HUMAN GENETICS, DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PH.D.) WITH A CONCENTRATION IN QUANTITATIVE HUMAN GENETICS

Program goal

The program is designed to provide students with the skills required to advance to positions as researchers and trainers in a broad spectrum of positions in human and molecular genetics. The structure of the program provides a framework for the progressive development of a mastery of the current state of the subject matter in human and molecular genetics and an ability to synthesize this information and apply this foundation to the identification of key areas of investigation and experimentation in this discipline. The program relates the above framework to the development of the ability to design, implement and interpret experimental approaches which address the questions identified. In addition, the program will develop skills in the various means of communicating both the core of human and molecular genetics knowledge and the expression of experimental design, results and interpretation to a variety of potential audiences.

Student learning outcomes

1. Oral communication skills: The candidate 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.
2. Written communication skills: The candidate 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.
3. Experimental design: The candidate 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.
4. Problem-solving skills: The candidate will demonstrate an appropriate level of skill in the identification and selection of meaningful problems to be addressed in research in human and molecular genetics, including the ability to defend said identifications and to design and develop appropriate methods to solve said problems as measured by rubric.
5. Integrated knowledge of human and molecular genetics: The candidate will demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge of the current elements of human and molecular genetics 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.

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-reg/s/)

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/s/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-reg/s/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 doctoral programs is available elsewhere in this chapter of the Graduate Bulletin.
The Department of Human and Molecular Genetics offers a comprehensive program in graduate study leading to a Doctor of Philosophy in Human Genetics. The program includes the completion of an original research project under the supervision of a faculty adviser and a background/foundation of courses that prepare students for research-oriented careers in the rapidly expanding field of human genetics. Major areas of study available to Ph.D. students in the program include clinical and molecular cytogenetics, molecular genetics, developmental genetics, cancer genetics, behavior genetics, population and quantitative genetics, genetic epidemiology, clinical genetics and genetic counseling. Once core course work requirements have been completed, the student's course plan is tailored to meet individual needs with regard to the area of research focus. For more detailed information on the program visit the program website (https://gen.vcu.edu/graduate-and-training-programs/phd-in-human-genetics/).

Degree requirements
In addition to the general VCU Graduate School graduation requirements (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/graduation-info/), students must complete a minimum of 86 graduate credit hours. The program requires at least three years of study for students entering with a B.S. or B.A. degree and must be completed within eight years.

The training programs in human and molecular genetics are intended to set the tone for a career and lifelong learning in human and molecular genetics by developing the student's knowledge of the field and skills in writing, laboratory techniques, critical thinking, data interpretation, study design, literature research and review, and integration of data from multiple disciplines while fostering the student's development as an independent researcher, laboratory director or teacher. These programs also seek to provide students with a core foundation of knowledge that will equip them to carry out translational research and for later work leading to certification by the American Board of Medical Genetics.

Students working toward the Ph.D. degree in human genetics pass through two stages of graduate study. The first stage consists primarily of course work recommended by the department and the student's graduate committee; the second stage consists of original research leading to the doctoral dissertation. Ph.D. students are expected to complete the required course work within four semesters and one summer, and they are intended to set the tone of a lifelong research career. In order to be considered in good academic standing, a student must maintain a 3.0 grade point average. The focus then shifts to the student's development as an independent researcher with emphasis being placed upon the development and execution of an original research project leading to the doctoral dissertation.

After the second year of study, students will take the Ph.D. candidacy examination. This exam comprises two parts, a departmental comprehensive examination and a written NIH-style application with an oral examination administered by the student's graduate committee. Upon successfully completing the departmental comprehensive and the oral exam, the student is admitted to Ph.D. candidacy. At this point, students are expected to develop and conduct dissertation research projects and to write and defend their dissertations describing their dissertation research.

Curriculum requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program core</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course</td>
<td>ANAT 620</td>
<td>Scientific Writing and Grantsmanship</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>HGEN 501</td>
<td>Introduction to Human Genetics</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>CCTR 702</td>
<td>Statistics for Genetic Studies I</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCTR 703</td>
<td>Statistics for Genetic Studies II</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>HGEN 502</td>
<td>Advanced Human Genetics</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HGEN 510</td>
<td>Classic Papers in Human Genetics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HGEN 603</td>
<td>Mathematical and Statistical Genetics</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HGEN 606</td>
<td>Introduction to Clinical Genetics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<td>HGEN 610</td>
<td>Current Literature in Human Molecular Genetics</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HGEN 611</td>
<td>Data Science I</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HGEN 619</td>
<td>Quantitative Genetics</td>
<td>3</td>
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HGEN 690  Genetics Research Seminar  
IBMS 600  Laboratory Safety  
IBMS 620  Laboratory/Clinical Rotations (two-credit course taken for three rotations)  
OVPR 601  Scientific Integrity  
or OVPR 602  Responsible Scientific Conduct  
or OVPR 603  Responsible Conduct of Research  

Total Hours 48

Elective courses
Course  Title  Hours
Select one elective course from the following:  3

PATH 670, courses at a 500-level or above in ANAT, BIOC, 
BIOL, BIOS, BINFO, HGEN, LFSC, MICR, NEUS, PHTX and 
PHIS excluding laboratory courses, courses specifically for 
professional programs (e.g. HGEN 600 Clinical Genetics), 
directed research, independent study, seminar, current topic 
courses, MICR 608 and MICR 609

Total Hours 3

Directed research
Course  Title  Hours
HGEN 697  Directed Research in Genetics (1-15 
variable credits)  35

1

HGEN 610 should be taken every fall and spring semester beginning the 
spring term of the first year.

2

HGEN 690 should be taken every fall and spring semester.

3

HGEN 697 should be taken every semester following the first year of 
study.

The minimum total of graduate credit hours required for this degree is 86.

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. The 
program requires at least three years of study for students entering with 
a B.S. or B.A. degree and must be completed within eight years. Students 
complete this degree program on average within five years. Students 
should refer to their program websites (https://gen.vcu.edu/graduate- 
and-training-programs/phd-in-human-genetics/curriculum/) 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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