

PHYSIOLOGY (PHD)

Doctor of Philosophy in Physiology

Unit: School of Medicine (<http://louisville.edu/medicine/>) (GM)
 Department Website: Physiology (<https://louisville.edu/medicine/departments/physiology/>)
 Program Website (<https://louisville.edu/medicine/departments/physiology/degrees/phd-pb/>)
 Academic Plan Code(s): PHZBPHD

Program Information

Program Overview and Objectives

The Department of Physiology is located in the Health Sciences Center of the University of Louisville, which provides an active and intellectually stimulating environment and a wide variety of course options. The graduate program permits studies in related disciplines, such as anatomy, neurobiology, pharmacology, toxicology, biochemistry, microbiology, immunology, and molecular biology.

The doctoral program of the Department of Physiology is offered through the School of Medicine at the University of Louisville. As such, one major goal of the Department is to provide students with advanced training, which leads to the PhD degree in Physiology. The research interests of the Department are broad enough to provide each student with a wide selection of possible research and graduate education opportunities. Our doctoral graduate program is designed primarily to prepare students for an independent research career in basic and applied physiology.

Faculty Advising

First-Year Temporary Advisor and Research Experience

The Director of Graduate Studies will meet with the new student to discuss the student's academic and research interests. The Director of Graduate Studies will serve as a Temporary Advisor until a Permanent Advisor is selected.

Selection of Principal Advisor

During the first semester, beginning graduate students will visit research laboratories in which they have an interest. First-year graduate students must select a Principal Advisor within the first five months of their graduate study. The selection process involves approval by the student, the Principal Advisor, the Director of Graduate Studies, and the Department Chair. The Principal Advisor must be a Graduate Research Training Faculty of the School of Medicine.

Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee in this Department is an integral part of the graduate student's training. This Committee is to be extremely proactive in planning the student's curriculum and providing an appropriate breadth in the student's research experience. To that end, not only does the mentor provide guidance in developing the dissertation research plan, but the Advisory Committee has the additional responsibility to assure the independent research design will provide appropriate results for the proposed hypotheses.

After selection of the Principal Advisor, the graduate student's Advisory Committee will be determined. This Committee must have at least five members, and will contain: the Principal Advisor, as Chair; at least three Departmental faculty members; and at least one Graduate Faculty member from outside the Department. All must be appointed as Members of the School of Medicine Graduate Faculty.

In cases where the Principal Advisor holds a primary appointment in a department other than the Department of Physiology, one of the full-time Physiology Faculty will serve as Co-Advisor. The Co-Advisor will also serve on the student's Advisory Committee and serve as the Second Reader of the Dissertation Reading Committee.

Approval of the Committee membership by the Director of Graduate Studies and the Chair will be contingent upon the potential role of each Committee member in the training or in the career plans of the student. The Dissertation Defense Committee, selected by the Principal Advisor, must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies, the Department Chair, and by the Dean of the School of Medicine (or his/her designee).

Admission Requirements

The University of Louisville Graduate School gives a general description of admission procedures. Application information can be found on the Graduate School website (<https://graduate.louisville.edu/admission/apply/>).

The following application items must be submitted to the Graduate School, at the University of Louisville.

1. Graduate application (<https://graduate.louisville.edu/admission/apply/>).
2. One official transcript of the applicant's previous work for each college or university that has been previously attended.
3. Two letters of recommendation from people who are well acquainted with the applicant's previous academic work.
4. TOEFL, IELTS, or Duolingo Examination scores for foreign students from non-English speaking countries.
5. A non-refundable application fee to the University of Louisville.
6. Applicants must state in a letter to the Department but submitted to the Graduate School (referred to as the Personal Statement in the application materials), why they desire a PhD degree in this Department of Physiology.

Applicants for combined degrees (MD/PhD or PhD/DMD) must apply and be accepted by the appropriate professional school (e.g., School of Medicine or Dentistry) before final action will be taken on the Departmental doctoral application.

Admission to the PhD program in the Department of Physiology requires:

- A genuine interest in graduate work and the desire for a significant independent research career in the health sciences
- A cumulative undergraduate grade point average that is usually 3.00 or higher on a scale of 4.00
- International students for whom English is not their primary language must show English language proficiency by demonstration of proficiency on the TOEFL examination (defined as 213 or higher on the computer-based test; >85 on the internet exam), IELTS scores of at least 6.5 overall band score from the academic module exam, Duolingo score of 105 or by successfully completing the exit examination for the advanced level of the Intensive English as a Second Language Program or by demonstration of a degree award from an acceptable English language institution.

Program Requirements

Minimum Course Requirements

The University of Louisville PhD degree does not require a specific number of hours of academic credit. However, the Department requires that a minimum of two consecutive semesters — nine (9) credit hours in the Fall or Spring semesters and/or six (6) credit hours in the Summer — to be taken to fulfill the full time one-year doctoral residency requirement at the University of Louisville. With the approval of the Dean of the School of Medicine (or his/her designee), a maximum of twelve (12) credit hours of this requirement may be credited for post-baccalaureate work from other professional or graduate degree programs.

By the end of the program, the student also must demonstrate the ability to conduct independent research.

The required program of academic studies must include (if not completed with a grade of B or better prior to admission to the Department) the following courses:

Code	Title	Hours
PHZB 640	Systemic Membrane, Nerve, and Muscle Physiology	3
PHZB 641	Systemic BF, Heart, and Circulatory Physiology	3
PHZB 642	Systemic Respiratory, Renal, & Acid -Base Physiology	3
PHZB 643	Systemic Endocrine, Reproductive, and Gastrointestinal Physiology	3
BIOC 645	Advanced Biochemistry I (or equivalent)	4
PHZB 625	Experimental Physiology Methods	1
PHZB 617	Seminar in Physiology and Biophysics (two semesters)	2
BIOC 667	Cell Biology	3
BIOC 630	Responsible Conduct of Research: Survival Skills and Research Ethics	1
PHZB 609	Integrated Systemic Physiology	3
PHZB 611	Advanced Human Cardiovascular Physiology	2
PHZB 616	Selected Topics in Physiology and Biophysics (or equivalent)	3
Minimum Total Hours		31

A student must have at least a 3.00 accumulated GPA (on a 4.0 scale) in order to take the PhD Qualifying Examination and to qualify for the PhD degree. In general, a student with a GPA of less than 3.00 after two consecutive semesters (excluding summer sessions) will require a two-thirds majority vote of the Departmental faculty to continue in the PhD Program. The student must not have received a total of more than six (6) credit hours of a grade of C in their academic work.

For Departmental purposes, passing grades in pass/fail graded courses will not be included in the GPA calculation; however, a failing grade in a pass/fail graded course will be included in the GPA calculation at zero quality points per credit hour. Students will not be allowed to graduate with failing grades on their transcript.

Minimum Requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Physiology

The PhD degree is designed for the student who wishes a professional life that involves original, independent research and who desires knowledge that will permit competent advanced teaching in a physiology area. The PhD degree requires that the student reach a high level of creativity and expertise. Therefore, mere completion of a prescribed number of courses is not adequate for receipt of the doctoral degree. All PhD students are expected to make steady and satisfactory progress toward the completion of the degree.

To document the satisfactory progress of the PhD students, each Advisory Committee must hold at least two mandatory, semi-annual meetings and report on the student's progress (presentations, publications, grades and research progress). The mentor will submit a written report to the Director of Graduate Studies who will collate and distribute these reports to the faculty. Twice a year, the Director of Graduate Studies will lead a Departmental faculty discussion of these reports to determine the student's progress.

The PhD Qualifying Examination

Before the PhD Qualifying Examination may be taken, the student must have completed the Minimum Course Requirements listed above and have a cumulative GPA of at least a 3.0 for all coursework. It would normally be expected that the student would take the PhD Qualifying Examination by the end of five semesters of graduate studies. If the student has not taken the PhD Qualifying Examination by the end of the second year, a letter of justification for the delay must be submitted by the Principal Advisor to the Department Chair.

A PhD Qualifying Examination must be passed by the applicant in order to be admitted to doctoral candidacy. The Qualifying Examination Committee will be comprised of members of the student's Advisory Committee. The membership must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Chair. A passing recommendation shall not involve more than one negative vote of this Committee. If the student does not pass the Qualifying Examination, one additional retake will be allowed if approved by a majority vote of the Departmental faculty.

The purpose of the PhD Qualifying Examination is to test the student's independent use and depth of core physiology through its application to the student proposed research. This examination shall consist of a written research proposal outlining the dissertation research and an oral examination of the student's depth of current understanding of the basic physiological concepts underlying the proposed research. The student will receive the Master of Science Degree in Physiology upon satisfactory completion of the Qualifying Exam.

Maintenance of Graduate Status

A candidate for the PhD degree who has completed all residency requirements, all of the approved required program of academic studies, and passed the Qualifying Examination may register for DOCT 600 Doctoral Candidacy to maintain doctoral candidacy until the degree is awarded. Continuous registration in this status is required. Semiannual progress meetings will continue to be expected. To complete the PhD degree, the student must continue to make satisfactory progress during the candidacy period. In order to be eligible to receive the PhD degree, the student must have been admitted to candidacy and registered for doctoral candidacy for the two consecutive semesters prior to the awarding of the degree.

Dissertation

The dissertation shall represent a scholarly achievement which embodies results of independent research and which demonstrates a thorough understanding of research concepts in the field of inquiry. The completed dissertation must be in the appropriate format as required by the Graduate School and must be approved by a Dissertation Reading Committee (the Candidate's Advisory Committee). Then, at least two weeks before the scheduled dissertation defense and at least thirty days before the expected date of graduation, the dissertation shall be submitted to the Dissertation Defense Committee. The Dissertation Defense Committee, selected by the Principal Advisor, must have been approved previously by the Director of Graduate Studies, the Department Chair, and by the Dean of School of Medicine (or his designee) (see section IIC). The accepted dissertation, must be submitted electronically, one signed signature page signed by the Dissertation Defense Committee, must be deposited with the Graduate School by the published deadline (<http://louisville.edu/graduate/current-students/thesis-dissertation-information/>) and one copy must be given to the Department Chair before graduation. The copy for the Department Chair may be electronic.

Dissertation Defense

The dissertation defense is an oral defense of the dissertation and a demonstration of mastery of the candidate's research field. The defense is administered by the Dissertation Defense Committee. The defense of the dissertation is a public examination and the Graduate School will notify all faculty members that they are invited to the Dissertation Defense, but only members of the Dissertation Defense Committee will vote on the student's performance. For the student to pass the Dissertation Defense, the vote of the Dissertation Defense Committee may not include more than one negative vote. The Dissertation Defense must take place at least fourteen days before the end of the semester in which the degree is anticipated.

The Department will not approve the granting of the PhD degree until the student has submitted at least one first-authored manuscript on the dissertation research and one co-authored manuscript for publication in a refereed journal. The manuscript and the choice of a journal must be approved by the Principal Advisor before manuscript submission.

In any case, where the Departmental requirements are less restrictive than those described in the School of Medicine Minimal Guidelines for Graduate Education, a School of Medicine guidelines will apply.

Exceptions

1. The above are statements of minimum Departmental requirements. However, it is recognized that there could be cases in which exceptions should be allowed. The student and advisor should consult with the Department Chair if the basis for an exception exists.
2. In the above guidelines, the Director of Graduate Studies has considerable responsibility for program quality. To avoid any possibility of a potential conflict of interest, the Department Chair (or designee) will fulfill the role of Director of Graduate Studies for any PhD or MS student who has the Director of Graduate Studies as their Principal Advisor.

Typical Doctoral Programs

Traditional Doctoral Program

Year 1		
Fall		
PHZB 640	Systemic Membrane, Nerve, and Muscle Physiology	3
PHZB 641	Systemic BF, Heart, and Circulatory Physiology	3
BIOC 645	Advanced Biochemistry I	4
PHZB 625	Experimental Physiology Methods	1
PHZB 617	Seminar in Physiology and Biophysics	1
Hours		12
Spring		
PHZB 642	Systemic Respiratory, Renal, & Acid-Base Physiology	3
PHZB 643	Systemic Endocrine, Reproductive, and Gastrointestinal Physiology	3
BIOC 667	Cell Biology	3
PHZB 617	Seminar in Physiology and Biophysics	1
BIOC 630	Responsible Conduct of Research: Survival Skills and Research Ethics	1
PHZB 619	Research	1
Hours		12
Summer		
PHZB 619	Research	6
Hours		6
Year 2		
Fall		
PHZB 609	Integrated Systemic Physiology	3
PHZB 619	Research	6
Hours		9
Spring		
PHZB 611	Advanced Human Cardiovascular Physiology	2
PHZB 616	Selected Topics in Physiology and Biophysics	3
PHZB 619	Research	4
Master of Science Final Exam (PhD Qualifying Exam)		
Master of Science Degree and PhD Candidacy program		
Hours		9
Summer		
DOCT 600	Doctoral Candidacy	0
Hours		0
Year 3		
Fall		
DOCT 600	Doctoral Candidacy	0
Hours		0
Spring		
DOCT 600	Doctoral Candidacy	0
Hours		0
Summer		
DOCT 600	Doctoral Candidacy	0
Hours		0
Year 4		
Fall		
DOCT 600	Doctoral Candidacy	0
Hours		0
Spring		
DOCT 600	Doctoral Candidacy	0
Hours		0
Minimum Total Hours		48

Dissertation Defense: If more research/dissertation time is needed, the student will continue to register as DOCT 600 until completed.

Doctoral Program for Residents/Fellows

This sequence is based on the premise that the clinician will be given the equivalent of two full calendar years ("Research Leave") free to complete research without clinical duties. The Director of Graduate Studies will see that the Graduate School is notified of the transfer of the preclinical courses applicable to the Departmental doctoral requirements. The clinician will take:

1. Advanced Human Physiology,
2. Integrated Systemic Physiology,
3. Statistics,
4. Seminar, and
5. Complete initial research (PHZB 619) to define a doctoral research problem.

Year 1

Fall		Hours
PHZB 609	Integrated Systemic Physiology	3
PHZB 619	Research	6
Hours		9

Spring

PHZB 611	Advanced Human Cardiovascular Physiology	2
PHZB 616	Selected Topics in Physiology and Biophysics	3
PHZB 617	Seminar in Physiology and Biophysics	1
BIOC 630	Responsible Conduct of Research: Survival Skills and Research Ethics	1
PHZB 619	Research	2
Hours		9

Summer

PHZB 619	Research	6
Hours		6

Year 2

Fall		
PHZB 619	Research	9
Master of Science Degree (PhD Qualifying Exam)		
Hours		9

Spring

DOCT 600	Doctoral Candidacy	0
Hours		0

Summer

DOCT 600	Doctoral Candidacy	0
Hours		0

Minimum Total Hours	33
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Dissertation Defense: If more research/dissertation time is needed, the clinician will continue to register as DOCT 600, until completed, and dissertation defended.