



## Requirements for Graduation with the PhD Degree

TPCB students are subject to PhD degree requirements set forth by the Weill Cornell Graduate School (WCGS), for students in Weill Cornell Medicine (WCM) and Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK) labs, and the David Rockefeller Graduate School, for students in Rockefeller University (RU) labs. Inherent to the nature of scientific research, each student will have different specific accomplishments that qualify them for graduation. **The individual requirements for graduation are established by each student's Thesis Committee**, known as the Special Committee for students in WCGS labs, and as the Faculty Advisory Committee for students in RU labs. Students are encouraged to discuss degree expectations with faculty early in their studies and as part of the thesis lab selection process. They should then have frequent discussions with their full Thesis Committee to establish specific milestones toward graduation. It is the responsibility of the Thesis Committee to ensure that appropriate standards are applied. Students should contact their committee Chair with any concerns at any time during training.

General requirements include:

- Successful completion of required coursework and satisfactory attendance at required academic events in the TPCB curriculum.
- Successful completion of Admission to Candidacy Exam (ACE) (for students in WCM and MSK labs) or Thesis Research Proposal (TRP) (for students in RU labs) by the end of Year 2 of study, unless an extension has been granted by TPCB and the relevant graduate school.
- Completion of required Thesis Committee meetings to document student progress. Meetings must be completed annually by June 30 of each year and, beginning in Year 5 of study, semiannually by June 30 and December 31 of each year, unless an extension has been granted by TPCB and the relevant graduate school.
- Contribution of a significant body of scientific work. This will differ for each individual student and **specific expectations are established by each student's Thesis Committee**. During each committee meeting, the Thesis Committee Chair should document these expectations in writing in the Thesis Committee Meeting Evaluation form (for students in WCM and MSK labs) or Faculty Advisory Committee Report form (for students in RU labs). Milestones referring to specific, discrete achievements should be established by the Thesis Committee.
- Demonstration of ability to operate as an independent scientist. This is assessed by the student's Thesis Committee throughout training and at the Thesis Defense.
- Demonstration of ability to communicate scientific findings effectively to the scientific community. This is assessed by the student's Thesis Committee throughout training and at the Thesis Defense. Although there is no formal publication requirement, it is expected that all students will publish their work in one or more peer-reviewed journal articles, although this may occur during training or after completion of the thesis defense.

*TPCB Requirements for Graduation*

- Completion of program of study in not longer than 7 years, unless an extension has been granted by TPCB and the relevant graduate school. The minimum time-in-program required by the New York State Education Department is 3 years. Historically, most TPCB students graduate in 4.5 to 6.5 years.
- Approval from the student's Thesis Committee to write and defend the thesis.
- Submission of a written thesis according to the guidelines of the relevant graduate school.
- Approval of the written thesis by the student's Thesis Committee, including any revisions requested by the committee before or after the thesis defense.
- Presentation of the thesis in a public lecture.
- Satisfactory performance on an oral examination by the student's Thesis Committee.

For reference, the WCGS Code of Legislation states:

*Section I-2:* "The PhD degree is designed for those students who demonstrate the potential to perform original research under guidance, in preparation for careers in independent research and teaching. The student is expected to give evidence of mature purpose by originating and pursuing a program of study and research in consultation with appropriate members of the Faculty. The award of the degree is contingent upon the completion of a dissertation constituting an original contribution to knowledge."

*Section II-7:* "The WCGSMS office and the Programs of Study issue written instructions for fulfilling the requirements for the degree. It is the candidate's responsibility to become familiar with the applicable requirements of both the Graduate School and the Program, and to fulfill these satisfactorily. In this process, the candidate's Special Committee (Section X) or equivalent MS Program committees are expected to provide guidance and advice."

For reference, the Rockefeller Program Requirements state:

"The degree of Doctor of Philosophy is awarded on the basis of satisfactory completion of academic requirements, the submission of an acceptable written thesis comprising a body of novel scientific experimental or theoretical research, the presentation of the thesis in an open lecture, and satisfactory performance in an oral examination given by the student's thesis committee."