ANATOMY AND NEUROBIOLOGY, MASTER OF SCIENCE (M.S.)

Program mission
The M.S. in Anatomy and Neurobiology program offers a two-year graduate curriculum of formal instructional activities and research training mentored by the members of the faculty leading to the terminal M.S. degree. The program prepares students for technical careers in neurobiological research laboratories in academic, private and government institutions. The program also provides a strong foundation for students who choose to continue onto doctoral training.

This is a research-oriented degree program comprised of graduate course work and supervised research leading to a master’s thesis. The M.S. program involves approximately one year of course work and a research thesis performed under the supervision of a faculty adviser.

Program goals
1. The program is designed to provide students with the skills required to advance to positions as bioscience researchers, trainers and technicians in a broad spectrum of positions. The structure of the program provides a framework for the progressive development of a mastery of the current state of the subject matter of bioscience, an ability to synthesize this information and apply this foundation to the identification of key areas of investigation/experimentation in bioscience.
2. The program relates the above framework to the development of the ability to design, implement and interpret experimental approaches which address the questions identified.
3. In addition, the program will develop skills in the various means of communicating both the core of bioscience knowledge and the expression of experimental design, results and interpretation to a variety of potential audiences. The program will prepare students to secure positions in their chosen career goals (medical school, doctoral studies, employment in academic or private laboratories).

Student learning outcomes
1. Experimental design: Degree candidates will demonstrate the achievement of an appropriate level of competence in the ability to appraise, modify and/or create, and implement experimental protocols and to design and develop experiments.
2. Communication skills: Degree candidates will demonstrate the achievement of an appropriate level of oral communication skills with respect to the content, organization, logical flow, presentation and appropriate use of language incorporating the use of visual aids. The candidate will also demonstrate the achievement of an appropriate level of written communication skills with respect to grammar, syntax, spelling and use of vocabulary to effectively present information including the use of figures, tables and citations.
3. Problem-solving skills: Degree candidates will demonstrate an appropriate level of skill in the identification and selection of meaningful problems to be addressed in bioscience research, including the ability to defend said identifications and to design and develop appropriate methods to solve said problems.
4. General knowledge of neurobiology and biosciences: Degree candidates will demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge of the current elements of neurobiology and the biosciences as related to disciplinary specialization and a more detailed understanding of the individual area of scholarship, including an appropriate familiarity with the research literature and the ability to evaluate and critique publications.
5. Employment or acceptance to advanced degree program: Degree candidates will secure positions in their chosen career goals (medical school, doctoral studies, employment in academic or private laboratories).

VCU Graduate Bulletin, VCU Graduate School and general academic policies and regulations for all graduate students in all graduate programs
The VCU Graduate Bulletin website documents the official admission and academic rules and regulations that govern graduate education for all graduate programs at the university. These policies are established by the graduate faculty of the university through their elected representatives to the University Graduate Council.

It is the responsibility of all graduate students, both on- and off-campus, to be familiar with the VCU Graduate Bulletin as well as the Graduate School website (http://www.gradschool.vcu.edu/) and academic regulations in individual school and department publications and on program websites. However, in all cases, the official policies and procedures of the University Graduate Council, as published on the VCU Graduate Bulletin and Graduate School websites, take precedence over individual program policies and guidelines.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on academic regulations for graduate students. (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-reg/) and academic policies and regulations in all graduate programs

Degree candidacy requirements
A graduate student admitted to a program or concentration requiring a final research project, work of art, thesis or dissertation, must qualify for continuing master’s or doctoral status according to the degree candidacy requirements of the student’s graduate program. Admission to degree candidacy, if applicable, is a formal statement by the graduate student’s faculty regarding the student’s academic achievements and the student’s readiness to proceed to the final research phase of the degree program.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following degree candidacy policy as published in the VCU Graduate Bulletin for complete information and instructions.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on degree candidacy requirements. (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-reg/grad/candidacy/)

Graduation requirements
As graduate students approach the end of their academic programs and the final semester of matriculation, they must make formal application to graduate. No degrees will be conferred until the application to graduate has been finalized.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following graduation requirements as published in the Graduate Bulletin for a complete list of instructions and a graduation checklist.
**Admission requirements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Semester(s) of entry</th>
<th>Deadline dates</th>
<th>Test requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M.S.</td>
<td>Fall preferred</td>
<td>Applications received prior to Jan 15 given priority consideration</td>
<td>GRE, MCAT or DAT TOEFL if international</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Special requirements**

- Domestic students apply through the Graduate Admissions office (http://graduate.admissions.vcu.edu/); international students apply through International Admissions (http://international.admissions.vcu.edu/).

In addition to the general admission requirements of the VCU Graduate School (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/study/admission-graduate-study/admission-requirements/), successful applicants will typically have the following credentials:

1. Baccalaureate degree or its equivalent at the time of enrollment with a minimum overall GPA of 3.2
2. Combined GRE scores of at least 300 for the verbal plus quantitative (1200 based on the previous scale) and 4.0 analytical score
3. Test of English as a Foreign Language examination with a minimum score of 100 (IBT), 250 (CBT) or 600 (PBT), or 6.5 on the IELTS for foreign applicants who do not use English as their native language

Although there are no absolute course requirements for admission, fundamental knowledge of general and organic chemistry and biology are considered necessary to pursue advanced studies, and upper-level courses in molecular and cellular biology are desirable. Previous research experience or demonstration of a serious interest in a research-oriented career is also desirable. A personal statement describing the applicant's research experience and interests, as well as letters of reference from previous supervisors, are necessary and helpful in determining an applicant's suitability for this curriculum. Official transcripts of all graduate and undergraduate records must be mailed from the college or university registrar.

**Degree requirements**

In addition to general VCU Graduate School graduation requirements (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-reggs/grad/graduation-info/), students must complete a minimum of 66 graduate credit hours. A minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 must be maintained. Students must receive a minimum grade of B for all required courses.

A student who receives a grade of C in a required course shall repeat the course. A second grade of C in a required course shall result in dismissal from the program.

There is no expectation of the time required to complete the master's degree; usually two years of study are necessary to complete the requirements. At the appropriate time in their research, students will prepare a thesis and schedule a final oral defense of the thesis. The final oral examination (defense of the thesis) will cover the subject of the candidate's dissertation and related basic science course work.

**Curriculum requirements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANAT 610</td>
<td>Systems Neuroscience</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANAT 690</td>
<td>Anatomy and Neurobiology Seminar (minimum four semesters)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOC 503</td>
<td>Biochemistry, Cell and Molecular Biology</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOC 504</td>
<td>Biochemistry, Cell and Molecular Biology</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBMS 600</td>
<td>Laboratory Safety</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEUS 609</td>
<td>Cellular and Molecular Neuroscience</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVPR 601</td>
<td>Scientific Integrity</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVPR 602</td>
<td>Responsible Scientific Conduct</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>OVPR 603</td>
<td>Responsible Conduct of Research</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Directed research**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANAT 697</td>
<td>Directed Research (1-15 variable credit course; 42 credits minimum)</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
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**Typical plan of study**

Many students often end up taking more than the minimum number of hours required for a degree program. The total number of hours may vary depending upon the program, nature of research being conducted by a study or in the enrollment or funding status of the student. Students should refer to their program websites and talk with their graduate program directors or advisers for information about typical plans of study and registration requirements.

**Graduate program director**

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Program website: anatomy.vcu.edu (http://www.anatomy.vcu.edu/)