

## VCU SOP Pharm.D., Ph.D., Dual Degree Program

Approved by the Pharm.D.-Ph.D. Dual Degree Subcommittee\*, December 12, 2019

### Summary

The VCU School of Pharmacy (SOP) offers a Pharm.D., Ph.D. dual degree program for outstanding 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.** Interested Pharm.D. students with documented research experience (e.g., Summer Research Fellowships (SRF), see below) are eligible to apply during their P-2 year and applications from P-3 students will be considered as well. Applications will be due by January 15<sup>th</sup>. 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

**Applications are due January 15<sup>th</sup> of each year.** The program is developed for students to apply during their P-2 year, but applications from P-3 students may be considered. Final review of the applications typically occurs January of each year, followed by final admission and funding decisions during the spring semester (see below). If admitted, the change in the student's tuition rate from Pharm.D. to graduate will be effective starting with the P-3 Fall semester. However, the student remains responsible for paying tuition during the P-3 (G-1) and P-4 (G-4) years.

**Applications materials (submit via email to Ms. Sha-kim Craft; [sjackson29@vcu.edu](mailto:sjackson29@vcu.edu))**

- CV
- Personal statement/essay
- Three letters of recommendation that comment on research accomplishments, experience, and potential (include at least one letter from a prospective graduate faculty sponsor letter in SOP or PHTX) to be submitted directly to Ms. Craft.

### **Application evaluation criteria**

- Pharm.D. GPA:  $\geq 3.0$  (required)
- Personal statement/essay
- Personal interview by two (2) Pharm.D./Ph.D. Subcommittee members.
- Research experience (SRF or equivalent) is required.
- Letters of recommendation (including at least one letter from a prospective graduate faculty sponsor letter in SOP or PHTX)

Students admitted into the Pharm.D., Ph.D. dual degree program will receive acceptance letters in the spring semester of the P-2 year (or P-3 year in special cases).

## 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 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).  
*Application to Pharm.D., Ph.D. dual degree program (deadline: January 15 of the P-2 year; applications from P-3 students will be considered)*

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**P-3 and P-4 years (also called the G-1 and G-2 years)**      Student will be a full-time Pharm.D., Ph.D. dual degree student who 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 and fees, as well as a stipend.

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**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 student's advisor. Students will be engaged in graduate course work and Ph.D. research. Students will also complete comprehensive exams during this time.

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**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 promotion throughout the P3/G-1 and P-4/G-2 years include:

- **GPA:**  $\geq 3.0$
- **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), PENG (Pharmaceutical Engineering), 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.

***(Application deadline to Pharm.D., Ph.D. Dual Degree Program: January 15<sup>th</sup> of P-2 year; applications from P-3 students will be considered)***

- 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.

**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 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 covers tuition and fees, and they will be provided a stipend 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)!

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

### **Abbreviations**

Department of Medicinal Chemistry (MEDC);

Department of Pharmaceutics (PCEU);

Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology (PHTX);

Department of Pharmacotherapy and Outcomes Science (PHAR);

Pharmaceutical Engineering PhD Program (PENG)

Graduate Research Assistant (GRA): funded by PI/Ph.D. advisor during graduate years;

Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA): funded by the SOP and Graduate School during G-3 and G-4 years, and by the PI/Ph.D. advisor during subsequent 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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