, BCHM 102a, BCHM 104b, and BCBP 200b. However, with the written prior approval of the Director of Graduate Studies, other courses can be substituted for BCHM 101a, BCHM 102a, and/or BCHM 104b in order to tailor the program of required courses to the academic needs and interests of the particular student. In addition to the four required first-year lecture/seminar courses, students must also take three additional elective lecture/seminar courses during their time in the program. All elective courses must be approved in advance in writing by the Director of Graduate Studies. [From the *Bulletin*]

Registration for Research Training

In addition to the lecture/seminar course requirements described above, all students must register for research training by registering for courses as described here: (1) In the first year, students must register for two semesters of laboratory rotations (BCBP 300a and 300b). In each semester students do two rotations, for a total of four in the first year. (2) All students beyond the first year must register for BCHM 401D every Fall and Spring semester. None of the research training courses listed here count towards the seven-course lecture/seminar requirement. [From the *Bulletin*]

As for the lecture/seminar courses, students must achieve a grade of B- or higher in each research training course.

Each Summer, students are also registered for the Summer Research course CONT 250B.

The Registrar's office warns that: "Every semester some graduate students completely overlook their obligations to enroll in classes, thinking it a matter of little importance which can easily be corrected at any time. *This is a false impression.* We will make a concerted effort to reach unregistered and unenrolled students in advance of the deadline. But thereafter, we are not at liberty to enroll students in courses; we will presume they are not in attendance, and process their withdrawal from the University, which in turn will invalidate any financial support they may be receiving."

Training courses

All students in the program are required by the university to complete specified workshops and on-line courses on such essential topics as Responsible Conduct of Research and Laboratory Safety. Courses must be completed/repeated at the times specified and completion must be documented as required by the university. You will be notified by email when you are required to do this training; please read and heed these emails.

Research Seminars and Retreats

Training in effective oral presentation of research is a key goal of the PhD program. Starting in year 2 of the program, every student must present a seminar on their research at least once a year in the **BCBP/MSM Student Talks** series (informally called "Tuesday Night talks"), which gives students practice in presenting their research and peer feedback on their presentation skills. Attendance at these talks is required of all students in the program, starting with year 1. All students are required to sign in at each talk; if you cannot attend on a particular date, please email the Grad Affairs Office to explain the situation.

All students in the program should attend the **Biochemistry & Biophysics Friday Pizza Talks** in which we invite distinguished scientists from outside the university to present their latest research results. BCBP students are given the opportunity to participate in a group lunch with the speaker to learn more about the speaker's research and lab. Space in the lunch is limited, so students should sign up promptly when asked. A few of the talks each year are given not by outside speakers but by Brandeis faculty (e.g., as a part of graduate student recruiting) and by the first-year students (as a part of rotations).

All BCBP students will have the opportunity to attend the **Biochemistry/BCBP Retreat**, an intensive two-day program of student and postdoc research presentations held off campus each year. The retreat is frequently co-sponsored by other PhD programs, departments or training grants. Costs of the retreat are partially funded by the PI's research grants, and PIs make the decision about which students and postdocs from their labs are invited to participate each year. Participation by first-year students is funded by the program and all first-year students are strongly encouraged to attend.

Research rotations

All first year students are required to register for the research rotations (BCBP 300a,b). Every student is required to complete rotations of approximately nine weeks each in four different laboratories during the academic year (see attached schedule). At the end of each rotation, each student will complete a written report on their rotation research and give a short chalk talk about the project to the department. Students will be given comments on their report and talk, and grades for the rotation will be based on lab/research work, talk, and report. The faculty member who is in charge of the rotations will provide further details about the rotations at the beginning of the Fall semester. Rotation periods and due dates for oral and written rotation reports are given on the Dates and Deadlines page.

Choice of rotation and dissertation advisors

The four rotation advisors and the student's eventual dissertation advisor are selected by the student as described below. Advisors can be chosen from the list of BCBP Training Faculty listed on the program web site or *Bulletin* chapter. If you want to do a rotation or dissertation with another Division of Science faculty member, this may be possible but requires written approval from the DGS.

During orientation week, students will attend a three-night Faculty Bazaar where faculty members will introduce their work. Students are also encouraged to read faculty ScholarWorks pages, lab web pages, and research papers. The day after the last Faculty Bazaar session, students will submit their top three choices for the first rotation advisor and students will be notified, typically the next working day, to which of the three choices they have been assigned. Students should immediately contact the advisor to arrange to begin the rotation.

Students have the responsibility to arrange for their advisors for rotations 2, 3, and 4 on their own by directly contacting the faculty member of interest and inquiring about the possibility of rotating in that person's research group. It is advisable to meet with prospective rotation advisors in person to discuss possible rotation projects. Students should also ask the advisor whether that professor intends to take one or more new dissertation advisees this year, to ensure that the student has sufficient choices of dissertation advisor.

Dissertation advisors are chosen during the selection window near the end of the fourth rotation; see Dates and Deadlines page. Students should begin the process by discussing with one or more Training Faculty the possibility of joining their research group(s). In order to be fair to all of the students in the program, **it is forbidden to discuss joining a research group before the selection window begins**; neither students nor faculty should initiate discussions on this subject before then. Students must obtain the agreement of a faculty member to serve as advisor by the end of the selection window and notify the Grad Office. It is possible for students to have two joint dissertation advisors if the student and both advisors agree to this arrangement.

Occasionally, a student elects to do a fifth rotation during the summer after the first year's courses are completed; the grad office should be notified of this choice. If the student does a fifth rotation, the deadline for Ph.D. advisor selection is the beginning of the

student's second year. Students unable to find an advisor willing to accept them by the beginning of the second academic year will not be permitted to continue in the Ph.D. program.

Occasionally a student wants to switch dissertation advisors in the middle of their PhD studies. Any student in this situation should immediately contact the DGS to make appropriate arrangements and should meet with possible new advisors. Students will be given a reasonable amount of time to effectuate the change of advisors. If a student cannot obtain the agreement of a new advisor in a reasonable amount of time, the student will not be permitted to continue in the Ph.D. program.

Teaching

Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) Assignments. Over the course of graduate study, each Ph.D. student is required to teach two undergraduate sections, courses, or labs. These are usually done in the second year. GTA assignments are made before the summer prior to the commencement of teaching responsibilities. In rare cases of unexpected enrollment shifts, cancellation or addition of courses, or inequities in workloads, assignments may be changed with little notice. In such a case the GTA concerned will be notified as soon as the changes are known.

Union Information. The current union contract is currently under negotiation.

GTA Responsibilities. Graduate teaching assistants and faculty members will discuss course requirements, attendance policies and the range of GTA responsibilities (e.g., in class or lab, outside class or lab, administrative duties, technical assistance). If GTAs are to grade undergraduate work, the faculty member and GTA will discuss the number of assignments, grading procedures and standards and an expected range of grades. Graduate teaching assistants should hold weekly office hours as needed for the course.

Graduate teaching assistants are seldom asked to tutor students requiring additional help. If regular tutoring is needed to address difficulties in the course, the GTA will refer the problem to the professor and, if necessary (and agreed upon), to the appropriate agency on campus for additional assistance.

All students serving as GTAs must attend the following training sessions: the Office of Equal Opportunity training, the Supporting Students Outside of Academics training, the Pedagogy training, and (for international students who have not received a previous degree from a US college or university) the International Pedagogy training. Students only need to complete each training once and will receive emails in the semester they are first teaching with information about schedules and signing up. GTAs may also wish to consult teaching materials available from the Office of the Dean of Arts & Sciences and Brandeis's Center for Teaching and Learning and to attend teaching seminars sponsored by the Graduate School.

Faculty members will also advise graduate teaching assistants on policies for academic honesty at the beginning of the term, at which time procedures for alerting the proper university officers and dealing with such matters will be agreed upon.

BCBP GTAs are encouraged to discuss teaching with the professor and with members of the BCBP Faculty Advisory Committee.

Every attempt should be made to resolve difficulties arising between graduate teaching assistants and faculty members. If such resolution is impossible, official grievances should be made per the stated procedures in the student handbook.

Graduate teaching assistants are encouraged to document teaching experiences for future job searches. Faculty members should agree to provide letters of reference for teaching which will be included in the student's departmental file.

Propositions

What are Propositions? Qualifying Exams for the BCBP PhD degree are in a format called “Propositions”. Propositions are research proposals that the student writes and then defends in an oral exam. Each student must pass *two* propositions, one “inside” and one “outside”, in order to obtain the Ph.D. degree. Each proposition is an original research proposal based on an understanding of current literature in specific fields of research. The student should identify an interesting and experimentally tractable question at the forefront of biochemistry or biophysics and should design a plan to attack this question (and maybe even to answer it!).

The Inside Proposition should be in the general field of the student's dissertation research. And should have the format of a research proposal. The Outside Proposition is a proposal for research that does not cover the field of the student's Ph.D. research. Students may choose to complete either the inside or outside proposition first.

Writing a proposition. Proposition topics are original research proposals formulated by the student. The subject of each proposition must be approved by the student's dissertation advisor. Propositions are academic exercises only; students are under no obligation to actually perform the research proposed. A proposition defines a specific current research problem and proposes the experimental means to investigate it. The proposition should clearly and explicitly define a goal of the proposed research. Usually, the goal is to answer a single, specific scientific question. The proposition should make a convincing case, using appropriate literature citations, that achieving the goal would be scientifically worthwhile and should summarize (with references) relevant work done by others. The proposition should also describe a practical plan of experiments by which the goal could be achieved. The plan should explicitly state the experimental methods to be used and contain sufficient detail, including literature citations, to allow the reader to evaluate its feasibility.

The proposition should be in a modified NIH format: Specific Aims (limit: 1 page) plus Background, Significance, and Experimental Plan (limit: 6 pages, single spaced, including figures and legends, but not including references). The Specific Aims page should make it clear what specific question(s) the project will try to address. This should include citation of pertinent literature relating to the project.

More detailed instruction and practice on writing propositions/proposals is provided in the BCBP 200b course, which is taken by all students in their first year. Students write a final proposition paper for BCBP 200b; the subject of that paper may not be used for either of

the students proposition exams for the BCBP program.

Proposition arrangements. The student is responsible for making the following arrangements by December 5 of the second year (for the first proposition) and April 12 of the second year (for the second proposition): For both inside and outside propositions, the chosen topic, and whether it is the inside or outside proposition, must be approved by the dissertation advisor(s). The student should then enlist two BCBP Training Faculty members to serve as committee members in addition to the advisor(s) and schedule a date and time (1.5 hours minimum) when the student and all committee members can meet for the oral exam. Students should schedule a room for the exam with the Biochemistry Office and communicate this to the committee members. **The exam must take place by January 6 (first proposition) or May 12th (second proposition)** One non-advisor committee member, who should be a member of the BCBP Advisory Committee, should be designated by the student to be committee Chair. All of the above information (see attached form) should be emailed to the Grad Affairs office for DGS approval. Each member of the committee and the Grad Office must be given a final copy of the written proposition no later than three days before the examination date. Students who fail to schedule and complete their oral exams by the specified deadlines are considered to not be making adequate progress toward their degree and may be subject to revocation of financial aid and non-readmission for the next semester.

Oral Exam Information. The student should prepare a 30-minute chalk talk presentation (no paper or projected visual aids are allowed) but should be aware that the scope and pace of the exam will be dictated by committee questions and that there may not be the opportunity to fully complete the planned presentation. After the exam, the Chair should complete the “Proposition Defense Form” (attached) and email it to the other members of the committee for their approval, and to Grad Affairs. On the form, the Chair will indicate the Committee’s decision as:

written exam: pass / fail / pass with revisions
oral exam: pass / fail.

The Committee Chair will provide additional written comments or instructions as needed (e.g., information about the types of revisions and timeline for revisions). Students receiving a failing grade are ordinarily given the opportunity to repeat the exam with the same committee within five weeks of the initial exam, following all of the same procedures as for the initial exam. The Chair will complete a new form when a student re-takes the oral exam or completes revisions to the satisfaction of their committee. Students that fail either the inside or the outside proposition twice will ordinarily not be allowed to continue in the program.

Propositions as fellowship applications. We encourage students to submit a modified version of their inside proposition as an NIH and/or NSF pre-doctoral fellowship application. Discuss submitting the application with your dissertation advisor before making a decision about whether to submit. Notify the Division of Science PreAward group (scipre-award@brandeis.edu) of your intention to submit an NSF GRFP at least one month before the deadline. The Office of Research Administration holds NRSA submission workshops approximately 8-9 weeks before each NRSA deadline (so usually at the beginning of October) – email Christine DiBlasi (cdibiasi@brandeis.edu) for more information.

Individual Development Plan

An Individual Development Plan (IDP) is a career development tool that is used to a) maintain communication between you and your mentor(s) regarding your long-term goals and career development, b) help identify an appropriate career path based on your skills and interests, c) assess current and missing skills and abilities for the desired career path, and d) set specific goals to prepare for the desired career path. The IDP will evolve as the interests and experience level of the student changes over time.

Students in their third year and above are required to annually complete or update an Individual Development Plan and discuss their plans with their dissertation advisors before their annual Progress Meeting. If the student does not feel comfortable speaking to their advisor about career plans, the student can as an alternative meet with the DGS instead. The student can choose the written IDP format that they prefer; example IDP formats can be found on the Brandeis Knowledge Base <https://kb.brandeis.edu/display/SCI/IDP+Templates> (use your Brandeis login to access the documents) or a web-based tool for making IDPs can be accessed at myidp.sciencecareers.org. IDPs are private documents for use only between the student and advisor (or DGS).

Progress Meetings

Starting with the third year of study, students meet with a faculty committee of three members at least once every academic year to discuss progress towards completing research and the dissertation. The committee, which includes the dissertation advisor(s) plus at least one BCBP Advisory Committee member (who is designated as committee Chair and another BCBP Training Faculty member, is chosen by the student, and its makeup should approximate that of the intended dissertation committee (minus the outside member of the dissertation committee). Students should not view these meetings as exams - their sole purpose is to facilitate the student's trajectory towards a successful dissertation.

For the first Progress Meeting, (held in the third year), the student should submit to the committee a written description of the general aims of the dissertation research project, the progress made towards these aims, and the plan for the next year. In subsequent years, the meetings can be more informal and do not necessarily require a written report. However, students often find it helpful to prepare for their committee a written outline describing what dissertation chapters or publications are planned to result from the student's research, which parts of the work are completed, which parts have yet to be completed, and the anticipated timeline. Meetings can be chalk-only or with slides as the student thinks appropriate.

At the beginning of the meeting, the committee meets privately without the student to briefly discuss the student's work. The student then joins the meeting, and the main part of the meeting consists of discussion with the student about progress and plans for completion of the dissertation. At the end of the meeting the advisor is asked to leave, and the student discusses with the committee any conflict with the advisor that the student feels is interfering with their progress toward completing the PhD.

The student should bring to the meeting the required form (attached) which the committee members sign to indicate whether the student is making satisfactory progress toward completion of an acceptable dissertation. The student should then return the form to the Grad Office. In addition to this form, the other committee members should send a separate email to the Grad Office and DGS if any disagreement between student and advisor was apparent during the meeting and recommending what the program should do to help overcome this. (If the advisor is the DGS, another member of the BCBP Advisory committee should be appointed to fulfill the DGS role for this student.)

Progress committee meetings must be completed by the dates indicated in the Dates and Deadlines attachment. After the sixth year Fall progress meeting, students remaining in the program must have additional progress meetings at least every six months. In addition, students at any stage in the program should feel free to call a Progress Meeting at any time, i.e., before the scheduled time, if they feel that more immediate advice from their committee would be helpful.

As for the Proposition exams, students are responsible for recruiting the committee members, arranging a date and time (at least one hour) for the meeting, reserving a room, and providing the above information to the Grad Office. Meeting scheduling should be completed at least one month in advance of the deadline. Students who fail to schedule and complete their meetings by the specified deadlines are considered to not be making adequate progress toward their degree and may be subject to revocation of financial aid and non-readmission for the next semester.

Residency

The graduate school requires a student to have resident status at Brandeis (i.e., enrolled as an on-campus graduate student) for at least three years to receive the Ph.D. degree. Consult the *Bulletin* and/or the Graduate Affairs Office if you need more information on the residency requirement.

Dissertation

The Ph.D. candidate must write a dissertation that presents the results of a significant, original investigation of an approved subject and which demonstrates the competence of the candidate in independent research. In general, BCBP dissertations are expected to contain at least one article of which the student is the primary author that has been published in a peer-reviewed journal, or primary-author research of sufficient quality, quantity, and presentation that it is ready to be submitted to a journal. Any research included in the thesis that was performed by others (e.g., co-authors or collaborators) or any text that was written by others must be explicitly identified. The dissertation must be approved by a defense committee composed of the dissertation advisor(s), and two to three additional faculty members. At least one of the members of the defense committee should be chosen from outside the BCBP Program Training Faculty and is customarily from outside the University, one being the dissertation advisor. In addition to evaluating the written dissertation, the committee conducts a final oral defense examination based on the dissertation, which must be passed. The defense consists of a public seminar of approximately one hour length given by the student, and a private oral examination after the public defense in which the committee meets separately with the student.

It is the responsibility of the student:

- to ensure that all BCBP program requirements are satisfied before the dissertation exam,
- to ensure that the dissertation is in a form and format acceptable to GSAS and is submitted by the required deadlines (students should obtain specific instructions for the preparation of the dissertation from the Graduate Affairs Office and GSAS before starting to prepare the dissertation),
- to arrange a time and date for the Ph.D. defense at least two weeks in advance,
- to fill out and return the GSAS Defense Calendar Submission Form at least two weeks prior to the defense,
- to give a copy of the dissertation to each committee member, **as well as a copy to the Graduate Affairs Office**, at least two weeks before the defense. You may retrieve the copy left in the office following the defense,
- to come to the examination with the form required by the university: Ph.D. Dissertation Defense and Oral Exam form (obtained from the registrar's office website).
- to obtain the signatures of the members of the dissertation defense committee and, as soon as possible after the defense, to email a copy of this form to Graduate Affairs office (scigradoffice@brandeis.edu) and to the Registrar's Office (registrar@brandeis.edu).

Students have not fulfilled the dissertation requirement until the final version of the successfully defended dissertation, including any changes and committee approvals required by the committee and GSAS, is submitted to GSAS through ProQuest. The Report on Ph.D. Revisions form must be submitted to the Registrar before the dissertation is submitted. For dissertations that include copyrighted material (for example, text already published in journal articles, or text written by others), copyright permission must be obtained from each copyright holder and submitted to GSAS with the dissertation.

The Graduate School requires that the oral exam be retaken if the final thesis is not submitted sufficiently soon after the exam; if delays are anticipated, please consult the Division of Science Graduate Affairs Office.

Biochemistry & Biophysics Ph.D. with Specialization in Quantitative Biology (QB)

In order to receive a Ph.D. in Biochemistry & Biophysics with a specialization in Quantitative Biology, students must complete the requirements defined above for the Biochemistry & Biophysics Ph.D. degree and, in addition, must satisfy the course requirements for the QB specialization that are described in the [Quantitative Biology section of the *Bulletin*](#). Any alteration to the QB course requirements must be approved by the QB program faculty advisory committee. With the approval of the Director of Graduate Study, courses taken to satisfy the QB specialization requirements can be used to satisfy course requirements of the Biochemistry & Biophysics Ph.D. degree.

Students wishing to obtain the specialization must first gain approval of the BCBP QB liaison. This should be done as early as possible, ideally during the first year of graduate studies. For information on how to apply to the QB program, [see "How to Apply"](#).

Affiliation

As a graduate student, your only official affiliation with Brandeis is as a member of the BCBP graduate program, not of a department (e.g., Biochemistry) or center (e.g., Volen). The student's affiliation in published papers affiliation should be listed as "Biochemistry and Biophysics Graduate Program, Brandeis University".

Transition from M.S. to Ph.D. Program

Students who have earned a M.S. at another institution will be admitted as normal first-year PhD students. Students in the Brandeis Biochemistry & Biophysics M.S. program who apply to and are accepted into our Biochemistry & Biophysics Ph.D. program may be transitioned into the program and considered as third year Ph.D. students. Any Masters student who wants to transition into our PhD program will talk to their advisor, and then the Director of Graduate Study, in the Fall of their second year. A faculty admissions committee will make a decision on admission as early as possible to expedite the transition to Ph.D. These students must complete the same requirements as students who enter directly as Ph.D. students, with the following alterations to their timeline:

Matriculation date:

M.S. students will enter the Ph.D. program during the summer after their M.S. year and matriculate as Ph.D. students that summer, typically with a start date of June or July 1st. The start of stipend payments will coincide with their matriculation date. Any exceptions to this timeline must be discussed with and approved by the DGS.

Courses:

Courses taken during the M.S. year may count towards the Ph.D. course requirement, if the DGS approves the courses. M.S. Students who are strong candidates for the Ph.D. program are encouraged to take BCHM102 in the fall of their second year at Brandeis. Students should plan to take BCBP 200b in the Spring of their second year. These students are expected to complete the remaining classes as soon as possible after transitioning to the Ph.D. program.

Rotations and Selection of Dissertation Lab:

In most cases, M.S. students who transition to the Ph.D. program are expected to continue their research in the same lab in which their Master's Thesis was completed. Exceptions to this will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Should a lab change occur, the possibility of additional lab rotations before changing labs will be discussed on a case-by-case basis.

Master's Thesis:

For completion of the MS degree, students will submit a Master's thesis and give an oral presentation at the beginning of May and then immediately transition into the PhD program.

Outside and Inside Examinations:

Students transitioning to the PhD will write and orally defend their inside proposition by July 1st and must complete their outside proposition by December

1st.

Resources for graduate students and ways to get help

At many points during your graduate career, you will probably have questions you'd like to ask someone, great ideas you'd like to share, or concerns you'd like someone to address. Please know that there are many people here on campus to answer those questions, help, and support you. Before we go into specifics of who to ask for help, please know that the majority of people on campus are "responsible reporters." This means that they are obligated to share any information that has been disclosed to them regarding discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct with the Office of Equal Opportunity. If you are hoping to have a confidential conversation about one of these topics, you will find a list of confidential resources later in this section.

Most issues can be best addressed by those closely associated with your graduate program or with Division of Science staff and faculty, so we encourage you to seek assistance from this group first. We recognize that sometimes there may be a particular person that you are more comfortable speaking with or that one faculty member may be holding multiple roles/positions, but we suggest that you reach out to for assistance in the following general order:

- **Your Advisor:** Your first stop should be your PI/advisor, if you have chosen one by this point. Your advisor will have the most intimate knowledge of your research/program progress and career goals and is here to help train and guide you. Advisors usually have regular meetings with their students, and this is a good time to bring up concerns. If you are in a program with lab rotations and you are still rotating, you should feel comfortable talking to your rotation advisor.
- **A member of your committee (once you have one):** You are always welcome to reach out to any faculty member on your committee. While not tied to your progress as closely as your Advisor, they will be familiar with your progress in your program and will have sufficient background knowledge on your project and your goals to provide personalized support. Committee members will be especially good resources if you have concerns about some aspect of your project design or results. Also keep in mind also that while annual meetings with your committee may be required, you can call additional meetings at any time.
- **DGS (Director of Graduate Study of your grad program):** This faculty member oversees your grad program as a whole and is here to support all students in the program. They will be knowledgeable in the program's requirements and are also tuned in to the current GSAS and University policies. Early in your grad career when you have not yet chosen an advisor, it is the DGS's job to support you. Later on, the DGS may be a good person to contact if a few students from different labs have shared concerns.
- **The Head of the Division of Science:** This faculty member oversees the entire Division of Science and works to support all of the departments and graduate programs within the sciences. The head of the Division of Science has frequent meetings with

individual program and department chairs, as well as with leaders across the University, so they will be knowledgeable about current Division and University practices. They are here to support and advocate for the entire science community. Talk to them if people from different graduate programs or departments have a shared concern or to raise. In particular, concerns about research integrity should be brought to the attention of the Head of the Division of Science.

In parallel to these program-level and Division-level faculty resources, there are non-faculty resources within the Division who you can go to for help. The following are good places to go to for help:

- **The Division of Science Grad Affairs Office:** This office is the administrative home for most of the graduate programs within the Division of Science (Computer Science and Psychology are the exceptions). The staff here work closely with grad students and faculty to administratively oversee those graduate programs and to monitor student progress. The staff in this office know your program's faculty, are well-versed in your program's requirements and policies, and are up to date with the other sources of support on-campus. If you are unsure about who to talk to first, the DivSci Grad Affairs Office is often a good place to start as they can help you decide who to approach and how to have that conversation. Within this office, Anna Miamis is the primary contact for the BCBP graduate program. You should also feel free to contact Maryanna Aldrich, who oversees this group.
- **Your Department Administration:** These staff work in your department's office and are here to help their entire department community. These staff may be a bit less familiar with your graduate program requirements, but they know your department's faculty and any non-grad-program details about your department well. If you are in the Computer Science or Psychology graduate program, your department office serves the role described above for the DivSci Grad Affairs Office.
- **The DivSci Pre-Award Office:** If you are applying for grants or fellowships, please loop these staff in. They may be able to provide guidance and help you navigate the submission process.
- **Your program's Grad Department Representatives (GDRs):** These graduate students were elected to represent the student body in your graduate program. One of the roles of the GDR is to bring concerns from students as a whole to the program faculty or to GSAS, so if you have a concern that you are comfortable discussing with your GDR it's a good idea to let them know. They cannot bring these concerns to the faculty to advocate for all students if they don't know about them, and there may be other students with similar concerns. Your GDRs may hold a student "town hall" once a semester or year to bring up issues, and this is a good forum to discuss some topics that may be weighing on your mind.

Outside of the Division of Science places to go to for help, there are various other entities on campus here to support students. These resources on campus are dedicated to supporting graduate students:

- **[The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences \(GSAS\)](#):** GSAS oversees all graduate

programs within the school of Arts & Sciences at Brandeis and is invested in the success of all graduate students in these programs. If you have a topic that you'd rather discuss with someone outside of the Division or want a non-DivSci perspective on, the staff in this office are a great resource for graduate students. GSAS is also a good resource if you are uncomfortable discussing a topic with any of the resources mentioned so far or if you have not made sufficient progress in those discussions. Depending on the topic that you have raised with faculty or administrative staff, they may have already contacted GSAS for advice/assistance on how to help or to handle the next steps. GSAS and your program/department faculty or the Head of the Division of Science frequently work together to support students, resolve problems, and enact positive changes. Please visit their [staff directory](#) to explore the areas GSAS can help with. If you are in a research group with limited funding, GSAS provides conference and research awards for [PhD students](#) and [Master's students](#). They also strongly encourage students to [apply for external fellowships and grants](#).

- **[The Office of Graduate Affairs](#)**: This office is a home and source of support for all graduate students at Brandeis, including those studying at the Heller School, the Rabb School, or the International Business School. Graduate Student Affairs provides students with information and events about graduate life at Brandeis and community resources.
- **[The Graduate Student Association \(GSA\)](#)**: Supported by The Office of Graduate Affairs, the GSA is an independent student body that represents all graduate students and provides a platform for graduate students to raise issues and concerns and build community. If you have a concern about an issue affecting graduate students that extends past your program, department, and the Division of Science, the GSA is a good group to talk to. To connect with them, visit their website to see the current year's grad student executive committee.
- **[GSAS Professional Development](#)**: Here, you can set up appointments with the Professional Development team and can also access resources to help you with many aspects of the professional development and job search process. In addition, there are many profiles of GSAS alumni with insights into their career journeys.

There are some offices on campus that specialize in specific topics and who will almost always be the best resource for those topics:

- **[The Office of Research Administration \(ORA\)](#)**: ORA, which reports to the [Vice Provost for Research](#), can help with issues related to research integrity and compliance. If you want to discuss the possibility of research misconduct, you may wish to report things there directly.
- **[The International Students and Scholars Office \(ISSO\)](#)**: ISSO supports all of Brandeis' international students and scholars. This office determines visa eligibility and prepares and issues visa documents. If you ever have any questions about your Visa or any of the associated regulations (e.g. travel, CPT, OPT), you should reach out to your ISSO advisor. They can advise students on rights and responsibilities and provide guidance regarding issues that may impact your legal status. Their website also has a collection of useful information for international students.

- **[Student Accessibility Support](#)**: If you are a student with a disability and in need of academic or non-academic accommodations, this office can support you and help you navigate this process. The definition of a person with a disability is broad, and many students who do not think of themselves as students with disabilities may qualify for support under the law. Even if you are not sure if you will qualify, you are encouraged to reach out to SAS.

As mentioned at the start of this section, there are some topics that responsible reporters on campus cannot keep confidential, and those are issues of discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct. The office on campus that addresses these issues is the **[Office of Equal Opportunity \(OEO\)](#)**. OEO provides information regarding support resources, information about taking action (internal resolution processes and criminal action), inquiries and investigations into concerns, processes to address grievances, and training for the Brandeis community. Please visit their website for contact information and steps (and an online form) to file a report. You are welcome to contact a resource listed above for support or advice about these topics, but they will be obligated to share the issue with OEO.

If you would like to have a *confidential* conversation with someone on campus, the following are our on-campus confidential resources:

- **[The Brandeis Counseling Center \(BCC\)](#)**
- **[The Brandeis Health Center](#)**
- **[The Prevention, Advocacy, and Resource Center \(PARC\)](#)**
- **[The University Ombuds](#)**
- **[The Chaplains in The Center for Spiritual Life](#)**

Forms

Note: you can print out these forms and fill out the hard copies, or you can paste the text of the form into an email, type in the required information, and send it. Faculty signatures can be provided on the hard copy or by sending an email indicating approval to Grad Affairs. All forms requiring DGS approval should be sent to the Grad. Affairs *and* to the DGS. Always keep a copy of any form you send and also of any approval emails that you receive back.

**Biochemistry & Biophysics Program
Proposition Committee Approval**

Proposition committee approval form for:

(student's name)

The subject/title of the proposition (must be approved by dissertation advisor before submitting this form) will be:

This inside/outside (please circle one) proposition defense date will be:

(date)

The committee will include:

_____ (dissertation advisor[s])

_____ (committee Chair)

Approval signature of DGS

Date: _____

**Biochemistry & Biophysics Program
Proposition Defense Form (Appendix)**

Proposition defense form for: _____
(student's name)

This inside/outside (please circle one) proposition defense took place on

(date)

The grades were:

Written proposition -- pass / fail / pass with revisions;

Oral examination – pass / fail;

(chair signature – **NOT advisor**) (chair printed name)

(committee member signature) (committee member printed name)

(dissertation advisor signature) (dissertation advisor printed name)

Required revisions and/or recommended changes (if applicable)

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Instructions for the student: Give a copy of this form to the examination committee chair before the exam.

Instructions for the chair of the examination committee: Please give the completed form to the Biochemistry and Division of Science Graduate Affairs Office, Ros/Kos 3-RK02.

**Biochemistry & Biophysics Program
Progress Meeting form**

The undersigned committee held a meeting with _____ (student)
on _____ (date)

to discuss his/her progress toward the completion of the Ph.D. degree. The committee judges that the student is / is not (circle one) making adequate progress toward the degree.

Comments by the committee: (Please summarize overall progress to publications and, if possible, anticipated completion date. If progress is not adequate, please comment on how student and advisor can correct this. If next committee meeting should take place sooner than one year from now, specify when.)

The student and advisor have had a conversation about the student's Individualized Development Plan and a document has been created or revised from last year. (Yes / No)

If an IDP meeting with the advisor hasn't taken place, please indicate when this will take place:

(committee Chair signature) (committee Chair printed name)

(committee member signature) (committee member printed name)

(dissertation advisor[s] signature[s]) (dissertation advisor[s] printed name[s])

Instructions for the student. Photocopy and give original to the Biochemistry and Division of Science Graduate Affairs Office, Ros/Kos 3-RK02. Please also keep a copy in your own files. Alternatively, the text above may be copied into an email and circulated to the committee members to indicate approval via email.

Summary: Dates and Deadlines for BCBP PhD students starting Fall 2024

2024-25 Rotations instructor: Niels Bradshaw, niels@brandeis.edu

Year	Requirement	Timeline/Deadline
1	1 st rotation (Sept 3, 2024 – Nov, 1, 2024)	Presentation: 11/1 Report Due: 11/4
1	2 nd rotation (Nov 4, 2024 – Jan 10, 2025)	Presentation: 1/10 Report Due: 1/13
1	3 rd rotation (Jan 13, 2025 – March 14, 2025)	Presentation: 3/14 Report Due: 3/17
1	4 th rotation (March 17, 2025 – May 16, 2025)	Presentation: 5/9 Report Due: 5/19 (Note early presentation date)
1	Pass first-year courses	End of the second semester
1	Dissertation advisor selection	May 12 through May 23, 2025
2	NSF GRFP fellowship application*	Typically, mid-October
2	NIH NRSA pre-doctoral fellowship application*	Typically, April/August/December
2	1 st proposition	January 6, 2025
2	2 nd proposition	May 12, 2025
3	1 st progress meeting and IDP	March-May
End of 4/start of 5	2 nd progress meeting and IDP	July-September
End of 5	Finish 7 Course Requirement	End of second semester
6	3 rd progress meeting and IDP	October-November

* encouraged but optional

Note: For the purpose of program deadlines, "end of the second semester" refers to the date listed in the Brandeis academic calendar as the date final grades are due, and "before the start of year" means before the first day of classes.