

VCU SOP Pharm.D., Ph.D., Dual Degree Program
Approved by the Pharm.D.-Ph.D. Dual Degree Subcommittee*, July 8, 2022

Summary

The VCU School of Pharmacy (SOP) offers a Pharm.D., Ph.D. dual degree program for outstanding VCU Pharm.D. students to obtain both a Pharm.D. degree and a Ph.D. degree in Pharmaceutical Sciences. The dual degree program provides curricular efficiencies in both the Pharm.D. and Ph.D. programs, opportunities for summer research, and elective advanced pharmacy practice experiences (APPEs), which allow dual degree students to graduate with their Pharm.D. after four years and with efficiencies to complete the Ph.D. degree after approximately two to three additional years.

Overview and admissions process. Current VCU Pharm.D. students or VCU Pharm.D. applicants with documented research experience are eligible to apply. Admission will be granted based on the student's academic record and likely success in completing the challenging Pharm.D., Ph.D. curriculum and a rigorous, hypothesis-driven Ph.D. dissertation research project.

Students accepted in the Pharm.D., Ph.D. dual degree program will be reviewed semi-annually until their Pharm.D. graduation. Once students earn their Pharm.D., they will be reviewed by their respective home Ph.D. departments according to guidelines of the Pharmaceutical Sciences Graduate Program.

Application and Admission

Application Deadline: May 1st

The program is developed for VCU Pharm.D. students to matriculate into the Pharmaceutical Sciences Ph.D. program in Fall of their P-3 year, though applicants may be considered for matriculation in Fall of their P-4 year. If admitted, the change in the student's tuition rate from Pharm.D. student to in-state graduate student will be effective starting with the P-3 Fall semester. However, the student remains responsible for paying the in-state tuition during the P-3 (G-1) and P-4 (G-1) years.

Applications materials (submit at <https://pharmacy.vcu.edu/admissions/graduate/>)

- CV
- Personal statement/essay
- Three letters of recommendation that comment on research accomplishments, experience, and potential (Current VCU Pharm.D. students, please include at least one letter from a prospective graduate faculty sponsor letter in SOP or PHTX).

Evaluation criteria

- GPA: ≥ 3.0 (required)
- Personal statement/essay
- Interview by at least two (2) Pharm.D./Ph.D. Subcommittee members.
- Research experience (Summer Research Fellowship (SRF) or equivalent) is required.
- Letters of recommendation
- Research experience/interests compatible with the research of SOP graduate faculty

Oversight

The **Pharm.D., Ph.D. Subcommittee of the Dual Degrees Steering Committee** (Pharm.D., Ph.D. SC), under the guidance of the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies, directs and oversees the Pharm.D., Ph.D. program and is charged the following responsibilities:

- Review of Summer Research Fellowship (SRF) applications for SOP funding during the P-1 summer (as one way of meeting a prerequisite of current Pharm.D. students for admission into Pharm.D., Ph.D. program).
- Review of Pharm.D. student applications for admission into the Pharm.D., Ph.D. dual degree program and make scholarship and assistantship funding recommendations.
- Semi-annual review of Pharm.D., Ph.D. students for promotion from admission until graduation with their Pharm.D. degree.
- Overall program oversight including curricular planning, reviewing any proposed course waivers/substitutions, and long-term strategic planning.

Typical Program Outline

P-1 and P-2 years Application for a competitive Summer Research Fellowship (SRF).

**P-3 and P-4 years
(also called the
G-1 and G-2 years)** Full-time Pharm.D., Ph.D. dual degree students will take core or elective graduate courses as Pharm.D. electives (applied towards 6 credits of didactic Ph.D. credits) and two (2) elective APPEs (applied towards 10 credits of their Ph.D. research); Students will be charged the Virginia resident graduate tuition rate.

Graduation with Pharm.D. degree

After the award of the Pharm.D. degree, dual degree students will receive tuition, fees, and the VCU health insurance plan, as well as a stipend.

G-3 and G-4 years Students will be full time Ph.D. students employed as Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) funded by the SOP and Graduate School or as Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs) funded by the advisor. Students will be engaged in graduate course work and Ph.D. research. Students will also complete comprehensive exams during this time.

G-5 year or longer If additional time is needed to complete degree requirements, students may be employed full-time as GRAs (funded by student's advisor) or may choose to self-fund their final years.

Graduation with Ph.D. degree.

Promotion

During the P-3 (G-1) and P-4 (G-2) years, Pharm.D., Ph.D. dual degree students will be reviewed annually by the Pharm.D., Ph.D. SC, as well as after each semester by the SOP Academic Performance Committee. The Pharm.D., Ph.D. SC criteria for matriculation as well as promotion throughout the P3/G-1 and P-4/G-2 years include:

- **GPA:** ≥ 3.0
- **PI (Principal Investigator, i.e., Graduate Advisor) and Graduate Program Director of home department letters**, documenting satisfactory progress on Pharm.D., Ph.D. dual degree curriculum/research.

Beginning in the G-3 year, the Pharm.D., Ph.D., dual degree students will be subject only to regular, annual graduate student performance reviews by their respective home departments.

Curricular Plan

The graduate course requirements for individual students depend on the departmental requirements for each track, MEDC (Dept. of Medicinal Chemistry), PCEU (Dept. of Pharmaceutics), and PHAR (Dept. of Pharmacotherapy and Outcomes Science), Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology (PHTX).

Depending on the background and training of the student, additional Pharm.D. and/or graduate core courses **may** be waived or substituted upon request, supported by the graduate advisor (PI) and upon formal review and written approval by the Pharm.D., Ph.D. SC.

The following table lists the approved curriculum (by semester in the Pharm.D., Ph.D. program):

P-1:	Pharm.D. curriculum.
Summer:	SRF; Research presentation at SOP summer luncheon and SOP Research and Career Day are required.
P-2:	Pharm.D. curriculum.
Summer:	Pharm.D., Ph.D SRF; Research presentation at SOP summer luncheon and SOP Fall Research and Career Day are required.
P-3 (G-1):	Pharm.D. curriculum. Maximum of a 3 credit graduate core course per semester (e.g., PSCI 607), counting as Pharm.D. electives.

Matriculation into Ph.D. Program begins in the Fall semester of the P-3 year. The student will be dual enrolled in the Pharm.D. and Ph.D. programs. Tuition will be paid by the student at the Virginia resident Ph.D. graduate rate.

Need to obtain approval for P-4 APPE schedule/plan by OEE no later than Fall of the P-3 year.

Summer:	n/a (APPE)
P-4 (G-2):	Approved APPE schedule (Summer/Fall), Research APPEs in P-4 Spring, Graduate core courses in P-4 Spring (Credits for PHAR 765 (research elective APPE #1, 5 credits) and PHAR 766 (research elective APPE #2, 5 credits) count towards both degrees).

Graduation with Pharm.D. degree

Summer:	Pharm.D., Ph.D., SRF; Research presentation at SOP summer luncheon and SOP Fall Research and Career Day are required.
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G-3 through G-5 (or completion): Ph.D. curriculum and research.

Doctoral dissertation defense and graduation with Ph.D. degree

Special Ph.D. Research Timelines

Pharm.D., Ph.D. dual degree students are expected to work diligently on their dissertation research throughout their tenure in the program; however, their available time for research will depend on their Pharm.D. and graduate coursework, especially during their P-3 (G-1) through P-4 (G-2) years. Their P-2 and P-4 (G-2) summer research fellowships (SRF) as well as their P-4 (G-2) spring semester will be dedicated towards making significant progress towards their dissertation research proposal - in close consultation with their graduate advisor (principal investigator; PI).

Pharm.D., Ph.D. dual degree students are expected to select their graduate advisory committee by the end of the Fall semester in the G-3 year and should complete their comprehensive exams (and proceed to Ph.D. candidacy status) prior to their G-4 year. Pharm.D., Ph.D. dual degree students are highly encouraged to apply for an F30 individual training grant from NIH (or equivalent) and submit it prior to their G-3 year.

Academic Efficiencies

Pharm.D., Ph.D. dual degree students are allowed up to six didactic credits taken during the P-3 (G-1) and P-4 (G-2) years that count towards both degrees. Additionally, up to 10 APPE credit hours taken during the P-3 (G-1) and P-4 (G-2) years count towards directed research credits for the Ph.D. degree.

Financial Incentives

During the P-1 and P-2 years, students are self-funded and pay Virginia resident rate or non-resident Pharm.D. tuition rate depending on their status. During the P-3 (G-1) and P-4 (G-2) years, Pharm.D., Ph.D. dual degree students remain self-funded, but pay tuition at the Virginia resident graduate student rate (See VCU Bulletin for current Pharm.D. tuition vs Graduate School Tuition). Furthermore, designated summer research fellowships (SRF) after P-1 or P-2 years, as well as for P-4 (G-2) students will be provided. Following the award of the Pharm.D. degree, dual degree students will be guaranteed an assistantship that fully covers tuition, fees, and the VCU graduate student health insurance plan, as well as a stipend (currently \$31,000 annually) to cover living expenses.

Beginning in the G-3 year (following the award of the Pharm.D. degree), students will be supported, after competitive review as:

- 1) Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs); or
- 2) Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs) and funded by their PI

Any funding beyond the G-4 year for Pharm.D./Ph.D. Scholars or GTAs will be provided by the PI, unless university funds or training grants have been awarded.

Continued funding of the student (i.e., tuition discount, SRF support, tuition, fees and stipend) depends on satisfactory progress throughout the Pharm.D., Ph.D. dual degree program (see Promotion on page 3)!

*Students may work part-time as a pharmacist, pending written approval from the PI and Graduate Program Director of the Home Department, and Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies as outlined in the SOP Graduate Handbook.

Funding as GTA/PI funded GRA:

Scholars may be eligible to receive stipend and tuition and fees support from the SOP Pharmaceutical Sciences Graduate Program and/or graduate advisor (PI), as follows:

P-1 and P-2

1. Self-funding at Pharm.D. resident or non-resident tuition rate.
2. Competitive Funding for the Pharm.D., Ph.D. SRF summer of P-1 and P-2 years (**\$4,000/8 weeks**) will be available

P-3 (G-1) and P-4 (G-2)

1. Self-funding at Pharm.D. Virginia resident graduate tuition rate.
2. Post-P-4 (G-2) summer (following award of the Pharm.D.), students will be covered for tuition and fees and will begin receiving the graduate student stipend.

G-3* and G-4*

Funding as either a GTA through the Pharmaceutical Sciences Graduate Program or a GRA through the PI. GTAs provide departmental teaching services, while GRAs provide research services as part of sponsored research. GTAs and GRAs receive funding for tuition, fees, and stipends.

G-5* (or longer if necessary)

PI covers funding as GRA for tuition, fees, and stipends.

Continued funding of the student (i.e., scholarship, SF support, tuition, fees and stipend depends on satisfactory progress throughout the Pharm.D., Ph.D. program (see Promotion on page 3).

*** Students considering part-time work as a pharmacist or other position are strongly advised to seek guidance from the PI, Program Director of the Home Department, and Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies.**

Abbreviations

Department of Medicinal Chemistry (MEDC)

Department of Pharmaceutics (PCEU)

Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology (PHTX)

Department of Pharmacotherapy and Outcomes Science (PHAR)

Graduate Research Assistant (GRA): funded by PI/Ph.D. advisor during G-5 year and beyond

Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA): funded by SOP & Graduate School during G-3 and G-4 years

Pharm.D., Ph.D. subcommittee (Pharm.D., Ph.D. SC)

Principal Investigator (PI): mentor and Ph.D. advisor

Summer research fellowships (SRF) occur following P-2 and P-4 years for Pharm.D., Ph.D. students, funded by SOP or PI

Contact information

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