

Requirements for Graduation with the PhD Degree

Graduate students are subject to PhD degree requirements set forth by the Weill Cornell Graduate School (WCGS). Inherent to the nature of scientific research, each student will have different specific accomplishments that qualify them for graduation. **The individual requirements for graduation are established by each student's Thesis Committee**, known as the Special Committee. Students are encouraged to discuss degree expectations with PIs early in their studies and as part of the thesis lab selection process. They should then have annual discussions with their full Thesis Committee to establish key milestones toward graduation. It is the responsibility of the Thesis Committee to ensure that appropriate standards are applied, and students should contact their committee Chair with any concerns at any time during training.

General requirements include:

- Successful completion of Admission to Candidacy Exam (ACE) for WCGS students by the end of Year 2 of study.
- Post-ACE, Mandatory **annual Thesis Committee meetings** to document student progress.
- Contribution of a significant body of scientific work. This will differ for each individual student and **specific expectations are established by each student's Thesis Committee**.
- During each committee meeting, the Thesis Committee Chair should document these expectations in writing in the Thesis Committee Meeting Evaluation form.
- Demonstration of ability to operate as an independent scientist. This is assessed by the student's Thesis Committee throughout training and at the thesis defense.
- Demonstration of ability to communicate scientific findings effectively to the scientific community. This is assessed by the student's Thesis Committee throughout training and at the thesis defense. While there is no formal publication requirement, it is expected that all students should publish their work in one or more peer-reviewed journal articles, although this may occur during training or after completion of the thesis defense.
- Completion of program of study in not longer than 7 years, unless an extension has been granted by the Academic Dean.
- Approval from the students' Thesis Committee to write and defend the thesis.
- Submission of a written thesis according to the guidelines of the Graduate School.
- Approval of the written thesis by the student's Thesis Committee, including any revisions requested by the committee before or after the thesis defense.
- Presentation of the thesis in a public lecture.
- Satisfactory performance on an oral examination by the student's Thesis Committee.

WCGS
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For reference, the WCGS Code of Legislation states:

Section I-2: “The PhD degree is designed for those students who demonstrate the potential to perform original research under guidance, in preparation for careers in independent research and teaching. The student is expected to give evidence of mature purpose by originating and pursuing a program of study and research in consultation with appropriate members of the Faculty. The award of the degree is contingent upon the completion of a dissertation constituting an original contribution to knowledge.”

Section II-7: “The WCGSMS office and the Programs of Study issue written instructions for fulfilling the requirements for the degree. It is the candidate's responsibility to become familiar with the applicable requirements of both the Graduate School and the Program, and to fulfill these satisfactorily. In this process, the candidate's Special Committee (Section X) or equivalent MS Program committees are expected to provide guidance and advice.”