HUMAN GENETICS, MASTER OF SCIENCE (M.S.) WITH A CONCENTRATION IN MOLECULAR BIOLOGY AND GENETICS

Program goals
The molecular biology and genetics curriculum is an integrated interdisciplinary program of study that builds on the graduate programs of participating departments in the School of Medicine. The master’s curriculum is designed to be an intensive course of study that will provide students with the skills required to advance to research-oriented careers in biotechnology or provide the foundation for further graduate study toward a Ph.D.

It is expected that the program should be completed in approximately two to two-and-one-half years.

1. The curriculum includes core, specialization and elective courses. Electives drawn from various departments allow individual specialization.

2. 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 and experimentation. The program relates this 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.

4. The final three semesters include a research project conducted under the guidance of a selected faculty mentor and culminates in the presentation and defense of a master’s thesis.

Participating faculty are associated not only with programs and departments within the School of Medicine, but also with the VCU Massey Cancer Center, the Philips Institute for Oral and Craniofacial Molecular Biology (School of Dentistry), the Institute of Structural Biology and Drug Discovery (School of Pharmacy) and the VCU Center for the Study of Biological Complexity (VCU Life Sciences).

The interdisciplinary approach to the solution of biological problems provided by this training is designed to develop in students the flexibility and problem-solving skills necessary for success in a variety of scientific career opportunities or further graduate study.

Student learning outcomes
1. 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 as measured by rubric.

2. General knowledge of sciences: Degree candidates will demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge of the current elements of 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, as measured by rubric.

3. Communication skills: Degree candidates will demonstrate that an appropriate level of oral, written and visual communication skills have been acquired.

   a. Oral 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, as measured by rubric.

   b. Written communication skills: Degree candidates will demonstrate the achievement of an appropriate level of written communication skill with respect to grammar, syntax, spelling and use of vocabulary to effectively present information including the use of figures, tables and citations as measured by rubric.

4. 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 as measured by rubric.

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://wwwgraduate.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-regs)

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.

A master’s student in the MBG curriculum must prepare a formal written research plan and make an oral presentation of their thesis research proposal and progress report to their graduate advisory committee prior to the beginning of the second year of residency. The student’s
knowledge in the area of the proposed research, current research accomplishments and the feasibility of the proposed research project will be evaluated by the GAC. Successful completion of this review is required for continuance in the program and constitutes admission to candidacy.

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-regs/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.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on graduation requirements. (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/graduation-info)

Other information

School of Medicine graduate program policies

The School of Medicine provides policies applicable to all programs administratively housed in the school. Information on master’s programs is available elsewhere in this chapter of the Graduate Bulletin.

Apply online at graduate.admissions.vcu.edu (http://www.gra...).
OVPR 601  Scientific Integrity
OVPR 602  Responsible Scientific Conduct
OVPR 603  Responsible Conduct of Research

Total Hours  19

1 This requirement may also be satisfied with BIOC 503 (five credit hours).

2 This requirement may also be satisfied, under certain circumstances, with MICR 608 or MICR 609 (three credit hours; section 002). Consult with the program director.

Other required course work (29 credits)

HGEN 501  Introduction to Human Genetics  3

Select a minimum of one credit hour of directed research every semester of enrollment in the program after the first year of study from:

HGEN 697  Directed Research in Genetics
or MICR 697  Directed Research in Microbiology

Select a minimum of one credit hour of research seminar course work every fall and spring semester of enrollment in the program from:

MICR 690  Microbiology Research Seminar
(section 002, MBG)

Students may take additional course work with the approval of their graduate program directors.

Total graduate credit hours required (minimum) 48

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
Gail E. Christie, Ph.D.
Professor, Department of Microbiology and Immunology
christie@vcu.edu
(804) 828-9093

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