

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1) What is a Ph.D. in Pharmaceutical Sciences?

Students in the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Pharmaceutical Sciences degree program select a concentration in Pharmacology (PCOL), Pharmaceutics (PCEU), Medicinal Chemistry (MC) or Pharmaceutical Health Outcomes and Policy (PHOP).

### 2) How long does it take to finish a Ph.D. in your programs?

The average time to completion is about 4.8 years

### 3) Can the application fee be waived?

The application fee is a requirement of the University. It can be reviewed by the department committee in extenuating circumstances but this does not guarantee a waiver.

### 4) Can I apply for a Ph.D. without a prior Master's?

The applicant does not need a Master's degree. However, applicants are stronger if they have prior research experience.

### 5) Does your program offer visiting scholar positions?

We do not offer visiting scholar positions.

### 6) What key components of my application with the committee review?

Acceptable test scores:

- GRE; No minimum, but the average total GRE for students admitted over the last three years was 308 (range ~290-320). GREs are waived for fall 2020 for PCOL, PCEU and MC; PHOP will consider on a case-by-case basis.
- TOEFL or IELTS (international applicants) MUST meet the minimum required by the University (79 for internet-based test or 550 for paper-based test)
- Research experience (publications are a plus)
- Cogent and clear responses to application essay questions
- GPA higher than 3.0 in career relevant courses
- Good letters of recommendation (should be academic and/or from employment supervisor)
- Interview (in person or online)

### **7) How long are GRE and TOEFL scores valid?**

TOEFL scores are reported for up to 2 years; if you took the test more than 2 years ago, you have to retake it. Applicants are exempt from taking TOEFL if you obtained a Master's Degree in the US.

GRE scores are reported for up to 5 years; if it's been more than 5 years you will have to retake.

### **8) Do I need official documents for the application?**

We don't need official transcripts to review the application, but we do need official test scores. If admitted, you will have to submit official, sealed transcripts for all degrees earned.

### **9) What kind of financial support is available?**

Most students initially receive financial support as Teaching Assistants (TAs), unless they bring their own scholarships. The amount of support committed in the offer letter will not change over student's career, unless the student has academic or other kinds of problems affecting eligibility for financial aid.

After year one, many students become Research Assistants (RAs), supported by faculty grants. The student may change from TA to RA, or from RA to TA during his/her career depending on the availability of funds from different sources. Individual students can apply for competitive external fellowships from many agencies, such as the National Institutes of Health, if they are U.S. citizens. Students many apply to the college each year for the other scholarships, which range from \$200-\$1000.

### **10) What are the overall financials?**

TAs and RAs, both domestic and international, have all of the tuition and fees paid by the University; there are no tuition or fees charged to students as long as 9 or fewer hours are taken per semester. After five years of study, there may be limitations on further student funding. There is a supplement to pay for health insurance (\$1800/yr). Students in PHOP are paid a yearly stipend of \$24,000 and in PCOL, PCEU and MC, \$25,000.

### **11) What are the teaching duties like?**

TAs assist with teaching the in the professional Pharm.D. curriculum, where there are currently ~120 students in each class. The work is mostly grading papers, proctoring exams, and performing various assessments requiring 10-15 hours per week. A few graduate students with special skills may be asked to help with small-group teaching in areas like chemistry and pharmaceuticals.

The Pharm.D. students are highly motivated and professional.

**12) Do you offer a Master's degree to new students?**

No. Students who begin the Ph.D. program but cannot finish due to unforeseen circumstances may be given a contingency M.S. if they write and defend a master's thesis. We do not award a non-thesis M.S.

**13) Do you admit students in the Spring?**

Yes, but only in Pharmaceutics and if funds are available, or if the student brings his/her own funding. Most often, this happens when a faculty member has his/her own funds and recruits a truly outstanding applicant.

**14) What is the academic program like?**

Most didactic courses in PCEU and PCOL are in the first two years, with 2-3 three-credit courses in each of the first two semesters. In the second year, there may be 2-3 three-credit courses total. PHOP course requirements are somewhat higher. After year two, you will be doing mainly dissertation research with a faculty advisor and the courses will mostly be seminars and presentations.

**15) How does the rotation requirement work?**

In year one, students work with 2-3 different faculty members before choosing one in which to perform dissertation research for the remaining 3-4 years. Some students may be recruited directly into a faculty lab and need not rotate.

**16) What about qualifying exams?**

For PCOL, PCEU and MC, by the end of the sixth long semester (spring of year 3), the student must write and defend a research proposal and take a written exam in the general subject area. PHOP students take Core and Area of Emphasis written exams, and an oral defense of a dissertation proposal.

**17) What about travel?**

A student who has done enough research to write an abstract and put together a poster or oral presentation will receive support to attend one scientific meeting per year, providing he/she also applies to the organizing body of the meeting for a travel award. The student may attend additional meetings if the mentor has independent travel funds.

**18) I am an international student. Will you help me with my visa?**

We will arrange to send you an I-20 as soon as you are accepted, then it will be up to you to arrange for a visa interview in your home country.

However, if you are already in the U.S. with an F-2, H-1 or other kind of visa, or if you need to transfer an F-1 from another U.S. university, procedures are much different, and we will refer you to a specialist in the International Students and Scholars Services Office (ISSSO) at UH. Immigration is very complex and constantly changing, and we rely on the ISSSO specialists to make sure you don't have visa problems.

**19) What is a 'postdoctoral fellow' and why do so many of your alumni have that title?**

In many fields of biomedicine, additional work in an academic environment is needed after the Ph.D. is earned in order to gain experience and bolster credentials before seeking a more permanent position. A Ph.D. graduate goes to work for a distinguished investigator at another institution, initially working on that investigator's projects, with potential to evolve some independence. A 'post-doc' position typically last 2-4 years, and current salaries start at around \$50,000 (plus benefits, at least 28% of that).

In some fields, such a Pharmaceuticals, Medicinal Chemistry and PHOP, it is more common for Ph.D. graduates to go directly into industry positions. The job title 'postdoctoral fellow' is also found in pharmaceutical companies at somewhat higher salaries and more direct lines to industry careers.