

The Graduate Program in Neuroscience

Bylaws

Objective of the Program

The Graduate Program in Neuroscience is an interdepartmental doctoral program. The main objective of this program is to provide students with broad, integrative training in neuroscience with a strong foundation in core concepts, skills, methodologies, and advanced comprehension of scientific literature.

The Director works with the students, the Program Committee, and the faculty to operate the program. These bylaws describe the structure of the administrative component of the program and provide guidance for governance and decision-making.

Administration

1. Director

The Program Director serves at the discretion of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and neuroscience faculty and affiliates. The Program Director will be nominated by the neuroscience faculty based on a majority vote of a quorum of faculty. The neuroscience faculty will forward their recommendation to the Vice President for Academic Affairs for appointment. The Director serves a three-year, renewable term. Together with the Program Committee members, the Director upholds Program policies. The Director is authorized to call meetings of the program faculty. The Director is responsible for reporting to the Vice Provost of Academic Affairs all notable outcomes of program-wide and Program Committee meetings and, conversely, for reporting to the Program members the outcomes of meetings with the Vice Provost, Accountant, and Program Coordinator.

2. Membership

The Program in Neuroscience is comprised of faculty and research affiliates at the University of Wyoming. Faculty are defined as tenured or on the tenure track (i.e. assistant, associate, and full professors). Faculty are expected to maintain active neuroscience research programs, advise graduate students, vote on issues presented by the Program Committee, and can serve on the Program Committee (described below). Affiliates include research associates and APLs. Affiliates can co-advise graduate students together with a faculty member, but do not serve as primary advisors, and they can attend faculty meetings, vote on program-wide issues, but do not serve on the Program Committee.

3. Committees

Program Committee: The Program committee is appointed by the Director, and the Director is a member of the Program Committee. Committee members are appointed for a two-year, renewable term. Given the interdisciplinary nature of this program, the committee shall ideally be comprised of neuroscience faculty from across the different departments and colleges that contribute to the program. The Director and other Committee Members work together to set, implement, and revise program policies to maintain a dynamic and well-functioning program. In addition, the Program Committee is responsible for screening graduate student applicants, deciding on faculty membership, and allocating funding from the operational budget to different programmatic activities. The committee, sans the director, is also responsible for carrying out a bi-annual evaluation of the director and forwarding the evaluation to the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs.

Ad Hoc Committees: Transient ad hoc committees can be formed to work on specific issues.

Note: Other permanent committees, in addition to the Program Committee, shall be formed as necessary (i.e. as the program grows).

4. Amendment of the Bylaws

The Bylaws shall be amended as necessary. The steps for amendment are as follows: Amendments may be proposed by any voting member of the Program in Neuroscience. The Program Committee will evaluate the proposed amendment. If approved by the Program Committee, the proposed amendment shall be presented to the Program faculty, and the program faculty shall vote. A two-thirds majority vote is needed to amend the Bylaws. The Program Committee will then revise the Bylaws to reflect the change. If the initial proposed bylaw amendment is not recommended by the Program Committee, it can be revised and resubmitted for re-evaluation.

5. Program Policies

Program policies are established and amended by a two-thirds majority vote of the Neuroscience faculty and affiliates. The program's policies, listed below, are presented in Appendix A:

- a. Faculty Status Policy
- b. Graduate Affairs Policy

Appendix A. Program Policies

A. Faculty and Affiliates

Faculty: criteria for admission

Minimum criteria for admission to the Program Faculty include status as a tenured or tenure-track Assistant Professor at the University of Wyoming. Program Faculty are expected to maintain an active and funded research program in the field of neuroscience, advise graduate

students, publish their research in peer reviewed journals, attend program-sponsored seminars, and contribute to teaching neuroscience courses offered by the Program.

Affiliates: criteria for admission

Minimum criteria for admission to the program as an affiliate member include status as a research associate or APL at the University of Wyoming. Affiliates are expected to have published scholarly work in the field of neuroscience and to be currently involved in neuroscience research or teaching neuroscience courses.

Prospective Faculty and Affiliates: Applying for membership

Individuals seeking to join the program, either as Faculty members or as affiliates, should send to the Program Director a current Curriculum Vitae, pdfs of representative neuroscience publications, and cover letter describing how the applicant will contribute to the program. Approval of the applications will be made by a quorum of the Program Committee. Although not required, newly admitted members are encouraged to give a public seminar on their work to the neuroscience community.

B. Graduate Students

Admission to the PhD Program in Neuroscience

Individuals seeking admission to the Program in Neuroscience submit an application packet via the online admission portal. This packet includes the following:

1. Application form
2. Official academic transcripts
3. Three letters of recommendation
4. Personal statement describing the applicant's motivation for pursuing a PhD in the field of neuroscience.

Minimum criteria for admission to the Program in Neuroscience are:

1. Undergraduate GPA of 3.0
2. A bachelor's degree, preferably in a discipline that is related to neuroscience.
3. TOEFL/IELTS: For international students whose native language is not English. The Minimum acceptable scores are 550 (79 iBT) and 6.5 for TOEFL and IELTS, respectively. (The University of Wyoming's school code for TOEFL = 4855.)
4. Agreement by a member of the Neuroscience faculty to serve as the student's PhD advisor.

Not required but encouraged: admission to a home department at the University of Wyoming.

Applications to the program are reviewed by the Program Committee. Only complete application packets are reviewed. Admission to the program requires unanimous vote to admit.

Transfer from other Programs:

Master's or doctoral students from other departments at the University of Wyoming may apply to transfer to the Program in Neuroscience by submitting a formal application. Potential transfer students must satisfy all the admission requirements specified above. The application consists of all the original materials submitted to the program in which the student is currently enrolled, a letter of recommendation from their prospective Neuroscience graduate advisor, and a letter stating their reasons for seeking transfer. Transfer applications will be reviewed by the Program Committee.

Doctorate Degree Requirements

Graduate advisor: A student is expected to have a graduate advisor at all times. The faculty adviser must be a participating member of the Neuroscience faculty. The adviser is responsible for directing the student's research and academic coursework.

Graduate Committee: During the second year, the student and advisor assemble a Graduate Committee. The role of the Graduate Committee is to review and offer guidance regarding program of study and establishing realistic research goals (see Program of Study section). The committee also assesses the progress of the student through informal meetings, the preliminary exam (See Preliminary Exam section), and the final exam (See Defense of the Dissertation). The Graduate Committee must have at least five members, including the chair (the student's advisor). Four members of the committee, including the committee chair (advisor), should be members of the neuroscience faculty. The fifth member, referred to as the "outside committee member", should be, as their name implies, neither a faculty member in the Program in Neuroscience nor be in the same department as the chair (student's advisor). Once the committee has been formed and approved by the Director, a completed Graduate Committee Assignment Form is submitted, by the student, to the Registrar's Office. The graduate committee is the authoritative entity regarding the terms of the student's program of study, preliminary and defense exam (i.e., no administrative structure can overrule the graduate committee regarding the content of these items).

Occasionally, scientists who are not part of the UW faculty may be chosen to be part of the graduate committee. Appointment of a non-UW faculty member should be discussed with the Director before an offer is made to join the committee.

Program of Study: The Program of Study includes all of the formal coursework, seminars, and research hours involved in earning the doctorate degree. It is developed by the student and advisor and must be approved by the student's Graduate Committee.

Coursework

All doctoral Neuroscience students are required to complete a program of coursework composed of a combination of required and elective courses. All neuroscience graduate students are required to complete Introduction to Neuroscience (NEUR 5280), Structure and Function of the Nervous System (NEUR 5100), and one course in Statistics (e.g. STAT 5050, STAT 5210). Electives are chosen based on the student's project and research interests. Electives do not need to be strictly neuroscience courses. While electives in general should be graduate level (5000), a total of 6 credit hours can come from 4000 level courses. The Neuroscience Program is a

research-oriented program and students are expected to take a minimum of 2 to 3 credit hours of research per semester. In accordance with the Bylaws of the University of Wyoming, a Ph.D. degree in Neuroscience requires a minimum of 72 hours of credit from UW or another approved university. At least 42 hours of the 72 hours (minimum) must be earned in formal classroom courses. Of these 42 hours, at least 18 hours must be structured formal courses, meaning that the course includes a syllabus. This 72-hour requirement may include graduate credits earned while working toward the M.S. degree in the same area but in that case at least 42 hours of the 72 must be earned through formal course work. Additional credits toward the 72-hour requirement will comprise mainly or entirely of Dissertation Research (NEUR5980) credits. In unique circumstances (e.g., exceptional disciplinary academic background before arriving at UW, or special targeted career objectives) the committee may allow that fewer disciplinary courses be taken at UW in lieu of other specialized coursework. Conversely, the committee may require additional hours for the degree or additional hours within the discipline, depending on the scope of the research problem and previous course work.

Graduate students are expected to maintain a 3.0 GPA at all times. Any grade below a "B" is considered failing. If a student's GPA falls below 3.0, the student receives a warning. A second semester with a sub 3.0 GPA is grounds for expulsion from the program. Furthermore, students must maintain a 3.0 GPA or better in order to receive funding through a teaching assistantship.

Required seminar

Students are expected to enroll in an on-going Seminar in Neuroscience (NEUR 5715) every semester for at least the first 3 years.

Preliminary Exam: A formal preliminary examination is required for all PhD. Students. The preliminary exam typically takes place during the student's 3rd year in the program. It is administered by the Graduate Committee. The exam covers all areas within the scope of the student's doctoral program, and is comprised of 3 major components: (1) a written dissertation research proposal which should be formatted as an NIH or NSF proposal (i.e. it should include a Specific Aims, Background and Significance, and Approach section), (2) a 20-30 minute talk to the Graduate Committee that summarizes their proposal and experimental plan, and (3) a written or oral exam comprised of questions posed by each committee member. The student must arrange a mutually convenient time for the preliminary exam, and the written document must be submitted to all Committee members two weeks before the scheduled exam. If the committee chair determines that the written proposal is not acceptable, the preliminary exam is postponed. Successful completion of the preliminary examination renders the student a Ph.D. candidate. Upon completion of the preliminary exam, the student shall submit the signed "Report on Preliminary Examination For Admission to Candidacy" form to the Registrar.

Dissertation defense and final exam: A draft of the written dissertation should be delivered to the Graduate Committee for review no later than 2 weeks before the day of the student's dissertation defense and final exam. The dissertation should not be sent out to the Committee until it has been approved by the student's advisor. Committee members can request further revision of the written dissertation. The appropriate format for the written dissertation is described in The University of Wyoming's Thesis and Dissertation Manual:
https://www.uwyo.edu/registrar/_files/docs/thesis.pdf

The dissertation defense and final exam comprises a public defense presentation followed by an oral exam with the student's graduate committee.

Upon completion of the dissertation defense and final exam, each Graduate Committee member signs and indicates their vote on the defense (confer, deny, or abstain). The student submits the completed form to the Registrar.