Plan of Study
The PhD plan of study includes at least two years of basic and advanced 
courses in physiology and/or pharmacology, as well as courses in cell 
and molecular biology. The students also will be trained in conducting 
physiological and pharmacological research in the laboratory of individual 
faculty members during the first year.

Qualifying Examination Policy
The department does not require a formal qualifying examination. 
Successful completion of the core curriculum and satisfactory 
performance in conducting scientific research and teaching will qualify 
students for continuation in the PhD program.

Choosing a Track and Mentor
The student will choose a dissertation mentor at or before the end of the 
first year and decide whether they wish to pursue the doctoral program in 
Pharmacology or Physiology.

Comprehensive Examination
All PhD program students must pass a comprehensive examination 
before the end of the first semester of the third year of enrollment. The 
usual format of the comprehensive exam includes the writing and oral 
defense of a research proposal outside of the student’s dissertation 
research area.

Dissertation
Each student must then carry out a dissertation research project, original 
in nature, which is expected to contribute significant new knowledge 
to the area of study. To facilitate this process, each student submits 
a dissertation research proposal within six months of passing the 
comprehensive examination.

Oral Defense
Finally, all PhD candidates must pass an oral defense of the dissertation 
and comply with all university and departmental regulations governing the 
PhD degree.

Length of Study
The doctoral program normally requires four to five years beyond the 
baccalaureate degree.