



# Department of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering

## PHD GRADUATE DEGREE REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES



Additional information may be obtained from the Rice University General Announcements, the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and the Graduate Studies Committee of the Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering department. It is the student's responsibility to be familiar with the rules, procedures and requirements and to make sure that policies and timelines are followed in order to allow for a timely graduation. See [graduate.rice.edu](http://graduate.rice.edu) for applicable policies.

**This document summarizes departmental requirements and includes information on some university requirements for graduate degrees.**

**Consult the General Announcements and Code of Conduct for official and complete information on University requirements.**

## **DEPARTMENT OF CHEMICAL AND BIOMOLECULAR ENGINEERING**

**Dr. Michael S. Wong**  
**Department Chair**

### **2014-2015 GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE:**

**Sibani Lisa Biswal, Associate Professor, GSC Chair**

**Laura Segatori, Associate Professor**

**Deepak Nagrath, Assistant Professor**

**Matteo Pasquali, Professor**

**Dilip Asthagiri, MChE Program Chair**

**Barbara Windish, Department Coordinator**

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### PHD GRADUATE DEGREE REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

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# Graduate Degree Requirements and Procedure

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## I. THE PhD DEGREE

### ***1.1 Course Requirements***

PhD students entering Rice with a bachelor's degree must take at least **30** semester hours of advanced courses approved by the Graduate Studies Committee and receive a grade of **B- or better in each course**. For those who do not receive a grade of B- or better, the credit hours for that course will not count toward fulfilling the 36 semester-hour requirement. No courses counted toward this requirement may be taken on a Pass/Fail basis. In accordance with University policy, students whose GPA falls below 2.33 will be placed on academic probation.

Course selection for first year students may be completed after the department orientation. The Graduate Studies Committee will assist and advise students. (See addendum A for first year course recommendations)

Courses taken to fulfill the PhD degree must be selected from an approved list posted on the department webpage. To register for courses for degree credit that are not on the approved list the student should:

- Complete the CHBE Course Approval Request Form;
- Have it approved by their advisor (new students entering their first year should obtain approval from the Graduate Studies Chair);
- Submit the form to the Department Coordinator.

The coordinator will notify the student and advisor of the Graduate Studies Committee decision.

The general guidelines for choosing a course are the following:

- a) No class below the 400 level will be approved with the exception of 300 level classes from the department of Biochemistry and Cell Biology.
- b) Up to 4 credits of classes with a business, law or ethics content offered by

departments within science and engineering will be approved.

With the approval of the advisor the student may take any other class without petitioning the Graduate Studies Committee with the understanding that it will **not** count toward fulfilling the course requirements for the PhD degree.

During the first two semesters in residence, all full-time PhD students must register for **at least four graduate courses each semester**. In the second semester, students can register for up to 3 semester hours of ChBE 800, which will count as one of the four graduate courses required.

All PhD students must register for the graduate seminar course, CHBE 661 (Fall) and CHBE 662 (Spring), each semester they are in residence. **Prior approval must be obtained from the Graduate Studies Committee before registering for a class that conflicts with the CHBE seminar course.**

PhD students entering Rice with a master's degree may petition the Graduate Studies Committee to evaluate their transcript and determine if they may receive credit for graduate courses taken during their MS studies **that are substantially equivalent to Rice courses**. Such credit will not exceed **12** semester hours, and these students must take at least **18** credit hours of advanced courses at Rice.

The following restrictions also apply:

- a) Each case must be individually approved by the Graduate Studies Committee, based on the work done for the MS degree.
- b) A detailed petition is required for consideration by the Graduate Studies Committee: students need to provide the syllabus of the MS course and indicate the equivalent Rice course.
- c) Students who receive credit for graduate courses taken during their MS studies may take courses at Rice that are substantially equivalent; however, these courses will not count toward their degree requirements.

- d) The decision as to whether a course is “substantially equivalent” will be made by the Graduate Studies Committee.

Students with an MS degree in chemical engineering from Rice granted within three years of their entry into the PhD program will have courses taken during their MS work at Rice counted toward the 30-hour requirement.

The university minimum requirement for the doctorate degree is **90 semester hours** beyond the bachelor’s degree (60 hours beyond the master’s degree). PhD students must earn the additional credits they need for graduation by registering for the thesis research course CHBE 800 (up to 15 credit hours per term) during the terms they are engaged in research.

**Departmental policy** requires that **full-time students be registered for at least 12 credit hours** each semester and **6 hours (University minimum) each summer**. PhD students must register for CHBE 800 (research hours) to meet the above stated requirements.

## ***1.2 Teaching Requirement***

Teaching is a graduate degree requirement and all PhD students are expected to assist a faculty member on a teaching assignment each semester in residence for a minimum of four semesters. Students must register for CHBE 605 in each semester they are assigned as a teaching assistant, which usually involves supervising work in the undergraduate laboratory, grading papers, tutoring, and answering student questions on homework and class topics. Unsatisfactory TA performance may result in an additional teaching assignment.

Students planning to pursue an academic career may request more involved teaching assignments by informing the Graduate Studies Committee and her/his advisor. Graduate students who are at least in their third year of residency (and who typically will have fulfilled three semesters of the TA requirements) are eligible to apply to the Graduate Studies Committee (prior to the beginning of each Fall semester) for one of several Dean of Engineering Teaching Assistant positions. Assigned to an undergraduate course in the Fall or Spring, these “Dean’s TA’s” take on teaching and curriculum development responsibilities, under the guidance of the instructor of that course. Dean’s TA’s must register for CHBE 606 in each semester they are assigned as such.

## ***1.3 Selection of Principal Advisor and Thesis Topic***

Department faculty members will present their research topics to the first-year graduate students during the fall semester. Attendance at these presentations is mandatory for all PhD candidates. **Each student must visit a minimum of three faculty members** for detailed discussions on the research topics of most interest to him/her. Only those faculty members who make a presentation are available for selection as an advisor.

Each PhD student will be provided an Advisor/Research Project Preference Sheet to be submitted by the published deadline indicating his/her three top choices of research projects. Topics from at least three faculty members must be indicated. **Students who fail to meet with at least three faculty members may not be assigned their top choice of research project/research group.** The Department will strive to match the preference of each student to those of the faculty and to available research projects. Students will be notified by the end of the first semester of their advisor appointment.

Students whose advisor’s primary appointment is in a different department will be required to follow the requirements outlined in the CHBE guidelines.

## ***1.4 The PhD Qualifying Exam***

The department offers the following graduate courses in core areas of chemical engineering:

Thermodynamics (CHBE 611)  
Mathematics (CHBE 692)  
Transport (CHBE 501, 602)  
Kinetics (CHBE 590)

These core courses are required of all students, unless otherwise indicated by the Graduate Studies Committee.

The PhD qualifier is an oral exam in the core areas of chemical engineering listed above, which will be administered **by May 15<sup>th</sup> of the first year of residence**. Extensions will be approved on a case-by-case basis and **requests must be submitted at least two weeks prior to the deadline**. The Graduate Studies Committee, in consultation with the PhD advisor, will form a qualifying examination committee comprised of three faculty members of the Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering Department (and jointly appointed faculty where



appropriate) for each PhD student. Exam committees will be designed to include faculty with expertise in all core areas: transport phenomena, thermodynamics, reaction engineering, and applied mathematics. The student's advisor will not be part of the committee. The chair of each exam committee will select a published research article and provide it to the student two weeks in advance of the exam. The student will prepare and submit to the committee a brief critical review of the paper at least 48 hours before the beginning of the oral exam (3 to 5 pages, in the style of a referee report). This is a pledged assignment, and the student cannot receive help in preparing the review. However, students can work together in reviewing material from the core courses. Additionally, senior CHBE graduate students provide practice opportunities and guidance before the qualifying exam.

Students should download the *Assessment of Student Performance on PhD Qualifying Examination on Chemical Engineering* (<http://ow.ly/o5Kjt>) Students must bring this form with them on their scheduled examination date. This form provides written assessment from the examination committee regarding core chemical engineering principles. **The form must be turned in to the Department Coordinator upon completion of the exam.** The student will have approximately 30 minutes to present the paper and his/her critique in an oral presentation. The committee members will ask questions about the paper as well as general questions on transport, thermodynamics, and chemical reaction engineering. The exam itself should last no longer than 90 minutes, unless the committee decides to exceed this time to help with its deliberation. The student will receive immediate feedback from the committee at the end of his/her exam period.

The student will be assessed by determining how well he/she (1) demonstrates an ability to perform PhD-level research by providing a critical review of the research article, and (2) demonstrates satisfactory fundamental knowledge at the graduate level in the four core areas of chemical engineering. A student passes the oral examination if both outcomes are achieved, *i.e.*, the committee judges the overall performance to be excellent, good, or fair. Students who pass the exam continue on the PhD track and prepare their thesis proposal for the following May deadline.

The committee may award a partial pass if the student's performance is judged to be unsatisfactory for either outcome. A student is

deemed to have partially passed the oral examination, but must perform additional activities to fully pass the examination, as recommended by the examination committee in consultation with the Graduate Studies Committee and a deadline for completion will be determined by the committee. For example, the student can be required to retake the qualifying exam, either in whole, or in part, at the discretion of their exam committee. As another example, the student can be required to revise the critical review of the paper or complete a pledged problem.

If the student performance is judged to be unsatisfactory for both outcomes, then that student fails the qualifying exam. He/she subsequently is placed in a probationary status and must retake the exam by August 15<sup>th</sup>. Students who fail to retake the exam by the deadline will have his/her stipend terminated until the exam is complete. Students who pass this make-up oral exam will then be allowed to follow the normal timeline for submission and defense of the thesis proposal. Students who **fail this exam** will be moved to the **MS track** and will have to complete their MS by May 15<sup>th</sup> of the following year. **Readmission to the PhD program in CHBE will not be possible under any circumstances.**

## ***1.5 Thesis Proposal***

A PhD thesis proposal is a written document that describes in detail a proposed research project: it should include a hypothesis-driven plan and preliminary results obtained during the first two years of residency. Normally, it should contain at least the following sections:

- a) Abstract (no more than 250 words)
- b) Background and literature survey
- c) Problem statement including scope and significance
- d) Research plans and methodology
- e) Preliminary results
- f) Possible pitfalls and alternative strategies
- g) Timeline

Portions of manuscripts or reports to sponsors could be incorporated into thesis proposals.

Each PhD student is required to submit a thesis proposal to the departmental office by **May 15<sup>th</sup>** of the second year in residence. In the event May 15<sup>th</sup> falls on a weekend, thesis proposals will be due on the following Monday.

The PhD student should submit to the Department Coordinator the following by May 15th:

- a) A bound hard copy of the thesis proposal
- b) A single pdf file the thesis proposal
- c) The names and email addresses of the thesis proposal committee members
- d) The date for which the oral presentation is scheduled (all committee members must have agreed to this date).

Moreover the student should give an electronic copy of the thesis proposal to each member of the committee at least a week before the date of the oral presentation.

**The oral presentation should be held by July 1<sup>st</sup>. The presentation deadline is firm.** Because many research-active faculty have busy summer travel schedules, it is advisable to assemble a committee as early as February and agree on a defense date with the committee members by the end of April.

After the presentation, the signed, original Evaluation of PhD Thesis Evaluation Proposal (<http://ow.ly/o5L7Y>) and signature page (<http://ow.ly/o5Ls3>) from each thesis committee member, should be submitted to the department by the student. A statement of whether or not the committee considered the proposal and presentation satisfactory shall be entered in the student's departmental file. If the written proposal and/or oral presentation are judged unsatisfactory by the thesis committee, the committee can either (a) fail the student and transfer him or her to the MS degree program or (b) request a revised proposal which must be submitted by **October 1<sup>st</sup>**. A second failure will result in automatic transfer to the MS degree program. For students who are transferred to the MS program, continued funding will be decided according to the guidelines on financial support (See Sec. V). The program should be completed by **May 15<sup>th</sup>** of the following year. Students who successfully complete the requirements for an MS degree under these terms, may reapply to the PhD program if they desire. Re-admission to the PhD program is not guaranteed.

**The May 15<sup>th</sup> deadline for submission of the written proposal is firm.** Failure to meet this deadline will result in termination of the student's stipend for a minimum of one pay period. If the proposal is not submitted by June 15<sup>th</sup>, no stipend will be paid until the proposal has been submitted. Please note this also applies to the presentation deadline. Any request for an extension to these

deadlines must be submitted to the Graduate Studies Committee. The committee will notify students of the extension request decision and revised deadlines for submission and oral presentation.

After the thesis proposal presentation, the thesis committee will complete the assessment form and provide the student with immediate feedback at the end of his/her presentation. The original assessment form must be submitted to the Department Coordinator for inclusion in the student's file.

## ***1.6 Convening Thesis Committee for Annual Review***

In years three of residency and beyond, students are required to update their thesis committee (which is the thesis proposal committee, unless the student and advisor decide to change the committee makeup) with a written progress report no later than **August 15<sup>th</sup>** using the *PhD Research Progress Report*.

## ***1.7 Approval of Candidacy and Final Oral Examination***

All PhD students must submit a *Petition for Approval of Candidacy* (<http://ow.ly/o5M9i>) **through the department chair** to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Since this petition must reach the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies **before February 28<sup>th</sup>** of the academic year in which graduation at the May commencement is expected, the students must complete the necessary departmental forms at least one week before that deadline. The deadline is **October 31<sup>st</sup>** for degree conferral after the fall semester. Final approval will come from the Associate Provost.

As a general rule, students should apply for candidacy as soon as they have successfully completed all required courses, teaching assistant requirements, and qualifying examinations, and have had their thesis proposals and presentations approved. The university requires that candidacy be approved before the beginning of the ninth semester in residence.

After a student's candidacy has been approved and upon completion of his/her research project the student must schedule, in coordination with his/her

research advisor, a public oral examination for the defense of his/her thesis.

### ***1.8 Acceptance of the Thesis***

The completed thesis must be submitted in either final or advanced draft form to the members of the thesis committee at least two weeks before the oral examination. In the course of this examination, the thesis committee members may recommend revisions or additions, which must be incorporated in the final thesis, which is then signed by all committee members. Within six months of passing the oral examination, the student must submit two copies of the signed, final thesis to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Final approval of the thesis is by the Associate Provost.

### ***1.9 Satisfactory Progress***

PhD students are expected to make continuous and **satisfactory progress** toward fulfilling their PhD requirements. Satisfactory progress in coursework is defined as follows.

#### **Courses:**

- By end of the **second** semester in residence, PhD students will have at least 21 semester hours of advanced courses with grades of B- or better in each course. In accordance with University policy (see General Announcements at [ga.rice.edu](http://ga.rice.edu)), students—whose cumulative grade point average or the average for the most recently completed semester (including the summer semester) falls below 2.33 – are placed on probationary status. University policy further states that any student placed on probationary status for a second semester will lead to an automatic dismissal by the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies unless the student's department presents a plea for exception for exception that is approved by the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.
- By the end of the **sixth** semester in residence, students will have at least 30 semester hours of advanced courses with grades of B- or better in each course.

#### **Exams and Research:**

**Year 1** – Qualifying exams taken

**Year 2** – Thesis Proposal deadline met and oral presentation passed.

**Years 3 & Beyond** – Annual Progress Report Form submitted to advisor, thesis committee, and Graduate Studies Committee by August 15th. This form will review research progress and provide feedback from the thesis committee members.

**Year 5** – Continued Financial Support requested (if applicable). See Section II.

Students who fail to meet any of the above requirements will receive a letter of warning for not making satisfactory progress. When such a letter has been issued, the Graduate Studies Committee may, after discussion with the student and thesis advisor, recommend a reduction or suspension in stipend to the department chair. In cases of egregious failure to maintain satisfactory progress a student's stipend may be terminated (See Section II.3). Decisions to reduce or terminate student stipends will be made on a case-by-case basis. Students who receive external funding will have their funding source notified of their unsatisfactory progress. The Graduate Studies Committee, the thesis advisor and the department chair will consider all the factors that may have affected a student's performance before reaching such a decision.

## **II. FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

### ***II.1 Rice Support***

Most PhD students receive financial support in the form of a department stipend, fellowship or from sponsored project funds. Students are considered full time and are expected to focus strictly on the curriculum. Until the assignment of thesis advisors, full-time for first-year students consists of four or more advanced courses, and assistance in teaching (as described in section I.2). After the assignment of thesis advisors, full-time consists of advanced coursework, assistance in teaching, and research as mutually agreed by the student and his/her advisor.

After the first semester in residence, financial support is normally provided by the student's advisor through grants or other sponsored research agreements.

Graduate students normally work full-time in research during the winter and spring recesses, and in the summer following the first academic year. During the second and subsequent years of study, the department will usually allow two weeks of



vacation and time off for holidays. **All vacations must be approved in advance by the thesis advisor.**

## ***II.2 Outside Employment***

Students who receive a stipend or salary in support of their graduate work are expected to devote themselves fully to their studies and research. Students are not permitted to take outside employment, including other on-campus work. Exceptions will be made for short-term campus events, (such as graduation), with **written permission** from the student's advisor and approval by the Graduate Studies Committee. Students accepting internships must obtain approval from their advisor and the Graduate Studies Committee. Students on a paid internship will have their stipend suspended and must notify the department of their anticipated internship start and end date.

## ***II.3 Suspension of Support***

Continued financial support is contingent upon satisfactory progress toward research goals, the doctoral thesis plan and is subject to limitations described in Section II.4 below. Students who fail to maintain satisfactory progress as described in IV.5 will have their stipends terminated. The thesis advisor will issue a **written warning** to the student at least one pay period before initiating action to terminate his/her stipend. This warning must also be communicated to the Graduate Studies Committee and the department chair. The student can appeal the stipend termination by requesting a review of his/her research progress by the thesis committee before financial support is terminated. The decision of the thesis committee is final.

## ***II.4 Support Limitation Rule for PhD Students - Progress Report***

The normal limit of financial support for PhD students is 10 semesters (excluding summers). Students who anticipate taking longer than 10 semesters for completion of the PhD degree must request, in writing, an extension of their support and submit a progress report. Students must submit a new petition to the Graduate Studies Committee each year beginning in their tenth semester, and

each subsequent year, to continue their financial support.

This progress report need not be lengthy, but should:

- a) summarize work accomplished since the presentation of the thesis proposal,
- b) provide specific information on research work remaining to be done,
- c) indicate the estimated time for completion, and
- d) include a brief statement from the advisor indicating his/her approval of the request, and contain a recommendation and/or justification (in the case of exceptional circumstances) for continued funding.

Manuscripts, reports and chapters of the thesis already written could be included. The complete progress report should be submitted to the Graduate Studies Committee **no later than March 15<sup>th</sup>**, or the following Monday if March 15th falls on a weekend. A specific period for continued support, not to exceed one year in duration, shall be included in the recommendation.

The Graduate Studies Committee will review the thesis committee's recommendation and, in conjunction with the thesis advisor (and the department chair, if the student is supported with departmental funds) make a decision.

## ***II.5 Support Limitation Rule for PhD Students who Transfer to the MS Program***

Continued funding for PhD students who transfer to the MS program because they either fail the qualifying examinations or the thesis proposal exam or for personal reasons is decided on a case-by-case basis. Typically, at the discretion of the advisor, the student will continue to be supported until May 15<sup>th</sup> of the following year pending continued satisfactory performance and progress toward completion of the MS degree requirements. Students who are supported by department funds must submit a written request for continued support to the Department Chair.

Any request for continued support beyond this initial period should be requested in writing by the student and the advisor at least two months before the financial support period is scheduled to expire and

should be accompanied by a progress report to the Graduate Studies Committee (see Section V.1).

Rice University graduate students have guidelines to assure fairness in problem resolution. These

### III. OTHER REGULATIONS

All graduate students are expected to maintain continuous enrollment, unless an official leave of absence has been granted. Failure to register for any period without a leave of absence granted by the Associate Provost constitutes *de facto* withdrawal. If a student later wishes to resume study, reapplication is required. Readmission is given only on the recommendation of the department and the approval of the Associate Provost.

A leave of absence is granted only by the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies upon the recommendation of the department, and is granted only to students in good standing with the University. Leave must be approved in advance of the academic semester in question; it will not be granted after the student has registered for courses or after the registration period has passed. Normally, leave of absence is granted for no more than two consecutive semesters. No work toward a degree may be done at Rice or involve Rice faculty (or facilities) during a student's leave of absence.

### IV. GUIDELINES FOR DISMISALS, PETITIONS, APPEALS, GRIEVANCES, AND PROBLEM RESOLUTION

policies strive to uphold standards and raise the quality of graduate programs. They provide graduate students with an environment that has high standards, clear assessments of the student's achievements and fair and transparent procedures for handling cases of inadequate academic progress. Please find the complete list of guidelines in the General Announcements for graduate students at [www.ga.rice.edu](http://www.ga.rice.edu). These guidelines are to be followed by all Rice graduate students. The CHBE Graduate Studies Committee will be the standing committee for all issues regarding these guidelines.

### V. TIME BOUNDARIES FOR PhD AND MS DEGREES

Effective July 1, 2012 all graduate students who have exceeded their time boundaries for achieving candidacy, defending their thesis or being beyond their time to degree without prior approval will be assessed a \$125 reinstatement fee by the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Students who anticipate exceeding their time boundaries may petition for an extension of their time boundaries by submitting an extension request to Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies prior to the deadline in order to avoid the fee.

## Appendix A

### Important Milestones for Students Entering in August 2014

FALL SEMESTER 2014 (1 <sup>st</sup> Semester) When: August 2014	Register for at least four graduate courses and for the Chemical Engineering Seminar Course (CHBE 661) and Teaching Assignment Course (CHBE 605), if assigned.
October 24, 2014	Submit choices of thesis advisor and topic, (see section I.3).
SPRING SEMESTER 2015 (2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester) When: No later than May 15, 2015	PhD Qualifying Exam - Oral exam in core areas of chemical engineering; thermodynamics and mathematics, transport and kinetics. All students must attempt examinations.  Complete at least 21 semester hours of advanced courses with grades B- or better.
FALL SEMESTER 2015 (3 <sup>rd</sup> Semester) When: No later than August 15, 2015	PhD Qualifying Exam (second attempt) and Annual Progress Report submitted to advisor, thesis committee and Graduate Studies Committee.
May 15, 2016	Submit written thesis proposal, (see Section I.6).
July 1, 2016	Deadline for presenting thesis proposal to thesis committee.
FALL SEMESTER 2016 (4 <sup>th</sup> Semester) When: No later than August 15, 2016	Annual Progress Report submitted to advisor, thesis committee and Graduate Studies Committee.
August 15, 2017	Deadline for submitting Annual Progress Report
By the end of SPRING SEMESTER 2018 (8 <sup>th</sup> Semester) When: No later than August 15, 2018	Submit petition for approval of candidacy <b>as soon as</b> all course requirements are completed, qualifying exams have been passed, thesis proposal has been successfully defended and TA requirement met. The University requires that candidacy be approved <b>before</b> the start of the ninth semester in residence.
August 15, 2018 and every year thereafter	Deadline for submitting progress report