

# PH.D. IN TRANSLATIONAL SCIENCE

In line with a field of science that emphasizes multi-disciplinary, collaborative research, the doctoral program in Translational Science is offered as a multi-institutional joint-degree program. The four University of Texas System universities partnering in this effort are:

Joint Degree Institutions:

- The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio
- The University of Texas at San Antonio
- The University of Texas at Austin

Collaborating Institution:

- The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston School of Public Health

This collaboration of four universities to offer a single joint doctoral degree is unique in the UT System. The program is designed to use the existing resources and expertise in specific key areas of each university to offer a strong, diverse, and competitive doctoral program. The TS Ph.D. will prepare the next generation of scientists to lead the multi-disciplinary biomedical research teams of the future in increasingly complex research environments. These scientists will advance knowledge toward the goal of translating scientific discoveries into strategies that will improve healthcare delivery, patient outcomes, and community health.

## Translational Science Admission Requirements

### Application Due Date

The TS Ph.D. program accepts applications once a year for fall enrollment. Application deadlines (<https://www.uthscsa.edu/academics/biomedical-sciences/programs/translational-science-phd/admissions/>) can be found on the program's admission page.

### Advanced Degree

The TS Ph.D. program is an advanced scientific research doctoral program. Eligible applicants must have achieved at least one of the following advanced degrees: a) an advanced **professional degree** (e.g., M.D., D.O., D.D.S., M.S.N., Pharm.D.); b) a **master's or doctoral degree** in a health-related, science, public health or social science discipline; c) enrollment in a clinical professional doctoral, academic doctoral or master's degree program with intent to graduate prior to the semester for which application is being made; or d) enrollment as a M.D./Ph.D. student with successful completion of the two-year preclinical curriculum. Eligible enrollment and/or advanced degree(s) must be from an accredited college or university in the United States or proof of U.S. equivalent training/degree at a foreign institution.

### University Faculty and Staff as Students

Residents or fellows in an approved residency or fellowship program may apply to the TS Ph.D. program as full-time or part-time students, as determined by the residency or fellowship program. Any faculty member (tenured or non-tenured) may pursue an advanced degree in an institution of The University of Texas System other than the university that employs the faculty member. Non-tenured university faculty may pursue an advanced degree at their university of employment with the

written recommendation of his/her department chair and approval of the appropriate dean and the president. Faculty interested in applying to the TS Ph.D. program are advised to review the guidelines provided in their employment institution's *Handbook of Operating Policies (HOP)* and speak with their departmental chair prior to application. Approved faculty and staff are encouraged to work with their college dean, department chair, and/or supervisor to determine availability and approval of release time for the completion of the educational and research activities required by the TS Ph.D. program. Any approved release time should be in accordance with university policies.

## How to Apply

The Translational Science Ph.D. program utilizes a single online application through the UT Health at San Antonio. Required documentation for all applicants includes:

- Online application
- All college/university transcripts
- Letters of recommendation (at least 3)
- Personal statement
- Curriculum vitae
- Medical license/certificate (if a licensed health care professional)

In addition, Foreign Nationals are required to submit:

- TOEFL/IELTS/Duolingo scores

## Documentation of Academic Record - Transcripts

For the purpose of evaluating the application, unofficial transcripts are acceptable for inclusion with the application. **If selected for admission, official transcripts will be required from all colleges and universities attended** and should be sent to the Office of the Registrar at The UT Health SA or the student's home institution. Transcripts from foreign colleges/universities must be officially translated into English, if needed, and must also be evaluated, including GPA and U.S. equivalent degree, by any members of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES - <http://www.naces.org/>).

## Demonstration of Ability to Participate in an Advanced Academic Program - Graduate Record Examination

Official documentation of the **Graduate Record Examination (GRE)**, or an equivalent, is not required. However, should an applicant submit the GRE score, it will be considered along with the other admission criteria, but will not be used as the sole criterion when making admission decisions. Scores for GRE tests taken more than five years prior to the date of application are not valid and should not be part of the application.

## Demonstration of Proficiency in English – Foreign Nationals Only

Official documentation of a satisfactory score on either the **Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)**, the **International English Language Testing System (IELTS)** or **Duolingo** is required for applicants from a country where English is not the native language. A minimum TOEFL score 84 (Internet-based Test), a band score of 7.0 on the academic version of the IELTS or a minimum Duolingo 115 score is required. Scores on tests taken more than two years prior to the date of application are not acceptable. **International applicants may be exempt from the TOEFL, IELTS or Duolingo requirement if at least one of the following requirements is met:**

- The applicant is an Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) certified physician.
- The applicant's post-secondary education was conducted in a country where English is the native language. Such exemption from the TOEFL, IELTS or Duolingo must meet university admissions criteria, which may be found in the UT Health San Antonio University Catalog, University Admissions Policy, at <http://catalog.uthscsa.edu/generalinformation/universityadmissionspolicy/>.

Consideration for the proficiency in English exemption outside of these guidelines will be made on a case-by-case basis. Consistent with Texas Education Code, Chapter 51, Section 51.842(b), an applicant's standardized test scores, when used to make admission or scholarship decisions, will not be used as the sole criterion for applicant consideration and will be compared with scores of other applicants from similar socioeconomic backgrounds, to the extent such information is available.

## Personal Statement

Applicants must submit a personal statement (1-3 pages) that describes the applicant's past training and experiences, future career goals and objectives, scientific research interest, and how the TS Ph.D. program will prepare them to achieve the stated research interest and career goals. The personal statement should include but is not limited to:

- A statement of the applicant's background and purpose for applying to the TS Ph.D. program
- Applicant's interest in and commitment to a translational science career
- Applicant's potential to develop into a successful scientist, as evidenced by research training/experience, prior publications, etc.
- Research interest and its applicability to the TS Ph.D. program
- Identification of a potential supervising professor
- Career goals and how the TS Ph.D. program will contribute to their attainment

## Letters of Recommendation

Applicants must provide a recommendation form and a letter of recommendation from at least three (3) faculty or other individuals who are familiar with and can provide information about the applicant's academic, research, and/or professional abilities and performance. Personal references are not recommended. In addition, letters of recommendation should provide an assessment of the applicant's potential to succeed in a doctoral program and develop into an independent research investigator. These letters should be submitted/uploaded by the recommenders with the recommendation form in the online application.

## Translational Science Degree Requirements

A minimum of 72 hours of graduate coursework is required for the translational science doctoral degree. Students must maintain a cumulative, university-specific, and combined TS PhD program 3.0 ("B") grade point average (GPA) for all courses for which letter grades are given for program continuation and completion.

The plans of study and specific courses taken by students will vary, depending on student background/discipline, research interest, and program goals. Courses may be selected from offerings at the four participating UT institutions.

All translational science doctoral students are required to take a minimum of:

1. **24 hours of Core Curriculum:** Core courses will provide essential knowledge, skills and training in the competencies necessary to conduct translational science research.
2. **18 hours of Electives:**
  - a. **2 hours of Directed Electives:** A Directed Elective, Topics in Translational Science, is required for two of the total elective hours and may be used to fulfill the prescribed elective requirement. Students must register for Topics in TS in two semesters to meet the Directed Elective requirement, and they may register up to three additional times for elective credit.
  - b. **16 hours of Prescribed Electives:** Prescribed electives will provide additional depth and breadth specific to the unique educational needs of each student to successfully conduct their dissertation research and progress in their career development. If more than one course meets the requirements, as with the core courses, students will select the course that most effectively meets their educational needs.
3. **30 hours of research/dissertation:** The TS Ph.D. is a research intensive program of study. For this reason, students are encouraged to initiate their research and begin taking supervised research credit hours in the first semester of enrollment, with guidance from an advisor, supervising professor, or the TS Ph.D. Program Director. Enrollment in dissertation hours will begin after the student has met all requirements and approvals to enter candidacy. A minimum of 30 hours of combined research and dissertation hours are required for completion of the TS Ph.D. degree, along with other requirements.

## Translational Science Plan of Study Academic Year

The TS Ph.D. program is a joint-degree program, and the semester structure of the health science center is different from the academic institutions. The UT Health San Antonio Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences operates under a "super semester" system, with two six-month semesters. There is no summer semester at the health science center; however, students may/will enroll in summer courses at one of the other three participating academic institutions. As a result, the summer semester is included in the academic year for the TS Ph.D. program and in the example plan of study. Students should refer to the graduate catalog of their home institution to determine credit hour requirements for full- and part-time students. At the health science center, full-time graduate students are required to complete a minimum of 24 semester credit hours each academic year; part-time students are required to complete a minimum of 12 semester credit hours per academic year.

## Curriculum Sequence

Students may attend the TS Ph.D. program as full- or part-time students. There is no prescribed sequence of courses for the TS Ph.D. program, and courses may be taken at any of the four universities participating in the joint TS Ph.D. program. Some courses are offered only one time per year, and some courses require prerequisites, so students and their academic/graduate advisors or supervising professors are encouraged to develop an individualized degree plan to maintain an established schedule to graduation. Although a full-time student can complete the TS Ph.D. program in three years, many students will require more time (4-5 years) to accommodate the real world challenges of conducting translational research. Because the program design provides for numerous course

choices based on research and career goals, only the TS educational domains are identified in this full-time student example.

### First Year

#### Fall

Translational Science (Core)  
Responsible Conduct (Core)  
Research Design-Methods 1 (Core)  
Research Design-Biostatistics 1 (Core)  
Scientific Communication (Core)

#### Spring

Research Design-Methods 2 (Core)  
Research Design-Biostatistics 2 (Core)  
Leadership & Team Science (Core)  
Track Elective

#### Summer

Track and/or Free Electives

### Second Year

#### Fall

Business of Translational Science (Core)  
Evidence-Based Policy & Implementation (Core)  
Track and/or Free Electives

Track and/or Free Electives

#### Spring

Cultural Proficiency (Core)  
Track and/or Free Electives

#### Credit Hours

1

2

2

2

2

2

2

3

2

6

3

2

4

3

3

Research

#### Summer

Track and/or Free Electives

Research

### Third Year

#### Fall

Research/ Dissertation

#### Spring

Research/ Dissertation

#### Summer

Research/ Dissertation

**Total Credit Hours:**

**72.0**

## Translational Science Objectives/Program Outcomes

The goal of the Translational Science Ph.D. Program is to provide an in-depth, rigorous, and individualized multi-disciplinary and multi-institutional research education and training program in translational science that will prepare research scientists to integrate information from multiple domains and conduct independent and team-oriented research to improve human and global health. Eight educational domains form the foundation for the TS Ph.D. educational objectives:

- **Translational Science:** Students will articulate what constitutes translational science, a discipline which translates scientific discoveries into real world applications to improve human health.
- **Responsible Conduct:** Students will be knowledgeable about and be able to apply research ethics and work effectively with regulatory groups within their organization(s).
- **Research Design and Analysis:** Students will formulate research questions and appropriately design experiments and studies to test hypotheses. They will develop specific analytic strategies based on the study design and assure that their studies are adequately powered to test the hypotheses.
- **Team Science and Leadership:** Students will work effectively in and be able to lead interdisciplinary research teams to (a) identify health related problems and (b) design and conduct research to address the problems.
- **Multi-level Cultural Proficiency:** Students will be able to identify the different cultures that exist within and among (a) organizations and (b) communities (locally and globally). In recognizing these differences, students will learn to use cultural competence and work effectively to conduct research investigations in different settings.
- **Scientific Communication:** Students will demonstrate oral and written competency in their ability to communicate research clearly to other translational scientists *via* journal articles and scientific presentations. They will be able to effectively write abstracts and manuscripts, give oral presentations, and communicate the relevance of their scientific expertise.
- **Business of Translational Science:** Students will become functionally informed about intellectual property licensing and the processes of developing products, drugs, or devices for human use. They will

also learn to function within different legal, regulatory, and economic environments.

- **Evidence Based Implementation and Policy:** Students will be able to independently read and interpret the scientific literature in their content area. They will be able to systematically review a body of scientific literature to apply to policy implementation. They will be able to make data based decisions and inform policy and guideline development.

## Translational Science Program Policies Home Institution Designation

Each student in the TS Ph.D. program must declare a home institution. The home institution will be the institution of record for admission, dissertation research and graduation, and it will be the primary institution for fees, financial aid, student health services and other student services. Change of a student's home institution designation will be approved only for exceptional or necessary circumstances. Please refer to the student handbook for additional information.

## Concurrent Registration

Each semester, students may register and take courses concurrently at more than one of the universities participating in the joint TS Ph.D. degree program. Approval of the student's advisor or supervising professor for course registration is assumed. Registration for courses offered by the UT Health Houston School of Public Health will require the student to apply and be accepted as a non-degree-seeking (NDS) student.

International students must follow policy related to pre-approval and limitations in concurrent enrollment in a single semester. The student is responsible for informing the enrollment institutions and providing required documentation of the concurrent enrollment. International students should review the student handbook and check with the international offices of the enrollment institutions to ensure that all requirements are met.

## Registration When No Class Is Being Taken

Student status will be maintained each semester at each joint-degree institution. This will be accomplished on each campus according to the procedures of the individual Registrar's Offices.

## Good Standing

A student must be in "good standing" at all institutions. Good standing may include GPA of 3.0 or better, having no unpaid tuition or other institutional debts, having no institutional holds, or any other restriction that would not allow registration. With the exception of specified requirements for all students, good standing is defined by each university. The TS Ph.D. program is a joint-degree program. As a result, if a student is identified as not being in good standing at one university, based on the criteria listed above or as defined in the university and/or graduate catalog, that status will apply at all the institutions participating in the joint TS Ph.D. program.

## Academic Year

The academic year for the TS Ph.D. program includes the fall, spring, and summer semesters. For UT Health San Antonio students, the academic year is the fall and spring super semesters July to December and January to June), plus a trailing summer semester if summer courses are taken at another institution. **Full-time students at the health science center are required to complete at least 24 semester-credit-hours each academic**

**year, in total from all universities, and part-time students are required to complete at least 12 semester-credit-hours each academic year, in total from all universities. Students with another home institution should refer to the graduate catalog of that institution for information about full- and part-time credit-hour requirements.**

## Academic Calendars

Students will comply with the calendar(s) of the institutions in which they are enrolled for the purposes of registration, course schedules, tuition and fee payments, etc. Please refer to the TS Ph.D. website and/or the graduate school websites of the individual universities for specific information about current academic calendars.

## Residency

Each TS Ph.D. student must establish domicile residency status for the purpose of assessing tuition and fees. This status will be determined by the home institution. Once residency has been established by the home institution, the residency designation will be the same for the enrollment in any of the universities that are part of the TS Ph.D. program.

## Tuition and Fees - Rates and Payments

TS Ph.D. students will enroll each semester at each university offering the course(s) selected by the student, with advisement of the student's advisor or supervising professor. Rates for in-state and out-of-state student tuition and fees are established by each institution, and payment of tuition and fees will be made to each university based on the number of semester credit hours selected. Some non-coursework-specific fees paid to the home institution may be waived by the other universities, but the final assessment of fees is dependent on the individual university policies. Tuition and fees are subject to adjustment. Students receiving any form of financial aid that is not automatically or fully distributed by the home institution to cover the payment of tuition and fees at the other universities are responsible for the payment of those additional tuition and fees.

TS Ph.D. students will follow individual university policies and procedures in regard to payment schedule date, refund dates, late fees, non-payment designation, etc. for each university in which the student is registered.

## Grading, Grade Point Average, and Academic Standing

Existing grading systems will be utilized by each institution. Students will be given letter grades (A, B, C, D, or F), Pass/Fail, Credit/No Credit, +/-, or Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory, as per the policy of the institution's graduate school and/or the program or department that offers the course. Students must maintain a cumulative, university-specific, and combined TS Ph.D. program 3.0 ("B") grade point average (GPA) for all classes for which letter grades are given. University/graduate school policy at each institution must be followed for the courses taken at that institution and course/grade related consequences will be assessed according to the policy of the institution in which classes are taken. The TS Ph.D. program is a joint-degree program, and academic standing at one university applies to all the institutions participating in the program. A student who faces academic dismissal from one of the participating universities will face dismissal from the program. Please refer to the Student Handbook for additional guidelines related to grades, GPA, and academic standing.



## Qualifying Examination

The qualifying exam (QE) will be administered before the start of dissertation research, and admission to candidacy will be contingent on its successful completion. The qualifying examination should be completed near the end or following the completion of core coursework. It is recommended that the student, at the time of the written exam on course content, should have completed the bulk (at least 75%) of core course work, including at least one course in each domain. Students must have a cumulative, university-specific and combined TS Ph.D. program 3.0 ("B") grade point average (GPA) for all classes for which letter grades are given to take the qualifying exam.

The qualifying exam is composed of two parts : (1) the written exam on course content and (2) the dissertation proposal (written and oral). The timing of the QE will be determined jointly by the candidate and the supervising professor, in collaboration with the dissertation committee and the instructors/graders for the written exam on course content. Please refer to the student handbook for requirements, procedures, grading, and other information related to the qualifying exam.

## Supervising Professor

If not already established at the time of admission into the TS Ph.D. program, students are advised to identify and select a supervising professor for the dissertation research as soon as possible. At a minimum, the student must select a supervising professor prior to the initiation of the qualifying exam. The supervising professor will chair all steps of the qualifying exam.

## Dissertation Committee

**The Dissertation Committee will have at least four members, but may have additional members if required by the graduate school of the student's home institution.** All program-required Dissertation Committee members must be approved as Graduate Faculty for the TS Ph.D. program with the exception of the member from an outside institution. Additionally, if the student's home institution requires additional representation, Graduate Faculty membership will be dependent on the requirements of the home institution. Dissertation committee membership will include (at a minimum):

1. Supervising professor (may be from any of the four participating UT institutions in this joint program and must have a faculty appointment at the student's home institution)
2. Graduate faculty from the TS Ph.D. program from the student's home department and/or institution
3. Graduate faculty from the TS Ph.D. program from a second UT component institution participating in the joint-degree program (in the case of joint or cross appointments, the faculty member's primary appointment must be at the institution that is not the student's home institution)
4. A member from an outside institution who is an expert in the student's dissertation field and does not have a faculty appointment, either full-time or part-time, at any of the four institutions participating in the joint-degree program

These are minimum requirements - the student and supervising professor must ensure that the Dissertation Committee requirements for both the TS Ph.D. program and the student's home institution are met. The proposed composition of the Dissertation Committee must be evaluated and approved by the TS COGS. Additional criteria may be set by the student's home institution regarding committee structure and approval

mechanisms. Students should verify the requirements of the TS Ph.D. program (student handbook) and the home institution's graduate school (graduate catalog of the home institution).

## Doctoral Dissertation

Each doctoral candidate must complete an approved body of research and submit and orally defend a dissertation as one of the requirements for graduation. The dissertation must be an original scholarly contribution based on the independent research conducted by the candidate, under the supervision and guidance of the supervising professor. A Dissertation Committee will provide additional advisement and assessment. The format of the dissertation will be in compliance with the rules of the student's home institution.

## Requirement for Semi-Annual Student Evaluation/Progress Report

TS Ph.D. students are required to submit a progress report two times each year. This report will be submitted in a prescribed format and include a written report of progress on the student's research work, activities related to the research, self-assessment and proposed direction of future work. Please refer to the student handbook for procedures and other information related to the semi-annual student evaluation.

## Graduation

The degree of Doctor of Philosophy is awarded upon satisfactory completion of a minimum of 72 semester credit hours, submission of a dissertation, satisfactory completion of a final oral examination (defense of dissertation), continuous enrollment requirements, and/or any other requirements of the TS Ph.D. program and the student's home institution. Students will apply and be approved for their degree and graduation by their home institution. The degree awarded is a joint degree with the other degree-granting institutions, and it is awarded on the official graduation date indicated to the University of Texas System and published by the home institution. Students will attend the graduation ceremony of the home institution. Please refer to the student handbook and graduate catalog of the home institution for graduation requirements.

## Other Program Policies and Requirements Release of Information

Because the TS Ph.D. is a joint-degree program, it will be essential that the participating universities are able to share and access relevant and academically pertinent data; therefore, all institutions participating in the TS Ph.D. program are recognized as having a legitimate educational interest in the relevant educational records of the students who participate in the TS Ph.D. program. All participating institutions will maintain confidentiality of the educational records in accordance with the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Accordingly, the sharing of relevant educational records among the participating institutions *will not* require a student release nor violate a student's FERPA rights.

## Student IDs

Students will obtain a student ID number from each institution prior to first semester enrollment. Thereafter, each institution will activate and/or issue student IDs according to individual institutional policy.

## Student Email

TS Ph.D. students will have an email account on each campus. Some institutions designate the email address, and others allow the student to make a choice. Students are encouraged to provide the TS Ph.D. administrative office with a list of their official email addresses on each campus. Students will be responsible for checking all student-related email addresses on a regular basis.

## Conduct and Discipline

The TS Ph.D. program expects all students to exhibit the highest standards of conduct, honesty and professionalism. Academic misconduct includes activities that undermine the academic integrity of the institution. The university(ies) may discipline a student for academic misconduct as outlined in the *Catalogs* and *Handbooks of Operating Policies* and/or by the graduate schools for each of the universities participating in the joint Ph.D. degree program. All cases of academic misconduct must be reported to the dean of the graduate school of the student's home institution, and the seriousness of the violation may be taken into account in assessing a penalty.

Each university maintains policies regarding conduct and discipline for students. If one site is implicated, the policies and practices of the university where the infraction was committed will be followed. If two or more sites are implicated, the most stringent policy, practice or procedure, as determined by the TS COGS and/or the graduate dean(s), shall apply. Please refer to the student handbook for more detailed information about ethics, professionalism and conduct.