Welcome

Letter from the Director

At the University of Florida Genetics Institute, our philosophy is that truly innovative ideas and novel insights arise at the interfaces between scientific disciplines. We are dedicated to applying the tools of genetics in a collaborative, multidisciplinary environment to address the difficult scientific problems and challenges of today.

Excellence in genetics and genomics at the University of Florida is achieved through the contributions of the greater UFGenetics Institute community. The UFGenetics Institute is more than 240 faculty members from seven different colleges applying genetic approaches to diverse scientific topics ranging from biofuels development to wound healing, to plant breeding to gene therapy. It is the students in our Genetics and Genomics Graduate Degree Program who train today to be the innovators of tomorrow. It is the hundreds of dedicated staff and trainees who work in our laboratories and offices. Finally, it is the people of the State of Florida who support our mission and inspire our efforts.

Genetics can help us to understand the amazing diversity of life, improve the quality and the availability of our foods, and provide novel cures for diseases. The UFGenetics Institute investigators, students, and staff work every day to make a difference in their field of study. The promise of genetics has never been brighter.

Patrick J. Concannon, Ph.D.
Director, UF Genetics Institute

Prestigious Faculty & Alumni

Members of the National Academy of Sciences
Robert Cousins, Ph.D.
Harry Klee, Ph.D.
Pam Soltis, Ph.D.
Doug Soltis, Ph.D.

Member of the Institute of Medicine
Julie Johnson, Pharm.D.

2013
Dustin Blanton, Ph.D.
Dean of Academic Affairs at Keiser University, Tampa

2014
Marcio Resende, Ph.D.
Co-founder of RAPID Genomics, LLC

2014
Patrick Thiaville, Ph.D.
Dual doctorates from UF and the University of Paris-Sud in 2014

2015
Tamar Carter, Ph.D.
Awarded the 2013 United Negro College Fund/Merck Graduate Science Dissertation Fellowship

2016
Tatiana Salazar, Ph.D.
Started a stem cell therapy business, Stem Point, while pursuing her doctoral degree


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Introduction & Contact Information

The University of Florida Genetics Institute is excited you have chosen to spend this stretch of your research career with us, and hopes you find your time with us to be educational and enjoyable. Our program is designed to help graduates succeed in a variety of scientific fields: academia, industry and entrepreneurship.

This is a concise guide intended to give an overview of the Genetics & Genomics Graduate Program’s structure and policies. As it does not outline every issue you may come across during your time at the UFGI, you are still responsible for becoming familiar with the requirements, procedures and deadlines set forth by the UF Graduate School.

You should also have received an expanded document (available in PDF) that outlines additional G&G program policies. This document is based largely on the suggestions of graduate students. If you have any additions or suggestions for this text, please contact Hope Parmeter (see below).

Program Staff Contact Information

As you progress through the program, it is only natural you will have questions. While much of the information about the program is available on the website, gradprogram.ufigi.ufl.edu, feel free to contact the people below with any problems.

Graduate Program Coordinators
Maury Swanson, mswanson@ufl.edu
Doug Soltis, dsoltis@ufl.edu

Graduate Program Assistant
Hope Parmeter, parmeter@ufl.edu

Graduate Program Students
Enrico Barrozo, ebarrozo@ufl.edu
Aishwarya Gurumurthy, aishuguru@ufl.edu
Kia Fuller, kiacfuller1@ufl.edu
Keon Wimberly, kwimber1@ufl.edu

Program Overview

First Year

During the first year, students must take nine course hours per semester, three course hours during summer A, and do at least three laboratory rotations. These rotations have two purposes: students use these rotations to identify a suitable mentor for their doctoral studies; at the same time, students’ research performance during rotations is evaluated based on reviews from the lab host, and presentations by students of their research results.

When choosing rotations, students must select hosts from at least two different colleges. During a rotation, students must work at least 10 hours per week for a duration of eight weeks. Students must meet with their rotation mentor to discuss specific expectations either before or within the first days of their rotation. Schedule another meeting after one or two weeks to have them review your performance.

At the conclusion of a rotation, each student will give a 15-minute talk during the graduate seminar class (page 5) where they will present the results of their research. While the class is typically made up of students and faculty from the University of Florida Genetics Institute, it is likely for rotation hosts and lab members to also attend these presentations. At the end of the third rotation, and before the end of the spring semester, students will be expected to choose their mentors and committees.

Second Year

Students continue to take nine course hours per semester during the second year. The slate of courses is determined by the student, with the approval of their mentor and committee. However, students must take Seminar in Genetics (GMS 6290) each semester, except the semester when they are writing and defending their thesis.

Subsequent Years

After the second year, most students’ credit hours are research hours.
Student, Honor Code

We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.”

Students who enroll at UF commit to holding themselves, and their peers, to the high standard of honor required by the Honor Code. In adopting the Honor Code, the students of UF recognize that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the UF community. Any student who becomes aware of an Honor Code violation is obligated to collect any proof they may have of the violation, and present it to a graduate program coordinator. Honor Code violations constitute an academic crime punishable by sanctions such as grade penalties, formal reprimands, loss of university privileges, conduct probation, suspension and expulsion.

Violations of the Student Honor Code Include, but are not Limited to the Following:

- **Plagiarism**– A student shall not represent as the student’s own work all or any portion of the work of another. Students must acknowledge whenever they include work done by another in their own work through appropriate citations, etc.

- **Unauthorized use of materials or resources (cheating)**– A student shall not use unauthorized materials or resources in an academic activity.

- **Prohibited collaboration or consultation**– A student shall not collaborate or consult with another person on any academic activity unless the student has the expressed authorization from the faculty member.

- **Use of fabricated or falsified information**– A student shall not use or present invented or fabricated information, falsified research, or other finding if the student knows or in the exercise of ordinary care should be aware that the information, research, or other finding has been fabricated or falsified.

- **Submission of paper or academic work purchased or obtained from an outside source**– A student shall not submit as his or her own work a paper or other academic work in any form that was purchased or otherwise obtained from an outside source. An outside source includes but is not limited to a commercial vendor of research papers, a file of research papers or tests maintained by a student organization or other body or person, or any other source of papers or of academic work.


General Financial & Regulatory Requirements

Payroll Sign-up and Letters of Appointment

All students, with the exception of those in their final semester employed as Other Personnel Services, must be assigned as graduate assistants. This involves a Letter of Appointment, which serves as the binding contract between the student and the University of Florida. The LOA should be filed before the beginning of the semester for which it applies. LOAs may be made for one semester, two semesters or an entire year. LOAs for students who have completed their first year are handled by the student’s mentor’s budgeted department, as these are employment contracts.

Health Insurance

GatorGradCare health insurance is available exclusively to graduate assistants at UF. The eligible graduate student’s premium for GatorGradCare is paid by UF. Students who include coverage for their dependent(s) on their online enrollment are responsible for the dependent premium. See ‘Dependent Coverage’ at [bit.ly/2gLrxa8](http://bit.ly/2gLrxa8) for additional information.

Enrollment is not automatic. Plan participants must re-enroll by the enrollment deadline, Sept. 14, to continue coverage each academic year they are eligible for coverage.

For plan information, participant eligibility requirements, enrollment and effective dates of coverage, please refer to [bit.ly/2gLrxa8](http://bit.ly/2gLrxa8). For additional questions, please contact the GA Benefits Office at 352-392-0003 or email gabenefits@admin.ufl.edu.

General health and non-work-related injuries are the responsibility of the student. Students may use the Student Health Care Center ([shcc.ufl.edu](http://shcc.ufl.edu)) on campus, and the range of providers and services covered by GatorGradCare ([gatorcare.org](http://gatorcare.org)). Students are responsible for being aware of the terms and limitations of their health insurance policy.

Fee Payments

Student tuition may be paid by any combination of the student, the student’s mentor/department or a fellowship. Students are also responsible for paying additional student fees that
total approximately $80 per credit hour (subject to change). Students fees are typically due within the first two weeks of the semester. Even though Genetics & Genomics Graduate Program administrators make every effort to inform students of the deadline for fee payment, it is the student’s responsibility to ascertain this date.

Late payment incurs a $100 penalty. For payment methods see bit.ly/2ubpl06.

Registration for Courses
Incoming first-year students will be registered for the first fall semester courses, and the first spring semester, by the graduate program assistant. Students should ensure that they do not have any holds on their record for immunizations, insurance, emergency contact information, registration checklist or financial services. Any holds that are not cleared during advanced registration will prevent G&G staff from processing that student’s registration. Late registration incurs a $100 penalty.

Identification Badge (Gator 1 Card)
UF requires that identification badges be worn at all times while personnel are on the premises. To obtain a Gator 1 Card, you must bring an official photo ID, such as a driver’s license or passport, to the ID Card Services office in the UF Bookstore. The G&G program assistant will fill out the necessary forms, and send them to ID Card Services on your behalf.

Students must obtain a Staff and Faculty Authorization Form from their department payroll administrator or office manager in order to receive new or replacement Gator 1 Cards. Any G&G student who needs a replacement ID card will be responsible for the replacement fee.

Email Accounts and Internet Access
Email is a vital means of communication and a requirement for UF. Much of the UF Genetics Institute communications will be delivered via email. The UFGI will use your GatorLink address, as listed in the UF directory, to contact you. Students are required to use their GatorLink accounts. GatorLink accounts can no longer be forwarded to a non–ufl.edu account. UF’s Information Technology policies are listed at bit.ly/2uBJICq.

Qualifying for Florida Residency
Once G&G students qualify as graduate assistants, the out-of-state portion of their tuition will be waived. To establish Florida residency, students should file a Declaration of Domicile, register to vote in Florida, obtain Florida vehicle registration, and acquire a Florida driver’s license. Students will be informed of any additional changes in state law or university policy that affect them.

UF, UFGI Administrative Requirements & Policies

Graduate Assistantship Policy
In the event that a faculty member cannot provide full support for the student, it is the responsibility of the mentor and the mentor’s primary department to find support for students in good standing. For this reason, a faculty member cannot become the mentor (chair) of a Genetics & Genomics Graduate Program student without the signed approval of the primary (budgeted) chair. The mentor form must be signed by the student, mentor and primary chair.

Payment is biweekly throughout the calendar year. The G&G program provides funding for the stipend during the student’s first two semesters and the first 3 credits of summer A. All assistantships are 0.33 FTE. They are classified this way because, according to federal regulations, students cannot simultaneously be classified as full-time students and work more than one-third of 40 hours. Technically, this requires the students to devote 13 1/3 hours per week to research activities relevant to the source of funding. However, note that doctoral students are expected to devote most of their time, while not in class, to research of direct relevance to the research of their mentor, which will be appropriate for their own doctoral dissertation. When there is a change of any kind, you must contact the G&G program assistant before going ahead with the change. There is usually a procedure that needs to be followed.

Vacation Policy
Students on assistantships may take up to five days per semester of personal leave. Any vacation time must be approved in advance by the mentor.

Course Drop/Add and General Withdrawal
Courses can be dropped or added during ‘drop/add’ week without penalty. After drop/add, students may drop a course with the approval of her or his college until the drop deadline listed in the academic calendar. Withdrawal formally drops all courses in a term. Students who withdraw after drop/add and before the deadline for withdrawal will receive a grade of W for all courses. Course drop/add and withdrawal procedures are listed at bit.ly/2uDIWIH.

Medical Withdrawal
A student who is withdrawing from the semester may request that this be processed as a medical withdrawal through the Dean of Students Office. Please refer to bit.ly/2gNoUV6 for the medical withdrawal process.

Compensation during the Final Semester
The graduate student’s stipend is typically funded by their mentor’s research grant, mentor’s department, a graduate assistantship, a teaching assistantship or a fellowship. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the student and the mentor to determine the stipend termination date following the student’s dissertation defense and final examination. Registration of fewer than nine hours during fall and spring terms, or fewer than six hours during the summer, qualifies students from receiving a graduate assistantship and tuition waiver.

Students who intend to leave UF before the end of the semester may register for a minimal number of credits, be paid via an Other Personnel Services appointment, and pay their tuition out of pocket (or have the mentor pay tuition from a grant or departmental source). The OPS employment must pay the same wage as for a typical graduate assistantship. This matter should be discussed with the student’s mentor and the department personnel administrator, and must be approved by the mentor and the associate dean for graduate education. Students may only have one final semester in which they are OPS and off the graduate assistantship.

Minimum Credit Registration Requirements
The UF Graduate School requires that students register for a minimum number of credits based on their type of appointment. Students must have 90 credits to be eligible to graduate. See the table on the top of page 5 for minimums.
The Seminar Course – GMS 6290

Each week all the Genetics & Genomics Graduate Program students meet in the Cancer and Genetics Research Complex, room 133, for Seminar in Genetics (GMS 6290). The topic of discussion will change each week. At least one session will focus on professional development. Class attendance is mandatory, and is monitored via a sign-in sheet. As punctuality is a critical element of professional development, chronic tardiness or absence will have a negative impact on your class grade. Student presentations will include the following:

First-year students present their 15-minute rotation talks.
Second-year students and more senior students present research updates.
Graduating students present their dissertation research.

In many ways, the seminar course serves as the face of the graduate program. It is designed to showcase the interdisciplinary nature of the graduate program. G&G students will have the opportunity to meet with other students and University of Florida Genetics Institute faculty members from different research fields, to discover more about each others’ work. Be prepared to ask intelligent questions of your fellow scientists, and to answer questions others might have about your own research. Students are expected to be attentive and engaged during the entire class period. Students are forbidden to check their email, read non-class books, play with their mobile phones or hold non-class related conversations with those around them. Doing so is disrespectful to the speakers and your fellow students.

Rotations

Rotations enable students to explore their research interests, gain experience in a lab, and determine whether they will be a good fit for the host they are considering as their mentor. During their first years, students conduct rotations. Each rotation lasts approximately eight weeks. Students are required to do rotations in at least three different labs. At least two of the lab hosts must be from two different colleges. During a rotation, the host will set the schedule and expectations required of the student. Students will be evaluated after each rotation. This evaluation influences whether a researcher will accept that student into their lab. Therefore, being careful in your choice of rotation, and performing to the best of your ability, are crucial to success in the Genetics & Genomics Graduate Program.

Choosing a Rotation Host

Students will be contacted by the graduate program coordinator well before the fall semester with information about how to arrange their rotations. As they will begin rotations their first semester, students will be expected to have arranged them by the time they arrive for their first fall semester. The earlier you attempt to arrange your rotation hosts, the more time you will have to arrange for alternate hosts, should one fall through. Potential hosts must meet the following requirements:

Graduate faculty status– They must be classified as ‘graduate faculty’ in their home department or college.
UFGI faculty member– They must be a member of the University of Florida Genetics Institute (the member list is available on the UFGI website at bit.ly/2u9e5QB).
Sufficient financial support– They must be able to financially support you should you be invited to join their lab.

Refer to the G&G program assistant to find out whether a faculty member also has graduate faculty status. Not all UFGI members do. If a student is interested in doing a rotation in the lab of a researcher who is not a UFGI member, they should consult the graduate program coordinator about whether the project they are considering is appropriate to the graduate program (i.e., is focused on genetics and/or genomics). After speaking to the graduate program coordinator, the student should speak with their potential host about becoming a UFGI faculty member. Once the student has settled on a rotation host, they must contact the G&G program assistant and graduate program coordinator with the name, college and department of their host. Students can find this information on the researcher’s UF Web page, or by contacting the researcher.

The program recommends students discuss funding with their potential hosts. Clarify whether the investigator would be able to financially support you should you be invited to join their lab. If a faculty member does not have funding to support you after your first year, they should not agree to be a rotation host (unless you have already found a host and are using the rotation to develop additional research expertise). Remember that faculty members are not required to support you at the same level the G&G program did during your first year.

Rotations are not just a trial period for students to determine whether they want to work in a certain lab. It is also a time for the investigator to evaluate whether they want you on their staff. It will be up to you to demonstrate through your work ethic and attendance why your host should invite you to join their lab. Be aware they may discuss your performance with other researchers. As you choose your potential rotation hosts, remember these are the faculty from whom you will choose your mentor for the remainder of your time in the G&G program. Students should take more into consideration than just whether they admire the investigator’s work. They need to also be sure they are personally compatible with their potential host and the lab environment. Students will be in their mentor’s lab for four or more years. They need to be sure that they can get along with this person, and that they will be doing research they find interesting and motivating.
What to Discuss with your Host at the First Meeting

Students should not assume their host is familiar with the requirements, structure, or policies of the G&G program. They may not have hosted students from the UFGI before. It is also possible that they may be accustomed to hosting students from other programs with different expectations. Below are some recommended topics of discussion for your first meeting with your host:

Introduction – Tell them a little about yourself and your research interests. Ask your host about their research interests and primary objectives.

The G&G program – Your host may not be familiar with how the program works. The G&G program assistant will send them an email explaining the program. Go over this email together.

Rotation expectations – Discuss how you should spend your time in the lab. Be sure your host is aware you are required to be in their lab for a minimum of 10 hours a week for eight weeks.

Funding – Tell your host you are in their lab because you are considering them as a potential research mentor. Find out whether they would have the resources to financially support you as a member of their lab. If they cannot fund you, it would not be worth using one of your limited rotations in their lab. Past students who neglected to discuss this at the beginning of their rotation, spent an entire rotation in a lab only to find out the host would not be able to support them.

Your rotation talk – Let your host know you will be expected to do a rotation talk as part of the G&G seminar course, GMS 6290, once you complete your rotation. Ask them whether they can help you organize the talk. Let them know when and where it will take place, in case they would like to attend.

Rotation Talks

Students give their rotation talks during GMS 6290. Students should use their talks to concisely explain the research they conducted during their rotations, and time them to last about 15 minutes. The format is flexible. Students should be prepared to take questions during, and after, their rotation talks. They must also be meticulous about citing sources on their slides, as the audience may have questions about where they obtained their information, or what resources might provide further information.

Typical rotation talks include the following: title slide, introduction, methods, results, conclusions, future directions and acknowledgments. Considering the brevity of student rotations, it is acceptable for talks to be light on data. Do not let that be an excuse to relax your work ethic. It’s important to always work hard during rotations, as some of them occasionally result in publications. When creating your presentation, be sure to acknowledge your rotation host, hosting laboratory and your direct supervisor in the lab (who may be your host, a postdoctoral researcher or another graduate student).

Choosing a Mentor & Committee

Students are expected to choose their mentors after the end of their third rotations, and before the end of the spring semester. This must be approved by the program coordinator. Students will work with their mentors to develop their thesis projects, and to select committee members during the fall semester of their second year before Dec. 15. The proposed committee members will be recommended by the students and their mentors, and reviewed by the graduate program coordinator.

Your mentor will serve as the chairperson for your supervisory committee. Your committee must be selected by Dec. 15 of your second year. Be aware, should the direction of your thesis project change, you can, and most likely should, replace any committee members who are not familiar with this discipline. It is the student’s responsibility to inform any committee members who are being replaced. Be sure to thank them for their work. The dean of the graduate school is an ex-officio member of all supervisory committees. Supervisory committees must meet the following qualifications:

Minimum of four members – Each committee must include a chair and three other faculty members.

Faculty status – Two of the members must have graduate faculty status in the University of Florida Genetics Institute. The third member must be an external member who has graduate faculty status in their home department.

Co-chairs – Students are not required to have two chairs. In the case you do, both must have graduate faculty status in their departments and the Genetics & Genomics Graduate Program.

Students who are having trouble securing all the necessary committee members can ask the graduate program coordinator for suggestions. Once a student has organized their committee membership, they need to have their mentor complete the Supervisory Committee Meeting Form located under the ‘Current Students’ tab on the G&G website, bit.ly/2tHkCzU, and submit it to the graduate program assistant for approval. Students are expected to meet with their committee at least once a year. As a record of these meetings, students are expected to complete the
First Committee Form located at bit.ly/2tHkCzU.
Faculty without graduate faculty status may be made official members of a student’s supervisory committee, provided they go through the special appointment process. This includes completing the Special Supervisory Committee Appointment Petition available at bit.ly/2tHkCzU.* The student’s committee chair will use the form to provide any necessary information regarding the student, and a brief description of what the proposed member will contribute to the supervisory committee. For more information on supervisory committees, visit bit.ly/2uISvFu.

*Students who are required by their department to have a “special” committee member must remember that this member does not count toward the G&G program’s committee member minimum.

Dissertation Defense
The dissertation examining committee will consist of the student’s supervisory committee. Every member must be present in some form, such as Skype, during the exams. No exceptions. The committee chair must be present during the examination. They are allowed to ask questions, but are not allowed to intervene on the student’s behalf.

Mentor & Funding
The adviser you choose must be a graduate faculty member in their home department, and a graduate faculty member in the Genetics & Genomics Graduate Program, in order to be a mentor. As gaining this status can often take a few months, please inquire about their status well in advance.

The G&G program supports graduate students through summer A of their first year. After this, the student’s mentor assumes the responsibility for supporting them. Students should find out how much graduate students are paid in the department they plan to join. Many departments do not pay at the same level the G&G program does, and students may find they need to adjust their financial planning. Support can be in the form of teaching assistantships, research assistantships or assistance in applying for research/training awards. It is crucial students discuss funding with their potential mentors.

The G&G program recommends students obtain funding commitments from their mentors by the middle of April of their first year, if they wish to continue receiving a paycheck. Students must inform their mentors they are expected to pay their G&G students for 3 credits during either summer B or C. Be sure to arrange this well in advance to avoid not being paid for that portion of summer. Be aware that mentors are not required to pay students at the same level they were being paid during their first year. The level of support should be typical for graduate students in that mentor’s department. Once students move into their new labs, they are expected to contact that college or department’s graduate secretary. This graduate secretary will assume the responsibility of taking care of your needs related to your work in that lab, and will write the Letter of Appointment. You must schedule a talk with the graduate secretary in order to go over the terms of your appointment and any other related information.

Students who are funded through a special fellowship or scholarship must contact the administrator who manages this fund for information regarding their special circumstances. The G&G program recommends that students seek external funding once they have selected a mentor. This extra source of support allows students to pursue additional research interests. It may also enable you to purchase supplies that your mentor does not readily possess.

Students must remember to keep track of every fellowship or scholarship they receive, as these are important additions to their curriculum vitae. Be watchful for opportunities to strengthen your CV during your time in the G&G program, as this will improve your standing when you begin to apply for professional positions upon completion of your doctoral degree. The graduate program coordinator will send announcements of funding opportunities. Students should also ask their mentors for suggestions. The G&G program offers a limited number of travel awards each year to support students traveling to conferences in order to present their research, and represent the program. Typically, students are not granted funding for more than one domestic (value $750) and one international (value $1,000) trip during their time in the program. To be eligible for funding, students must make a presentation during their trip, and acknowledge the program on their poster or slides. They must also provide the G&G program assistant with their itinerary and travel authorization. The Graduate Student Organization also offers $250 per student, per year, for conferences.
Guest Lectures & Luncheon Events

UFGI Seminars and Luncheons

The University of Florida Genetics Institute hosts a weekly Wednesday seminar series during the fall and spring semesters. Researchers from UF and other institutions are invited to give a talk, and answer questions, about their research. The Genetics & Genomics Graduate Program students are required to attend these weekly seminars. Attendance is monitored via a sign-in sheet. Incidents where students are caught writing in absent students’ names, or asking other students to forge their names, will be considered honor code violations. The seminar schedule is posted on the events calendar on the UFGI website, bit.ly/2uDDxje.

Students are also expected to attend a luncheon with the speaker before the seminar. The G&G program assistant will email students several days in advance of a speaker luncheon asking them to RSVP. The only acceptable reason for not attending a speaker luncheon is if a student has an experiment taking place at the same time that they must monitor, or if they have a class at the same time. Students must contact the G&G program coordinator for approval to miss a luncheon. These luncheons are not only part of a student’s commitment to the G&G program; they are also excellent opportunities for networking, and to practice professional skills, such as summarizing your research in a way that is interesting, and comprehensible, to scientists from other disciplines. Meeting more established researchers, and taking advantage of opportunities to impress them with your research knowledge and professionalism, is essential for moving forward in your career. Furthermore, visiting faculty members are extending a courtesy to the program by traveling to speak about their research, and we should be hospitable and courteous in return. This means demonstrating an interest in their work by discussing it with them at the luncheon.

When attending a luncheon, it is important to stay for the duration. If a student has a conflict that will cause them to be late, or need to leave early, they need to notify the program assistant when they RSVP. With the exception of instances where the program assistant has been notified to accommodate your schedule, it is considered bad manners to arrive at a luncheon more than five minutes late, or to leave more than 10 minutes early.

Exams & Dissertation Defense

First Year Examination

The First Year Exam is a comprehensive exam administered at the end of the first year of the Genetics & Genomics Graduate Program (late May – early June). The exam has two parts: a closed book in-class exam and a take-home exam. Both parts of the exam involve multiple sections, and each section corresponds to one of the first year required classes. (For example, there will be an Advanced Genetics section on the in-class exam and the take-home exam). Students will take the in-class exam first, and then be given the take-home exam. Students will have one to two weeks to complete the take-home exam. Exams are written, and graded, by the Academic Status Committee. The committee consists of instructors representing the core first year classes, as well as the graduate program coordinators. Students will receive one of three evaluations: pass, eligible to retake the exam or fail. Students who receive a failing evaluation will immediately be dismissed from the program. You may not use this exam as one of your committee meetings.

Qualifying Examination

Students take a qualifying examination during the fall semester of their third year. Students need to obtain the necessary accompanying forms from the G&G program assistant to give to their committee. Their committee members will use these forms to grade their student’s efforts during the examination period. The exam consists of a written proposal, a public seminar, a written examination and an oral examination. You may not use this exam as one of your committee meetings.

Written Proposal- Follows the NIH or NSF format. It should be at least 15 pages (including the reference list), and should be turned in to the committee members four weeks prior to the oral exam.

Written Examination- The student’s committee will give them questions based on their coursework and research. Students have two weeks before their oral exam to request the written questions and one week to complete the written examination.

Public Seminar- Typically held during one of the fall G&G seminars.

Oral Examination- Takes place after the written exam and public seminar. Only the student’s committee will attend.

Dissertation Defense and Submission of Thesis

A students’ dissertation defense committee consists of the student’s supervisory committee, who must all be present in some form (such as Skype, if unable to physically attend) at the defense. The committee chair and co-chair must be physically present. The chair of the Supervisory Committee will be present during the oral examination, and may ask questions, but will be asked not to intervene on the student’s behalf. You may not use this exam as one of your committee meetings.

Timeline

Apply to graduate on the student administration website
There is a strict deadline published on the UF Graduate School website

Complete UF Graduate School check-list for graduating students
bit.ly/2vhibFE

Request the following forms from the G&G program assistant
ETD Signature Page Form, Transmittal Letter, and Final Exam Form

Turn in first electronic submission of dissertation draft to the UF Graduate School by deadline

Finish dissertation for defense
Turn in to Supervisory Committee at least 10 business days prior to the defense exam

Defend dissertation (final exam)

Turn in first electronic submission of dissertation to the UF Graduate School by deadline
FAQs & Advice

When in doubt, ask for help! If you knew everything, you wouldn’t be in school.

Get to know your peers– Your cohort, and the more advanced Genetics & Genomics Graduate Program students, are a powerful resource.

Listen to constructive criticism– Adopt what is useful, and move on.

Attend University of Florida Genetics Institute events, other professional events and lab meetings– These are indispensable opportunities to make connections, and learn.

When should I publish my first paper?

As soon as possible. As soon as you arrive on campus, you should start thinking about how you present yourself professionally, what you want to accomplish while you are in graduate school, and what you want to do when you graduate. Regardless of the field you wish to enter after graduation, publishing papers is essential to achieving your professional goals. There is a reason faculty repeat the saying “publish or perish.” You must have first-authored publications in top-ranked journals in order to compete for good postdoctoral positions, grant funding and academic positions. Plan to have at least one first-author publication by the time you graduate, but strive to have multiple first-author and middle-author publications. In all of their publications, students must list three affiliations: the Genetics & Genomics Graduate Program, UF Genetics Institute, and their home department.

Where can I study?

UF campus offers many study options. If your rotation host has enough space, they will provide a desk for you during your rotation. You may also apply for a graduate study carrel at the Marston Science Library or Library West (be sure to apply early in the semester). Furthermore, all campus libraries are open to students during hours of operation. The Health Science Center Library’s third floor is kept quiet for study purposes. Visit cms.uflib.ufl.edu for campus libraries and hours of operation. Many students also study at home or in common areas of the UFGI.

Graduate Resources

Counseling and Mental Health Services at UF

It is understandable that students may eventually find themselves overwhelmed by the stress of graduate school. Should you find yourself feeling like you have more than you can handle, the University of Florida provides many mental health resources for free to students. Student-counselor conversations are strictly confidential.

Counseling & Wellness Center
counseling.ufl.edu/cwc

352-392-1575 \(\text{S} \) 352-392-1575

Services are free for students

Emergency walk-in appointments during business hours

24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, someone is on-call

One-on-one counseling, as well as group counseling (graduate student specific groups)

Can easily change providers

U Matter, We Care
umatter.ufl.edu

Anonymous service to bring a counselor in touch with a friend who may need help

If you are worried about a friend/PI/lab-mate, you can send an anonymous message to the counseling center, and someone will contact them

SNAP (Student Nighttime Auxiliary Police)

352-392-SNAP (7627)

Free, nightly, campus safety and transportation service

Fitness

Exercise is a great way to take a break from the mental grind. UF has two recreation centers that include full gyms, cardio stations, and group classes like yoga and Zumba, free for students. Also, G&G students often organize fun trips to the springs, or other places, to unwind. You will receive an email notifying you of these events.

Dean of Students Office
352-392-1261 \(\text{S} \) 352-392-1261

Housing & Residence Education
352-392-2161 \(\text{S} \) 352-392-2161

International Center
352-392-5323 \(\text{S} \) 352-392-5323

University Police Department
352-392-1111 \(\text{S} \) 352-392-1111

How to Keep a Laboratory Notebook

The following is a list of suggested practices for researchers who must maintain laboratory records. In general, the laboratory records should contain enough information that a technically sophisticated non-expert can understand what was done. This section about notebooks was taken from an article published by Todd Garabedian in Nature Biotechnology (volume 15, page 799-800, 1997).

College of Medicine, Office of Student Counseling & Development
counseling.med.ufl.edu

Dr. Beverly Vidaurreta, student counselor

Services are free

Available for all Genetics & Genomics Graduate Program students

To setup an appointment, contact Brooke Bollinger bbollinger@ufl.edu | 352-273-8383

Reference


go.nature.com/2uHatEE

- The records should be maintained in a bound and numbered laboratory notebook. An index at the front of the notebook outlining the titles of the experiments is also useful. All entries should be in permanent ink, preferably a single color. Changes or additions to the record should be initialed and
dated. Abbreviations and codes should be clearly defined.

- The dates when an idea was formed, and when work on the idea was begun and completed, should be recorded. This information is important in establishing a clear date of conception and reduction to practice.

- Each experiment should start with a clear statement of the objective. An initial statement allows one to get an idea of what the inventor was thinking before the experiment took place.

- Experiments should be recorded in the notebook in chronological order on numbered pages. Skipped or blank pages or pages dated out of order can create suspicion of tampering with the record. Pages left initially blank should be indicated as such.

- All essential facts should be recorded, such as equipment used; conditions; times; temperatures; pH; materials used including source and quality, yields; characterizing data; and so forth. Protocols, experimental design, and calculations should also be recorded.

- The record of an experiment that takes more than one page should make clear reference to previous and subsequent pages so the entire experiment can be followed (i.e., "continued on page 7," "continued from page 15," or "page 2 of 4.")

- If a standard or routine procedure is being followed, reference to the location of a full description of that procedure should be made. For example, "The DNA sequence was determined by the method of Maxam and Gilbert (1977) PNAS USA 74:560-564."

- Analytical or other test results should be dated, and attached or copied, into the record. It is advisable to sign, and date, across both the added document and the underlying notebook page. Experimental results that degrade over time should be converted to a more permanent form. For example, gels that use color reagents should be photographed or scanned and the photograph or scan mounted into the notebook. Electronic records raise new issues concerning record keeping. The technology is so new that neither the PTO nor the courts have determined the legal rules with respect to these types of records. At this time, the best advice for researchers who keep electronic records is to print hard copies, and affix them, to the bound notebook, as outlined above. However, this is not feasible for large sequencing or microarray data files. In this case the student should consult with the adviser as how to best keep a record of these data.

- The record should draw a conclusion, and evaluate the experimental results, if possible. This practice is particularly desirable with experiments that investigate new conditions or synthesize new compounds. A conclusion and evaluation are significant because recognition of success is an important element in the reduction to practice of an invention.