

## Transitioning from MD to PhD

### Choosing a PhD Program & Mentor, and Completing Rotations

In this document, MD/PhD students will find an overview of steps to take after passing Step 1, which graduate programs to choose from, choosing a rotation and final mentor, rotation expectations, planning PhD coursework, and information on changing mentors or programs if necessary.

#### Step 1 Done, Now What?

After passing Step 1, completing the MD program's TTCE course, and completing 2-3 research rotations, MD/PhD students should choose a mentor and lab to join. Students will also need to finalize their graduate program choice by the end of Spring term. If there are extenuating circumstances, such as a medical leave of absence in Spring term, students will have another term to complete rotations and choose a mentor/program. Students may take PhD program courses in Spring term if beneficial to their timeline, otherwise students should plan to take courses in Summer or Fall term per their PhD program of choice.

MD/PhD students will formally be transitioned to GRU student status the start of the term following passing Step 1, typically Spring term. Instructions for this process will come directly from the MD/PhD Program Coordinator.

#### Choosing a PhD Program

Students can select between the following graduate programs:

- Behavioral and Systems Neuroscience Graduate Program (BSN)
- Biomedical Engineering Graduate Program (BME)
- Biomedical Informatics Graduate Program
  - (must choose one of two majors and early notice is required, 11/30 prior to Step 1):
  - Health & Clinical Informatics (HCN)
  - Bioinformatics & Computational Biomedicine (BCB)
- Neuroscience Graduate Program (NGP)
- Program in Biomedical Sciences (PBMS) – research hubs include:
  - Biochemical, Molecular, and Structural Biology
  - Chemical Physiology
  - Development, Differentiation, and Disease
  - Genome Sciences
  - Infectious Disease and Immunology
  - Integrated Cancer Biology

Please see the [Graduate Programs in MD/PhD web page](#) for links to any of these program websites.

Discuss possible programs and mentors with SOC and appropriate graduate program director(s) as early as possible, and no later than Summer & Fall terms prior to Step 1. **As an incoming student**, reach out to program directors and coordinators of all prospective programs to understand curriculum options. **As an MS2 in the summer prior to Step 1**, reach out to program directors and coordinators to ensure curriculum changes, requirements, and any flexibility options are understood and explored. **As a Grad1 after rotations**, finalize a lab and PhD program to join.

## Rotations and Coursework

### Rotation Expectations

Each MD/PhD student will need to complete 2-3 research rotations 4-6 weeks in length. A [rotation approval form](#) will need to be completed prior to every rotation and a [write up](#) will be required at the end of every rotation. Students should start research rotations in Winter term after passing Step 1 and TTCE. During Spring term, students should complete any remaining research rotations in order to identify a permanent mentor and graduate program. Please note that some graduate programs have additional research rotation and mentor selection requirements, which would supersede these MD/PhD rotation requirements. Please work with program director(s) and coordinator(s) to understand the program's requirements *before* starting rotations, and please notify the MD/PhD program coordinator if deviating from the MD/PhD research rotation requirements.

### Choosing Rotation Mentors & Finalizing Mentorship

Faculty rotation mentors should be graduate program faculty. However, if they are not already faculty, students should talk to their prospective mentor and the program director(s) about the possibility of them becoming graduate program faculty for the student's chosen PhD program. Students should meet with graduate program directors, SOC members, and the MD/PhD program director to get input on selecting rotations and mentors. Students should select a mentor from among their rotation mentors and pick a specific graduate program by the end of Spring term.

Email the [appropriate graduate program coordinator](#) and [mdphdadmin@ohsu.edu](mailto:mdphdadmin@ohsu.edu) once a mentor/lab and PhD program has been finalized. The graduate coordinator will work with students to start a mentor form.

## Planning Coursework

Students should work with their SOC, mentor, and graduate program director and/or graduate program academic advisor to develop a plan for required coursework within the selected graduate program. Please note that students must complete all requirements of their chosen graduate program. Continue to work and meet with SOC until a dissertation advisory committee (DAC) has officially been formed. Students should meet with their SOC and DAC every 6 months after committee formation.

During Spring term students will be registered for:

- CONJ 601MD: MD/PhD Research, variable credits
- JCON 715: Longitudinal Clinical Clerkship, 1 credit
- CONJ 640: Professional Development Fundamentals, 1 credit
- CONJ 606MD: MD/PhD Journal Club, 0.5 credits

Students can register for MD/PhD Research credits for any term the PhD program does not offer research credits.

## Changing Graduate Programs or Mentors

We highly recommend that students do plenty of research into mentors, labs, and PhD programs prior to committing before the end of Spring term after Step 1. However, we understand that circumstances may arise that necessitate a change in the PhD program or mentor/lab, or both.

If students need to switch graduate programs after officially join a program, they will need to go through a formal petition process with the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies. Students must receive approval from both the graduate program being left and the graduate program being entered in an official letter request to the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies. Please note that there is more flexibility within the first PhD year (prior to the start of Spring term at the end of Grad1), than afterward. While this process is not recommended, we prize student success above all else and recognize that there may be extenuating circumstances leading to this decision.

If you feel that you need to switch labs or programs, please connect with the MD/PhD Director and Coordinator immediately.