



2026-2027
Course Handbook

Sanford Burnham Prebys
Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

Updated August 21, 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW & ADMINISTRATION	2
MISSION STATEMENT AND VISION	2
Accreditation	2
Leadership	2
Academic Integrity	2
Academic Freedom	2
Non-Discrimination	2
Student Complaints	3
Campus Facilities	3
GSBS Program Leadership	4
Support Personnel	4
2026-2027 Academic Calendar	5
SECTION 2: ADMISSIONS PROCESS	6
Application Prerequisites and Documentation	6
SECTION 3: ACADEMIC PROGRAM	8
CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS	8
Attendance	8
Required Courses	9
Data Club	9
Annual Student Retreat	9
Responsible Conduct of Scientific Research	9
Fall Meetings	9
1. Annual Thesis Committee Meeting (ATCM)	10
2. Qualifying Exam Milestone Meeting	10
3. Pre-Thesis Defense Milestone Meeting	11
4. Thesis Defense Milestone Meeting	11

Writing Requirements	12
ACADEMIC PROGRAM OVERVIEW	13
SECTION 4: CO-CURRICULAR & EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES	14
Educational Activities	14
OLAD Co-Curricular Workshops & Events	14
Graduate Student Association and SBP- Science Network	14
SECTION 5: ACADEMIC POLICIES & PROCEDURES	14
Academic Probation and Dismissal Policy and Procedures	14
Disability	15
English Requirement	15
Leave of Absence and Withdrawal	16
Scientific Conduct	16
Student Conduct	16
Student Grievance Policy	16
Student Records	17
Transfer Credit	17
Vacation and Sick Leave	17
SECTION 6: GENERAL INFORMATION	17
Student Financial Responsibility	17
Student Stipend Support and Benefits	17
Orientation	19
Visa/Immigration Information	20

WELCOME

The Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at Sanford Burnham Prebys offers the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree in Biomedical Sciences. The following information outlines requirements for admission into the school and requirements students must satisfy to complete the Ph.D. degree.

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN Scientific discovery is a rewarding profession. The next generation of scientists is learning their trade at an exciting time, when so many tools and technologies are available to enhance the acquisition of knowledge. While Sanford Burnham Prebys' reputation for excellence in basic biomedical research has grown over the last 50 years, the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences was founded in 2006 to prepare the next cadre of scientists to drive discovery.



Sanford Burnham Prebys' Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences is founded on the Institute's collaborative ethos. The program plays to our strengths in biomedical research and is supplemented by the technologies that are being developed here and elsewhere to facilitate breakthroughs in thought and practice.

Galileo Galilei said: "You cannot teach a person anything; you can only help them find it within." At Sanford Burnham Prebys, Galileo's words reflect the didactic, tutorial and laboratory-based focus of our graduate program. Our program is designed to provide students with a solid foundation in the biomedical sciences while engaging in projects with our biological, chemistry, bioinformatics and engineering faculty, with a specialized focus on the main areas studied within a laboratory.

The San Diego area is famous for its recreational and scientific opportunities. Here we have a beautiful climate, pristine beaches and proximity to mountains and desert. I encourage you to explore the web pages describing our graduate program so that you can see for yourself why we are so enthusiastic about science and graduate education at Sanford Burnham Prebys.

Alessandra Sacco, Ph.D.
Professor and Dean
Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW & ADMINISTRATION

MISSION STATEMENT AND VISION

- **Program Mission:** *Educating students to become the innovative biomedical scientists of the future.*
- **Program Vision:** *With state-of-the-art technology, an entrepreneurial mindset and a highly personalized program, Sanford Burnham Prebys is dedicated to educating the next generation of outstanding biomedical scientists who will drive future cutting-edge basic and translational research.*

Accreditation

The Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS) at Sanford Burnham Prebys is accredited by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC), 1080 Marina Village Parkway Suite 500, Alameda, CA 94501; phone 510-748-9001. 

Leadership

GSBS is led by the Graduate School Dean with support from the Vice Dean/Associate Dean of Curriculum, the Associate Dean of Student Affairs, the Associate Dean of Admissions, the Associate Dean of Administration and Professional Development. These five individuals along with three ad-hoc elected faculty members comprise the Graduate Program Executive Committee (GPEC) which manages the policies and procedures of GSBS. GPEC is advised by the Faculty Senate which is comprised of all faculty at the Institute and led by an elected faculty member chairperson.

Academic Integrity

As members of the scientific community, students are responsible for promoting academic integrity. This includes the responsibility to report cases of academic dishonesty to the Human Resources department and to cooperate with faculty and the Human Resources department to resolve such cases.

Academic Freedom

Academic freedom may be defined as the freedom to conduct research, teach, speak, and publish subject to the norms and standards of scholarly inquiry, without interference or penalty, wherever the search for truth and understanding may lead. By facilitating critical thinking and open discourse, academic freedom provides the foundation for the continued intellectual and social value of GSBS at Sanford Burnham Prebys as a place of unfettered debate and the free exchange of ideas.

Academic freedom carries with it a concomitant responsibility of scholars to resist corrupting influences on their research and teaching, to transcend partisanship and prejudice, and to foster intellectually vigorous norms and standards of scholarly inquiry and teaching. GSBS maintains and encourages freedom of inquiry, discourse, teaching, research, and publication, and protects all members of the scientific staff and student body against external and internal influences that might restrict the exercise of these freedoms.

Non-Discrimination

Sanford Burnham Prebys is an equal opportunity institution with respect to both education and employment. The Institute does not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, religion,

❖ *Enrolled students may visit the GSBS Intranet site to view policies, procedures, forms, and other documents mentioned throughout the Handbook (<http://www.sbpdiscovery.org/GSBSintranet>).*

belief, opinion, economic class, national origin, gender, sexuality, age, or physical challenges in admission or access to, or treatment or employment in its programs and activities as required by federal and state laws and regulations. Inquiries regarding compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, Title IX of the 1972 Educational Amendments, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, or related legal matters should be directed to Human Resources (hrconfidential@sbpdiscovery.org).

Student Complaints

The Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education protects students and consumers through the oversight of California's private postsecondary educational institutions by conducting qualitative reviews of educational programs and operating standards, proactively combatting unlicensed activity, impartially resolving student and consumer complaints, and conducting outreach. An individual may contact the Bureau for Private and Postsecondary Education for review of a complaint. The bureau may be contacted at 1747 North Market Blvd, Suite 225, Sacramento, CA 95834, <http://www.bppe.ca.gov>, Phone: 916-574-8900, Fax: 916-263-1897.

Campus Facilities

Sanford Burnham Prebys facilities are located on approximately 18 acres in La Jolla, CA within close proximity to the following institutes which fosters inter-institutional collaborations: University of California San Diego, The Salk Institute for Biological Studies, and Scripps Research. The main campus occupies 9.5 acres and provides approximately 205,000 sq. ft. of office and lab space. Another building near the main campus provides an additional 75,000 sq. ft of office and laboratory space.

- **Maps:** ❖ View maps of the Main Campus (buildings 1-7) and Building 12, including evacuation routes on the GSBS Intranet site.
- **Facilities and Equipment:** A list of facilities and equipment and materials that are available to students for research purposes throughout their studies can be found online [here](#). Students should submit requests that require attention from Facilities through the Facilities Service Now application "Fix."
- **Library:** The Institute's library offers a full range of scientific journals that are available either in print and/or electronically. Items that are not available in the library can be requested through the interlibrary loan service. Books and reference materials are also available to all students. All library services are for use at no additional charge.

❖ *Enrolled students may visit the GSBS Intranet site to view policies, procedures, forms, and other documents mentioned throughout the Handbook (<http://www.sbpdiscovery.org/GSBSintranet>).*

GSBS Program Leadership

Alessandra Sacco, Ph.D.

*Professor;
Dean of the Graduate
School
Building 12, Room 1301
asacco@sbp.edu*

Andrei Osterman, Ph.D.

*Professor;
Vice Dean;
Associate Dean of
Curriculum
Building 12, Room 1304
osterman@sbp.edu*

Alex Colas, Ph.D.

*Associate Professor;
Associate Dean of
Admissions
acolas@sbp.edu*

Barbara Ranscht, Ph.D.

*Faculty, Emeritus;
Associate Dean of Program
Advancement
ranscht@sbp.edu*

Diane Klotz, Ph.D.

*Chief Learning Officer;
Accreditation Liason Officer
Building 1, Room 1224
dklotz@sbp.edu*

Caroline Kumsta, Ph.D.

*Assistant Professor;
Associate Dean of
Student Affairs
Building 7, Room 7107
ckumsta@sbp.edu*

Angelica Rocha, Ph.D.

*Director of Graduate School
Administration and
Institutional Research
arocha@sbp.edu*

GSBS Administrative Team

Megan Elyamani

*Academic Programs Specialist
and Registrar
melyamani@sbp.edu*

Sara Sandoval

*Recruiting and PhD
Pathway Programs
Manager
ssandoval@sbp.edu*

Nisha Cavanaugh, Ph.D.

*Associate Director of Career
Development and
Postdoctoral Programs
ncavanaugh@sbp.edu*

Support Personnel

Mitch Furumoto

*Principal Designated
School Official
mfurumoto@sbp.edu*

The GSBS Office is located in Building One.
Sanford Burnham Prebys: 858-646-3100

2026-2027 Academic Calendar

Fall 2026

September 14th Quarter begins
December 9th Quarter ends

Winter 2027

January 4^h Quarter begins
March 18th Quarter ends

Spring 2027

March 25th Quarter begins
June 7th Quarter ends

Summer 2027

June 14th Quarter begins
August 26^h Quarter ends

Students observe the following official Sanford Burnham Prebys holidays:

Labor Day: September 7, 2026

Veteran's Day: November 11, 2026

Thanksgiving: November 26-27, 2026

Winter Break: December 24, 2026 – January 1, 2027*

MLK Jr. Day: January 18, 2027*

President's Day: February 15, 2027*

Memorial Day Holiday: May 31, 2027*

Juneteenth: June 18, 2027*

Independence Day: July 5, 2027*

*2027 holidays are subject to change, per Human Resources.

All graduate student appointments are considered full-time, 52-week appointments, and are not subject to academic recess.

Students are expected to be in the laboratory when not attending class.

Graduate School Orientation:

New Student Onboarding & Orientation Events August 24-27, 2026.

❖ View this calendar on the GSBS Intranet site.

❖ Enrolled students may visit the GSBS Intranet site to view policies, procedures, forms, and other documents mentioned throughout the Handbook (<http://www.sbpdiscovery.org/GSBSintranet>).

SECTION 2: ADMISSIONS PROCESS

The Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS) at Sanford Burnham Prebys offers a Ph.D. degree in Biomedical Sciences. GSBS is a highly innovative program wherein students and faculty are matched as a prerequisite for acceptance into the program. Applicants are required to communicate with prospective faculty mentors during the application process, before they submit their application. Mutual interest between applicant and faculty is a prerequisite for an invitation to interview, either in-person or virtually, prior to acceptance into the program. All applications are reviewed by the Admissions Committee. A list of faculty and their qualifications can be found at <https://sbpdiscovery.org/education/graduate-school/faculty-and-educational-affiliates/>. Entering graduate students are admitted to their thesis laboratories on day one and do not perform laboratory rotations. *NOTE: Only Sanford Burnham Prebys faculty can serve as mentors.*

Our Admissions Committee emphasizes research experience and recommendations during the review process. All applications are reviewed after the application deadline. GSBS considers both domestic and international applications. The GSBS Admin Office will work with applicants who have been selected for interviews to ensure sufficient matching of the applicants with potential faculty mentors. Applicants will be invited for online virtual interviews to be completed by late-March. After interviews, the GSBS Admin Office will extend offers of admission to selected applicants based on the interviews with a faculty mentor and based on recommendations of the Admissions Committee. Students enrolling in Fall 2027 will start on August 23, 2027.

**The application deadline to be considered for Fall 2027 is
Tuesday, December 1, 2026, at 11:59 pm Pacific Standard Time.
Students enrolling in Fall 2027 will start on Tuesday the last full week of August 2027.**

Only online applications are accepted. Please visit the Prospective Students website to access the application: <https://sbpdiscovery.org/education/graduate-school/prospective-students/>

Application Prerequisites and Documentation

- **CV / Resume**
Candidates are encouraged to highlight current and previous laboratory research experience.
- **Education**
An undergraduate and/or graduate degree and/or significant experience in the biological, medical, chemical, physical, or computational sciences is required for consideration to the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences.
- **Personal statement of interest**
This statement should discuss your reasons for pursuing a doctorate in the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at Sanford Burnham Prebys. Statements should be ~1,000 words and should address your research experience(s), scientific interests, and career goals, as well as obstacles and challenges you had to overcome in your academic and/or scientific journey. We encourage applicants to discuss both strengths and weaknesses, providing specific examples, where possible.
- **Letters of recommendation**
At least three letters of recommendation are required. As part of your application, you will enter the contact information for each of your referees. Referees should be

❖ Enrolled students may visit the GSBS Intranet site to view policies, procedures, forms, and other documents mentioned throughout the Handbook (<http://www.sbpdiscovery.org/GSBSintranet>).

positioned to speak to your strengths and weaknesses as a potential graduate student. Letters should be on official letterhead and must be received by December 1, 2026.

- **TOEFL/IELTS Scores**

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS) scores are required for all foreign students whose first language is not English, or who have obtained their previous degree in a country where teaching is not in English. TOEFL scores must be sent by the Educational Testing Service to the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences Program Office. All tests must be taken within the last two years. Successful applicants generally score at or above 100 on the TOEFL or 7 or above on the IELTS. The TOEFL School Code for Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute is 2718.

- **Transcripts**

All undergraduate and graduate school official transcripts must be received no later than December 1, 2026. An unofficial transcript may be uploaded with application materials, but to be considered for acceptance, an official copy must be submitted either by mail or electronically, to the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences: admissions@sbp.edu. Grades must be reported on a 4.0 scale.

- **GRE Scores (optional)**

GRE scores are not required for admission to the Graduate School. Applicants who choose to not submit GRE scores will not be at a disadvantage in the review process. However, applicants may opt to send GRE scores from exams taken within the past five years. Any GRE scores must be sent by the Educational Testing Service to the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences Office. The School Code for Sanford Burnham Prebys is 2718.

- **Application Fee of \$95 USD**

Applicants may pay via electronic check or credit card at the end of the application or submit a check or money order drawn from a US bank made payable to "Sanford Burnham Prebys."

- Applicants requesting a fee waiver must meet one or more criteria listed on the document: [here](#). To obtain a waiver, you must first contact our Admissions office at admissions@sbp.edu. Fee waivers must be approved in advance from the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences Office for your application to be reviewed.

GSBS MAILING ADDRESS:

Sanford Burnham Prebys
Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences
10901 North Torrey Pines Road
La Jolla, CA 92037, USA

SECTION 3: ACADEMIC PROGRAM

PROGRAM STANDARDS

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs):

Sanford Burnham Prebys' Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences has the following learning outcomes that are aligned with the mission and vision of Sanford Burnham Prebys, and define the program:

PLO 1: Integrate knowledge across biomedical disciplines to develop explanations of biological phenomena

PLO 2: Synthesize the biomedical literature into a research direction

PLO 3: Design a rigorous biomedical experiment to test a hypothesis

PLO 4: Perform appropriate experimental protocols using advanced biomedical research techniques

PLO 5: Analyze biological data using adequate quantitative methods

PLO 6: Communicate scientific findings in an audience-appropriate format

PLO 7: Explain translational applicability of their biomedical research in an audience-appropriate format

CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS

Each student is required to take five core courses and eight tutorials by the end of their second year. Students must complete a minimum of 96 credit units to graduate. A minimum of 64 credit hours must be earned prior to holding the Qualifying Exam and a minimum of 32 Thesis Research Hours (GRES 991) must be earned after the Qualifying Exam and prior to holding the Thesis Defense. Students accrue eight units per quarter by completing courses, tutorials and laboratory research. Upon completion of all degree requirements, students will earn a Doctorate of Philosophy degree from GSBS.

GSBS uses a learning management system to post course syllabi, grades, and rubrics. Each student will have an account that can be accessed at any time.

Attendance

Each student must take full responsibility for their academic work and research progress. Students are expected to attend all classes, tutorials, and Data Club, as consistent attendance offers the most effective opportunity to gain command of concepts and materials that are essential for success.

It is the policy of GSBS to excuse the absences of students as follows:

1. Illness of the student, or illness of a dependent
2. Religious observance (where the nature of the observance prevents the student from being present during the class period)
3. Participation in institute activities at the request of institute authorities, and
4. Compelling circumstances beyond the student's control.

Students are expected to attend their scheduled classes/tutorials and take scheduled examinations according to the requirements of the instructor. Instructors are not required to accommodate requests for alternative examination dates and exceptions. Absences may be used in computing grades. Students with unexcused absences will face disciplinary actions, as outlined by course directors and GSBS.

Participation in laboratory research is an ongoing requirement and an integral part of the learning experience. Graduate students are considered full-time (52-week appointments) and are not subject to academic recess. Students are expected to be in the laboratory when not attending class. Students should communicate with their faculty mentors regarding course schedules and must request and be approved to take vacation time in advance of taking vacation. Students are responsible for managing their coursework and research participation. Laboratory meetings or laboratory journal club are not valid reasons for missing a class, tutorial, Data Club, or similar.

Required Courses

SBP 260	Molecules to Systems (4 units, Fall, Year 1)
SBP 273	Scientific Communication (2 units, Winter, Year 1)
SBP 265	Introductory Statistics (2 units, Spring, Year 1)
SBP 275	Computational Biology and Bioinformatics (2 units, Winter, Year 2)
SBP 263	Modern Drug Discovery Technologies (3 units, Spring, Year 2)
SBP 281	Graduate Tutorials (1 unit each, 8 required, Years 1-2)
GRES291	Graduate Research (1-8 units, all quarters through the Qualifying Exam)
GRES991	Thesis Research (8 units per quarter, starting in the quarter following the Qualifying Exam)

❖ View course and tutorial descriptions on the Course Catalog page of the GSBS Intranet site.

Data Club

Data Club provides a forum for students to present their research progress and receive feedback on their oral presentation skills. Meetings are held in-person, once or twice per month from October through April. First through third year students present their research once per academic year and are responsible for inviting their faculty mentor to the meeting. Attendance is mandatory for all students. Unexcused absences will result in an Unsatisfactory grade and disciplinary action. A detailed schedule is available for registered students by clicking on the Data Club link at sbpdiscovery.org/GSBSintranet.

❖ View the 2026-2027 Data Club Student Presenter Schedule on the GSBS Intranet site.

Annual Student Retreat

Each spring, the graduate school hosts an annual research-focused retreat. The retreat offers students the opportunity to present their research and engage with faculty and peers from various programs in an informal setting. Participation in the retreat is mandatory.

Responsible Conduct of Scientific Research

The Responsible Conduct of Scientific Research offers first-year graduate students with a 2-day overview of the nine Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Core Areas as outlined by the Office of Research Integrity (ORI). A special emphasis is placed on Sanford Burnham Prebys policies and best practices, providing students with a strong foundation in ethical research practices.

Fall Meetings

Annual Thesis Committee Meeting (ATCM), or Milestone Meeting:

Students along with their faculty mentors are responsible for assembling a thesis committee by

9

❖ Enrolled students may visit the GSBS Intranet site to view policies, procedures, forms, and other documents mentioned throughout the Handbook (<http://www.sbpdiscovery.org/GSBSintranet>).

June 30th at the end of Year 1. The thesis committee must have at least four members, though five members are recommended.

The members are:

- Faculty mentor
- Thesis committee chair from Sanford Burnham Prebys with whom the student is not conducting research and is an associate-level professor, or higher
- One or two Sanford Burnham Prebys faculty members from the graduate program
- One or two faculty members from outside of Sanford Burnham Prebys with a graduate school appointment at their home institution

To meet quorum, the faculty mentor and thesis committee chair must be present at every ATCM and Milestone Meeting. A second internal member may substitute for an absent internal member; a second external member may substitute for an absent external member. If a quorum is not met, the meeting must be rescheduled.

1. Annual Thesis Committee Meeting (ATCM)

Beginning in year two, GSBS students are required to assemble their thesis committee annually for a formal meeting. All documents must be submitted by the first day of the quarter in which the meeting will take place. The meeting must take place between September 1st and November 30th. Students will either hold an Annual Thesis Committee Meeting (ATCM) or a Milestone Meeting which is an oral defense (e.g., Qualifying Exam, a Pre-Thesis Defense, or a Thesis Defense). Students meet with their Thesis Committee to provide an overview of their research progress and assess next steps. In either case, the student must submit the following three documents that are due by the first day of quarter and no later than 2 weeks before the meeting takes place (1) an **annual report form** completed by the mentor, (2) an **annual report form** completed by the student, and a (3) **cohort-specific writing assignment** that outlines their yearly progress in the laboratory. The annual reports require students to track course grades as well as participation in co-curricular activities, and to share accomplishments. Two additional cohort-specific documents are due 7 days after the meeting: (4) **Student Post-Meeting Summary** outlining the feedback received in the meeting, future steps and a timeline, and a (5) **rubric** completed by the Thesis Committee Chair assessing the writing assignment. If a Milestone Meeting is being held, the Thesis Committee Chair must indicate the **outcome** of the meeting (i.e. pass, pend, or fail) on the **rubric**.

Students will submit all ATCM and Milestone Meeting documents using the student learning management system and must also email the documents directly to all members of the thesis committee by the due date.

Milestone Meetings

Students must hold three oral defenses, or “Milestone Meetings” to graduate.

2. Qualifying Exam Milestone Meeting

Student and Mentor Annual Reports and the Writing Assignment (i.e. Research Proposal) must be completed by the first day of the fall quarter.

Students must present and successfully defend a Qualifying Exam to their thesis committee by November 30th in Year 3 of graduate studies. All coursework must be completed and passed before holding their Qualifying Exam.

The Qualifying Exam involves a research proposal written in the style of an NIH F31 pre-doctoral fellowship application, followed by an oral presentation. The proposed research is discussed in depth during the exam. Upon successful completion, students advance to candidacy and are expected to dedicate full-time effort to their thesis research.

3. Pre-Thesis Defense Milestone Meeting

After passing their Qualifying Exam, students hold their Pre-Thesis Defense (PTD). The purpose of this meeting is to determine if the student has made sufficient progress in their research to write their thesis.

The PTD can be held at any time of the year. As with all students, Student and Mentor Annual Reports must be submitted in the fall quarter of the academic year that the PTD is being held.

The PTD Writing Assignment must be submitted no later than the first day of the quarter in which the PTD is held and at least 2 weeks prior to the meeting. The writing assignment is a document consisting of a minimum of 2,000 words covering introduction, scientific questions, summary of results, innovation, timeline with milestones for completing the thesis work, and references. The thesis committee assesses the student's written document and oral defense and indicates an outcome of pass, pend, or fail on the GSBS Outcome Form.

Students must hold their Thesis Defense within 12 months of passing the PTD.

4. Thesis Defense Milestone Meeting

The final component of the PhD program is the thesis defense (TD).

Students are required to submit their written thesis by the first day of the quarter in which the TD is being held. The written thesis should be composed of a series of chapters. The first chapter should be an introduction outlining the background information and rationale for the thesis research, with a concise summary of the research results. A final conclusion chapter should place the significance of the work into a larger context and point out future directions of study. There is no set number of chapters, but the thesis should be appropriately structured according to the thesis committee. Published papers written by the student may be included as a chapter. A typical thesis includes an abstract, an introduction, three or four research chapters, and a conclusion.

Graduating students meet with the Registrar of the GSBS Admin Office for a formal Graduation Audit and to receive guidance on all graduation requirements and timelines. Graduation requirements include the student circulating a draft of their thesis to all committee members within 8 weeks of the scheduled TD and submitting their final written thesis to ProQuest, an online thesis repository, prior to the student holding their oral TD.

The oral TD consists of a public seminar lasting approximately one hour, followed by a closed-door session with the Thesis Committee, typically lasting 1-2 hours. During the closed-door session, thesis committee members ask questions pertaining to the written thesis and oral presentation to evaluate the candidate's mastery of the field. Following the session, the thesis committee privately discusses and votes on the outcome of the defense.

Upon a successful TD and confirmed completion of all GSBS graduation requirements, the student will be conferred the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Biomedical Sciences from Sanford Burnham Prebys.

❖ *Access writing requirements, guidelines, blank forms, and other resources by visiting the Annual Thesis Committee Meeting page, or the respective page for each Milestone Meeting on the GSBS Intranet site.*

Writing Requirements

There are several Writing Requirements in the GSBS Program:

1. **Retreat Abstract:** Each year, students submit an abstract for the Annual Retreat which is graded by members of the Graduate Program Executive Committee.
2. **Year 1 Students:** Not applicable
3. **Year 2 Students (750-Word Summary and Mini-Review):** Students write a 750-word summary on their research project which is due by the first day of the fall quarter in Year 2. A second writing assignment is a Mini-Review on the student's research topic due by November 30 of Year 2. The Mini-Review is graded by the Thesis Committee Chair, is 1 credit hour, and goes on the student's transcript.
4. **Year 3 Students (Research Proposal):** Students write a research proposal of their thesis work which is due by the first day of the fall quarter in Year 3 and at least 2 weeks prior to the meeting. This work serves as the basis for the first oral defense, the Qualifying Exam Milestone Meeting. The research proposal is future-facing but also incorporates a summary of the work conducted in the previous academic year. This thesis committee, led by the Thesis Committee Chair, designates an outcome Milestone Meeting assignment is graded by the Thesis Committee Chair with input from the Thesis Committee.
5. **Year 4+ Students who are not holding a Milestone Meeting (Scientific Manuscript):** By the first day of the fall quarter, fourth plus-year students who are not holding a milestone meeting (i.e. Qualifying Exam, Pre-Thesis Defense, Thesis Defense) submit their research progress as a scientific manuscript to be graded by their Thesis Committee Chair.
6. **Pre-Thesis Defense Milestone Meeting (Pre-Thesis Defense Writing Assignment):** Following the QE, students may hold the Pre-Thesis Defense (PTD) Milestone Meeting. The PTD is the second of the three oral defenses and may be held at any time of the year. By the first day of the quarter in which the PTD will be held, and at least 2 weeks prior to the scheduled meeting, students submit a PTD Writing Assignment outlining their thesis project and a timeline for completion. The thesis committee, led by the Thesis Committee Chair, designates an outcome of pass, pend, or fail.
7. **Thesis Defense Milestone Meeting (Thesis):** Within a year of holding the PTD, students must hold their Thesis Defense (TD) Milestone Meeting. Students may hold the TD at any time of the year. By the first day of the quarter in which the TD will be held, and at least 8 weeks prior to the scheduled defense, students submit the written thesis. The thesis is the culmination of the research they conducted during their tenure at GSBS. The thesis should

❖ *Enrolled students may visit the GSBS Intranet site to view policies, procedures, forms, and other documents mentioned throughout the Handbook (<http://www.sbpdiscovery.org/GSBSintranet>).*

be divided into chapters that are of appropriate length and of level-specific content, as determined by the Thesis Committee. The final thesis is submitted to ProQuest, a thesis repository, prior to the oral defense. The thesis committee, led by the Thesis Committee Chair, designates an outcome of pass, pend, or fail.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM OVERVIEW

GRADUATE PROGRAM CURRICULUM				
	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4+
SBP 260 – Molecules to Systems (M2S)	Y1 Fall			
SBP 273 – Scientific Communication (SC)	Y1 Winter			
SBP 265 – Introductory Statistics (Stats)	Y1 Spring			
SBP 275 – Computational Biology and Bioinformatics (CBB)		Y2 Winter		
SBP 263 – Modern Drug Discovery Technologies (MDDT)		Y2 Spring		
Tutorials (8 required) (within first two years)	Y1-Y2			
GRES 291 – Graduate Research (pre-candidacy)	Pre-candidacy			
GRES 991 – Thesis Research (post-candidacy)			Post-candidacy	
REQUIREMENTS				
Responsible Conduct of Scientific Research	Y1			
Data Club	All Years			
Annual Retreat	All Years			
Yearly <u>Writing Requirement</u> : Abstract for Retreat	All Years			
Year 1: <u>Writing Requirement</u> : Not applicable.	N/A			
2 nd Year <u>Writing Requirement</u> : Annual Report, 750-word summary, and Mini-Review. Starting with the Fall 2024 cohort, the Annual Report is due by the first day of the quarter while the Mini-Review is due in Year 2 by November 30.		Y2		
3 rd Year <u>Writing Requirement</u> : Annual Report, research proposal for the Qualifying Exam.			Y3	
4 th + Year <u>Writing Requirement</u> : Annual Report and research progress in the format of a scientific manuscript, if not holding a Pre-Thesis Defense or Thesis Defense.				Y4+
4 th + Year <u>Writing Requirement</u> : Pre-Thesis Defense Writing Assignment, if holding a Pre-Thesis Defense.				Y4+
Thesis Write the Thesis, if holding a Thesis Defense.				Y4+

❖ Enrolled students may visit the GSBS Intranet site to view policies, procedures, forms, and other documents mentioned throughout the Handbook (<http://www.sbpdiscovery.org/GSBSintranet>).

SECTION 4: CO-CURRICULAR & EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Educational Activities

Sanford Burnham Prebys is dedicated to cultivating the next generation of scientists. Students are expected to participate in institute-wide seminars, symposia, and colloquia. Students may also attend local, national, and international scientific meetings and are advised to discuss these opportunities with their faculty mentors.

OLAD Co-Curricular Workshops & Events

The Office of Learning and Education (previously the Office of Education, Training, and International Services) provides career and professional development workshops and events to support students and postdocs in preparing for their next career steps. Workshop topics include oral and written communication (e.g. fellowship writing, manuscript writing, presentation skill development), career exploration and career preparation, CV and resume review sessions, and presentation skills practice sessions (“Podium Pointers”). Students are encouraged to attend and actively participate in these workshops. A monthly events bulletin blast with dates and details is emailed to students.

❖ View the OLAD Calendar on the GSBS Intranet site.

Graduate Student Association and SBP- Science Network

The Graduate Student Association (GSA), led by elected GSBS graduate student representatives, includes the president and vice-president who attend Graduate Program Executive Committee meetings to represent student interests.

Established in 1999, the Sanford Burnham Prebys Science Network (SBP-SN) predates the GSA and promotes professional networking among Institute trainees. Coordinated by postdocs and graduate students, SBP-SN and GSA collaborate on the Annual Career Day and Vendor Shows, as well as various social activities throughout the year, including networking activities with nearby research institutes, including Scripps Research, the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, and the University of California San Diego.

SECTION 5: ACADEMIC POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Academic Probation and Dismissal Policy and Procedures

The provisions of this policy pertain to probation and dismissal for academic reasons and are overseen by the Graduate Program Executive Committee (GPEC). This policy aims to establish and maintain basic standards and requirements for graduate work at Sanford Burnham Prebys and is applicable to all GSBS students.

1. **Passing Core Courses or Other Required Courses:** All students must pass the GSBS core courses and tutorials required by their program with a letter grade of B- or better. If a student does not satisfy this requirement they are placed on academic probation. Students are given two opportunities to pass required courses and tutorials.
2. **Passing Qualifying Examinations:** After the Qualifying Examination the Thesis Committee delivers one of three decisions: Pass, Pend, or Fail. A “Pend” decision allows the student one re-take of the exam. If the student fails the re-take, they will be dismissed from the program, though they may appeal to the Dean if they feel that an additional re-take is justified. Students receiving a “Fail” decision will be dismissed from the program.
3. **Inability to Conduct Research:** Faculty Mentors guide students accepted into their

14

❖ Enrolled students may visit the GSBS Intranet site to view policies, procedures, forms, and other documents mentioned throughout the Handbook (<http://www.sbpdiscovery.org/GSBSintranet>).

research projects but are not obligated to accept any specific student. Under the guidance of the faculty mentor, students are expected to: (1) design and plan the research project; (2) conceptualize and formulate the hypothesis and methodology; (3) perform data analysis; and (4) write and defend a thesis.

The Faculty Mentor and Thesis Committee Chair are primarily responsible for determining whether a student has demonstrated adequate research skills and independence. Any failure to demonstrate adequate research ability must be well-documented by the Faculty Mentor and reviewed by the Thesis Committee Chair. If the student has not yet assembled a thesis committee, a review committee will be convened that consists of other GSBS faculty and a member of GPEC. If the committee recommends dismissal, the Thesis Committee Chair notifies GPEC, and if GPEC concurs, the Thesis Committee Chair will inform the student of their dismissal. If there is no thesis committee, the GPEC member will convey the decision to the entire GPEC for review.

4. **General Appeal Process:** A student may appeal a decision for dismissal for any reason by filing a written appeal with GSBS in accordance with the GSBS Grievance Policy.
5. **Periodic Review and Documentation:** All academic difficulties described above must be documented in writing at each stage and should begin as soon as problems arise. The requirement for documentation applies to all academic shortcomings. Maintaining documentation of student academic problems is primarily, although not exclusively, the responsibility of the Faculty Mentor and the student's thesis committee. As problems are documented, students should receive written notice of documentation, as well as the opportunity to respond to the written notice. Annual thesis committee meetings are considered sufficient documentation.

Disability

The Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS) is committed to providing equal educational opportunities for students with disabilities in accordance with the requirements of Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008, as well as the mission and values of Sanford Burnham Prebys (Institute). GSBS provides students with disabilities with reasonable accommodations or modifications to ensure that qualified students with a disability have an equal opportunity to participate in all GSBS programs and activities, and to complete all fundamental and essential academic requirements. GSBS will assist qualified students with disabilities in securing reasonable accommodations and/or resolving access problems as tailored to the needs of the individual. Any student who has been diagnosed as having a disability, or who believes that they may have a disability, and who believes they will require accommodation should register promptly with the Director of Graduate School Administration, who will coordinate evaluation and implementation of appropriate/reasonable accommodation with Institute resources and personnel. For detailed information please refer to the Disability Policy.

English Requirement

The Institute's working language is English. All Institute business, including oral and written communications, laboratory notebooks, and other records, must be conducted in English to prevent miscommunication and ensure safety and efficiency, especially in the laboratory. As a matter of courtesy, students should be mindful of colleagues who do not speak that language and may feel excluded. Non-compliance with this policy may result in disciplinary actions.

Leave of Absence and Withdrawal

Accepting an offer of admission to the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS) signifies full commitment to graduate and professional study. This commitment requires fulfilling degree requirements as outlined in the GSBS Catalog. Continuous enrollment from admission to the completion of degree work is expected and is a GSBS standard.

- **Leave of Absence:** In circumstances where continuous enrollment is not possible, students may request a suspension of their enrollment by means of a leave of absence. Failure to be enrolled or obtain an approval for a leave of absence by the start of an academic quarter may result in the dismissal of the student from the program. A student in good academic standing may request a leave of absence for up to one year (four quarters), or to be placed on an involuntary leave of absence. During an approved leave, the student will not be registered. For details on different types of leave see the **Leave of Absence Policy**.
- **Withdrawal:** Students considering withdrawing from GSBS should first consult with their Faculty Mentor, the Associate Dean of Student Affairs, and/or the Dean of GSBS.

If the student decides to withdraw, they must notify their Faculty Mentor and the GSBS Office in writing. The student then completes the Voluntary Complete Withdrawal Form and returns it to the GSBS Office for signature. All financial obligations to the Institute must be cleared.

Scientific Conduct

Sanford Burnham Prebys upholds the highest standards of professional conduct, recognizing that the integrity of the scientific enterprise is essential to maintaining the trust and confidence of both the scientific community and the public. Unethical behavior breaches this trust, hindering the advancement of knowledge and undermining public confidence. For these reasons, Sanford Burnham Prebys considers misconduct in science a betrayal of fundamental scientific principles and will deal with all instances of possible misconduct firmly.

Research misconduct is defined as fabrication, falsification, plagiarism or other practices that significantly deviate from norms commonly accepted within the scientific community for proposing, conducting, or reporting research. It does not include honest error or honest differences in data interpretation. Sanford Burnham Prebys will thoroughly, promptly, and confidentially investigate and resolve all instances of alleged or apparent scientific misconduct.

Student Conduct

Sanford Burnham Prebys students are expected to conduct themselves with professionalism, respect, integrity and honesty. By enrolling, students agree to uphold the Sanford Burnham Prebys Scientific Code of Conduct and the policies and practices set forth by the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (❖View the Policies and Procedures folder). Violations may result in disciplinary actions, academic probation, or expulsion from the graduate program.

Student Grievance Policy

Sanford Burnham Prebys is committed to ensuring fair treatment for all students. If a student has a complaint, they may seek guidance from the Associate Dean of Student Affairs who will work with the student to resolve the issue. Confidentiality is to be maintained by each person involved

❖ Enrolled students may visit the GSBS Intranet site to view policies, procedures, forms, and other documents mentioned throughout the Handbook (<http://www.sbpdiscovery.org/GSBSintranet>).

in the process. Students can express their concerns freely without fear of retaliation.

In cases where the student believes their concern requires consideration by GPEC, GSBS has a separate grievance policy from that of the Institute that includes formalities for grievances on grades, misconduct, probation, suspension and other matters.

Student Records

The Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS) maintains academic records for all graduate students of Sanford Burnham Prebys. These records include admissions, coursework, academic reports, and academic progress. Material unrelated to a student's academic background, such as medical records, are maintained separately. Decisions regarding a student's academic records are guided by the principle of protecting student privacy. Students may request to view their records by contacting GSBS.

Pursuant to the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), certain student records, such as confidential recommendations and records involving multiple students, are restricted from inspection until a proper release is obtained. If a record involves multiple students, only the specific information that pertains to them may be disclosed. Parents have no inherent rights to inspect a student's records and may access these only with the student's written consent.

Transfer Credit

A student who wishes to transfer to GSBS from another doctoral-level graduate program must apply and undergo the same review process as new applicants. Academic credits for courses taken towards an unfinished Ph.D. degree are evaluated for transfer based on their relevance to the GSBS curriculum, the institution where the courses were completed, and the grades received.

Vacation and Sick Leave

- **Vacation days:** Graduate students do not accrue vacation. GSBS recommends that graduate students be granted vacation time in line with other trainees at the Institute. Ultimately, vacation time is at the discretion of the Faculty Mentor and students must request and obtain approval in advance. Vacation time exceeding 2 consecutive weeks must be reported to GSBS. For extended leave, refer to the Leave of Absence policy.
- **Sick leave:** As Graduate Students are a non-employee status, they do not accrue sick leave according to the Institute's employment policies. Students must notify their Faculty Mentor as soon as possible regarding sick time.

❖ Enrolled students may access GSBS Policies and Procedures on the GSBS Intranet site, or contact GSBS@SBP.edu.

SECTION 6: GENERAL INFORMATION

Student Financial Responsibility

- **Tuition:** GSBS is without cost to students admitted into the program. Tuition and program fees are covered by the Institute or Faculty Mentor, so the California Bureau of Private Postsecondary Education's "Student Tuition Recovery Fund" does not apply.

Student Stipend Support and Benefits

- **Stipend:** Students admitted to the graduate program are directly placed into the research

❖ Enrolled students may visit the GSBS Intranet site to view policies, procedures, forms, and other documents mentioned throughout the Handbook (<http://www.sbpdiscovery.org/GSBSintranet>).

laboratory of interest. The Faculty Mentor is responsible for providing financial support for each student in their lab. Students will receive a base stipend of \$51,500 annually (for academic year 2026-2027) which will be paid semi-monthly. The stipend is subject to change based on cost of living and national competitiveness. Students are not responsible for registration fees of required core courses. For non-required courses, students and Faculty Mentors are responsible for registration fees and associated costs. Supplementation of the stipend is at the discretion of the Faculty Mentor and based on the following criteria:

- **Fellowship-based Stipend Supplement[†]:** At the approval of the faculty mentor, an annual supplement of up to 10% of the base annual stipend may be extended to graduate students in good academic standing who secure their own fellowship from external sources covering a minimum of 90% of the GSBS annual stipend. This supplement automatically renews annually for the duration of the fellowship. If the student maintains good academic standing after the fellowship ends, the Faculty Mentor may choose to continue providing the annual supplement until the student graduates.
- **Merit-based Supplement[†]:** Faculty Mentors may award a one-time merit-based supplement of up to 10% of the base annual stipend to students in good academic standing, based on academic and/or research performance and accomplishments. This merit-based supplement is not automatically renewed but may be renewed at the discretion of the Faculty Mentor.

[†]Fellowship- and merit-based bonuses may be combined but are not to exceed an annual total of 10% of the base annual stipend.

- **Taxes:** Non-service scholarships or fellowships, including the GSBS student stipend, are not typically subject to withholding and reporting by the withholding agent (i.e., the Institute). U.S. Citizens, U.S. Permanent Residents, and individuals who are considered residents for U.S. income tax purposes are responsible for reporting their income to the U.S. federal and state governments. F-1 students, however, are generally subject to tax withholding on their GSBS stipend payments from the Institute. Students should refer to a qualified tax professional with tax-related questions.
- **Benefits:** Sanford Burnham Prebys students and dependents are eligible to participate in many of the Institute's group benefits, including:

Cost Share or Student Paid

- Medical insurance,
- Dental insurance
- Vision insurance.
- Supplemental health (accident, critical illness, hospital indemnity)
- Identity Theft protection
- Supplemental/Voluntary Life Insurance for self, spouse and/or child

Institute Paid

- Basic Life/AD&D Insurance (\$50,000 flat benefit)
- Benefits Guide for Graduate Students (view on [sbpdiscovery.org/GSBSintranet](http://www.sbpdiscovery.org/GSBSintranet))
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP, administered by Magellan, is a

❖ *Enrolled students may visit the GSBS Intranet site to view policies, procedures, forms, and other documents mentioned throughout the Handbook (<http://www.sbpdiscovery.org/GSBSintranet>).*

network of confidential services that include legal and financial assistance, a discount program, and medical and professional referrals. The EAP offers 8 free confidential counseling sessions annually as well as support services for emotional health and wellbeing, relationships, workplace issues, and more.

Graduate Students may need to contribute to the total premium costs for benefits. To receive health benefits, students will pay a cost share that will be deducted from each stipend check at approximately 15% of benefit cost (depending on the selected benefits). Benefits become effective on the first day of the month following the student's start date.

If a new graduate student was an employee of Sanford Burnham Prebys immediately prior to becoming a GSBS graduate student, their benefits noted above, will continue "as is." Their Basic Life Insurance will convert to the graduate student level of coverage, and they will no longer be enrolled in Long Term Disability coverage. While the graduate student can no longer contribute to the Institute's retirement plan, they can still access and manage their retirement account.

Current benefit plan details are maintained by the Human Resources office. For questions, contact the Benefits team at benefits@sbpdiscovery.org. Sanford Burnham Prebys reserves the right to modify, amend, change, revoke, suspend, or terminate its benefit programs, in whole or in part, at any time and for any reason.

❖ Access the Benefits Guide for Graduate Students on the GSBS Intranet site.

- **Student Educational Fund:** The Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS) allocates up to \$500 annually for educational expenses for each student, according to the Student Educational Fund Policy. This fund is for allowable educational support purchases under the Internal Revenue Service Student Scholarship and Fellowship Grants law Topic # 421.

❖ Access the Student Educational Funds form on the GSBS Intranet Site.

- **Financial Aid:** Sanford Burnham Prebys does not offer financial aid, but does participate in Title IV loan deferment as an exempt institute for students to defer student loans from previous education. Contact GSBS for the U.S. Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education identification number (OPEID). Because students do not incur financial expenses, there is no refund policy.
- **Housing:** Students are responsible for arranging their own accommodations and are encouraged to discuss living arrangements with other GSBS students.

Orientation

New students will be notified of when to arrive on campus in August for onboarding with Human Resources. During onboarding, students will receive their Sanford Burnham Prebys ID badge/access card, GSBS Student ID card, and parking permit, set up their e-mail account, sign paperwork, and obtain important information to start at the Institute.

The F-1 Designated School Officials (DSOs) in International Services will meet with F-1

❖ Enrolled students may visit the GSBS Intranet site to view policies, procedures, forms, and other documents mentioned throughout the Handbook (<http://www.sbpdiscovery.org/GSBSintranet>).

Students to review their immigration documents, register their arrival in SEVIS, review steps for maintaining legal F-1 Student status in the U.S., and provide guidance on obtaining a Social Security Number and a California State ID card or Driver's License, if needed.

Following onboarding and F-1 Student check-in, students will participate in the GSBS New Student Orientation.

Visa/Immigration Information

Sanford Burnham Prebys International Services works with prospective and current GSBS students who need F-1 student sponsorship to study in the U.S. and for participation in *Optional Practical Training* after graduation.

Sanford Burnham Prebys International Services issues Form I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for F-1 Nonimmigrant Student Status, and provides incoming F-1 students with information on how to apply for an F-1 student visa at a U.S. Consulate/Embassy abroad so they can travel to the U.S. to study at GSBS. Continuing F-1 students who are sponsored through other U.S. institutions and are already in the U.S. will work with Sanford Burnham Prebys International Services and a DSO at their current F-1 sponsoring institution to arrange in advance for the transfer of the administration of their F-1 student record in SEVIS, as well as to discuss any plans to travel abroad before beginning at GSBS.

Sanford Burnham Prebys International Services provides information and support to F-1 students (and their F-2 dependent family members, if any) in order for them to maintain their F-1 nonimmigrant status in the U.S. so they can achieve their educational and personal goals.

Services include, but are not limited to, providing information and resources on the following.

- Initial entry to the U.S. in F-1 student status
- F-1 visa application and renewal, if needed
- Travel and reentry to the U.S.
- Maintaining nonimmigrant F-1 student status
 - Be sure to consult the Sanford Burnham Prebys International Services and the GSBS Office well in advance if you anticipate academic, medical, or other issues that may prevent you from maintaining full-time enrollment.
- Optional Practical Training (OPT) application to work in the U.S. within the F-1 field of study for up to 12 months following completion of the Ph.D. degree program and the STEM Extension of OPT application to continue working in an eligible STEM field for up to 24 additional months.



10901 North Torrey Pines Road La Jolla, CA 92037
Sanford Burnham Prebys: 858-646-3100
GSBS@SBP.edu sbpdiscovery.org/gradschool