

***Nutrition Sciences  
PhD in Nutrition Sciences***

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**2024-2025  
STUDENT HANDBOOK**



**UAB SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS**  
***NUTRITION SCIENCES***  
**PHD IN NUTRITION SCIENCES**  
**2024-2025 ACADEMIC HANDBOOK**



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PhD Program Director

04/22/2024

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Date



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04/22/2024

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Date



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School of Health Professions

08/01/2024

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## INTRODUCTION

### DEAN'S WELCOME MESSAGE

Welcome to the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Health Professions! We are pleased you chose to join one of our many excellent programs, which in combination have established us as a national leader in health professions education.

We are home to one of the largest health professions schools in the nation with more than 30 programs at the certificate, baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral levels, with more than 2,000 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled.

Moving into a post-COVID environment is a new start for everyone in health care, and you are in the best place to begin your personal journey toward joining this dynamic field. We are all committed to providing you a world-class education, and to support your pursuit of knowledge and your strong desire to serve others as a healthcare professional.

The pandemic has challenged all of us in many ways, and your entry into one of our professional programs demonstrates one of the most precious personal qualities one can have: resilience. That resilience has brought you here today and will continue to serve you well during your journey at UAB.

We recognize that healthcare needs - even outside of a pandemic - are constantly changing. That is why we continue to add innovative programs to our academic portfolio and to enhance and revitalize ongoing programs. We also offer graduate programs you will only find in Alabama at UAB, such as Genetic Counseling, Nuclear Medicine and Molecular Imaging, Low Vision Rehabilitation, Health Physics, Healthcare Quality and Safety, doctoral-level Rehabilitation Science, and Biomedical and Health Sciences.

Our degrees and programs are fully accredited by their respective professional organizations. This means you will be eligible for licensure, national certification or registrations and enjoy being in high demand within the job market. Our first-time student exam pass rate on many credentialing exams is an astounding 98 percent or higher.

Graduating from the School of Health Professions means you will acquire an esteemed degree, have a host of job opportunities in healthcare – an industry that continues to grow rapidly – and be well prepared to make a difference in your community. We look forward to maintaining our relationship with you when you join our alumni community.

Our alumni give advice to current students that is worth repeating: “learn your craft, be a better professional for your patients, be open minded to future possibilities, and remember to have a healthy work/ life balance”.

I look forward to seeing you grow in your respective fields and watching you become the leader we know you can be.



Andrew J. Butler, PhD, FAPTA

## OVERVIEW OF THE SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS

A leader in federally funded research, the UAB School of Health Professions (SHP) is one of the largest academic institutions of its type in the United States and currently boasts several nationally ranked programs. What began in the 1950s as a collection of training programs in various para-professional disciplines has grown into an internationally recognized center of academic excellence.

The SHP initially took shape in 1969 as UAB gained autonomy within the University of Alabama System. Originally christened the School of Community and Allied Health Resources (SCAHR), the school incorporated the School of Health Services Administration and the Division of Allied Health Sciences from the College of General Studies with parts of the Department of Public Health and Epidemiology from the medical school. An innovative facility designed to meet the growing needs of the health care industry, the SCAHR was divided into four academic divisions that functioned like regular academic departments: Health Services Administration, Public Health and Environment, Allied Health Sciences, and the Regional Technical Institute for Health Occupations.

Throughout the 1970's and 80's the school's offerings were amended to reflect the changing health care industry. As a result of the changes, SCAHR became the School of Public and Allied Health (SPAH). Next it became the School of Community and Allied Health (SCAH) and later the School of Health Related Professions (SHRP). During this time, the school added several new areas of study including a nationally ranked program in Nutrition Sciences. Through the leadership and guidance of early visionaries, the school experienced unparalleled success, which continues to date.

Today, the School of Health Professions is comprised of more than 30 programs – at the certificate, baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral levels – across five academic departments: Clinical and Diagnostic Sciences, Health Services Administration, Nutrition Sciences, Occupational Therapy, and Physical Therapy. The school is housed in three buildings, the Susan Mott Webb Nutrition Sciences Building, the Learning Resource Center Building (LRC), and the School of Health Professions Building (SHPB).

With more than 2,200 faculty, staff, and students, SHP is one of six schools comprising the world-renowned UAB Academic Health Center. Students have access to vast academic resources, state-of-the-art facilities, and progressive research.

SHP is proud of many accomplishments including:

- U.S. News & World Report ranks SHP programs in the nation's top 25.
- Research funding is over \$14 million and growing.
- The school is at the top of the list in research funding from the National Institutes of Health for schools of its type and has been either first or second in funding received since 1969.

Under the current leadership of Dean Andrew Butler, the school has never been stronger or better positioned as a national leader in health professions education.



## SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS CONTACT INFORMATION

In addition to your program director and program faculty, the following individuals may be able to provide assistance with questions and issues related to your school and program activities.

**Jennifer Christy, PhD, Assistant Dean for Faculty Affairs**

(205) 934-5903; [jbraswel@uab.edu](mailto:jbraswel@uab.edu)

**Samantha Giordano-Mooga, PhD, Director of Undergraduate Honors Program**

(205) 996-1399; [sgiordan@uab.edu](mailto:sgiordan@uab.edu)

**Melanie Hart, PhD, Associate Dean for Academic and Faculty Affairs**

(205) 934-7528; [mhart2@uab.edu](mailto:mhart2@uab.edu)

**Kevin Storr, Director of Communications**

(205) 934-4159; [storr@uab.edu](mailto:storr@uab.edu)

**Lee Test, Director of Academic and Faculty Operations**

(205) 975-8034; [lttest@uab.edu](mailto:lttest@uab.edu)

**Marci Willis, Director, Learning Resource Center**

(205) 934-9472; [mbattles@uab.edu](mailto:mbattles@uab.edu)

## SECTION 1 – SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY INFORMATION

### ACADEMIC CALENDAR

All dates related to registration, payments of tuition and fees, drop/add dates, other administrative requirements, and official school holidays are recorded on the [UAB Academic Calendar](#).

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY CODE

The University established a new Academic Integrity Code effective August 23, 2021. This Code, which applies to undergraduate, graduate, and professional students as well as all academic activities, defines academic misconduct and outlines procedures for breaches of the code. Policies are established for resolution of charges of academic misconduct, and these processes are managed by the Academic Integrity Coordinator (AIC). In the School of Health Profession, the AIC is the Associate Dean for Academic and Faculty Affairs, the office is located in SHPB 660. The full text of the Academic Integrity Code is available at: [Academic Integrity Code](#).

### ADVISING

Undergraduate student advising is provided through the Student Services and Advising unit, which is housed in the School of Health Professions Building (SHPB) 230 suite of offices, near the elevators on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. Walk-ins are accepted, but appointments are preferred. Contact information for individual advisors is listed below.

Andrea Bennett, Academic Advisor III, (205) 996-1689; [arbennett@uab.edu](mailto:arbennett@uab.edu)

Eileen Hatfield, Academic Advisor II, (205) 934-4185; [mehatfie@uab.edu](mailto:mehatfie@uab.edu)

Chris Smith, Academic Advisor III, (205) 934-5974; [cjsmith1@uab.edu](mailto:cjsmith1@uab.edu)

Adam Pinson, Academic Advisor III, (205) 996-6789; [apinson@uab.edu](mailto:apinson@uab.edu)

Graduate student advising is provided through the SHP graduate programs.

### AMBASSADORS

Ambassadors help to spread awareness of the School of Health Professions and its multifaceted undergraduate and graduate programs, serve as liaisons between the department and university-wide student organizations, and serve as a student voice in school and university committees. The SHP Ambassadors help to support the programs within the school that will impact recruitment and retention initiatives.

### ASKIT

ASKIT is the technology help desk for faculty, staff, and students. They provide free support via telephone, email, or in-person. You will be asked to supply your BlazerID when you request assistance.

## ATTENDANCE

Class attendance is expected in all SHP programs. Specific class, laboratory, or clinical site attendance requirements may be more stringent than university guidelines. Refer to the program requirements in this handbook and in course syllabi for policies. The UAB attendance policy is as follows:

The University of Alabama at Birmingham recognizes that the academic success of individual students is related to their class attendance and participation. Each course instructor is responsible for establishing policies concerning class attendance and make-up opportunities. Any such policies, including points for attendance and/or participation, penalties for absences, limits on excused absences, total allowable absences, etc., must be specified in the course syllabus provided to students at the beginning of the course term. Such policies are subject to departmental oversight and may not, by their specific prescriptions, negate or circumvent the accommodations provided below for excused absences.

The University regards certain absences as excused and in those instances requires that instructors provide a reasonable accommodation for the student who misses assignments, presentations, examinations, or other academic work of a substantive nature by virtue of these excused absences.

Examples include the following:

- Absences due to jury or military duty, provided that official documentation has been provided to the instructor in a timely manner in advance.
- Absences of students registered with Disabilities Services for disabilities eligible for “a reasonable number of disability-related absences” provided students give their instructors notice of a disability-related absence in advance or as soon as possible.
- Absences due to participation in university-sponsored activities when the student is representing the university in an official capacity and as a critical participant, provided that the procedures below have been followed:
  - Before the end of the add/drop period, students must provide their instructor a schedule of anticipated excused absences in or with a letter explaining the nature of the expected absences from the director of the unit or department sponsoring the activity.
  - If a change in the schedule occurs, students are responsible for providing their instructors with advance written notification from the sponsoring unit or department.
- Absences due to other extenuating circumstances that instructors deem excused. Such classification is at the discretion of the instructor and is predicated upon consistent treatment of all students.
- Absences due to religious observances provided that students give faculty written notice prior to the drop/add deadline of the term.

In these instances, instructors must give students the opportunity to complete assignments in a way that corresponds as much as possible to the nature, scope, and format of the original. Options may include making up exams or other assignments, rescheduling student classroom presentations, or arranging for early or late submission of written assignments. The course make-up policy should be included in the syllabus.

## BACKGROUND CHECK

Students in SHP programs are required by policy to undergo a background check using the school's approved vendor, [CastleBranch](#), at the time of program admission, and again, prior to placement in a fieldwork placement (clinical, internship, practicum, residency, etc.). Additional checks may be required by the individual sites therefore, students should work with the program to ensure compliance requirements are met. Instructions for requesting the background check are provided to students by their programs.

**The Office of Academic and Faculty Affairs is responsible for ensuring student compliance throughout the program. Students found to be non-compliant will not be allowed to matriculate in the program (orientation, attend class, fieldwork placement, etc.) until all requirements are met. Program Directors, Fieldwork Coordinators, and students will be notified of non-compliance and a hold will be placed on the student's account.**

- **The initial background check must be completed prior to the first day of class.**
- **Subsequent background checks must be completed prior to the first day of the semester of a fieldwork placement (clinical, internship, practicum, residency, etc.).**

## BLAZERID / BLAZERNET / EMAIL

**BlazerID:** All students receive a unique identifier, the BlazerID, established at: [www.uab.edu/blazerid](http://www.uab.edu/blazerid). Your BlazerID is required for accessing BlazerNET and other campus resources. To activate one's BlazerID, select "Activate Accounts."

**BlazerNET** is the official portal of the UAB information network and is accessible from any Internet-accessible computer, on- or off-campus. Access BlazerNET from UAB home page [www.uab.edu](http://www.uab.edu) then choose UAB Quicklinks.

**Email: [uab.edu](http://uab.edu)** UAB student email is provided through Microsoft Office 365, a cloud-based system. Students have 50 GB of email space and 25 GB of free file 1 TB storage. Monitor your email regularly. Your UAB email is the official communication medium for courses, news, information, and announcements. Do not forward your UAB account to a personal email account. UAB is not responsible for information not received by the student due to the 'redirecting' of a UAB account to another email server.

## BLAZER EXPRESS

The UAB Blazer Express Transit System provides transportation throughout the UAB campus. With a valid UAB ID badge, students can enjoy fare-free bus transportation. All buses are ADA-accessible and can seat approximately 35 riders. For an updated schedule, route maps, and hours of operation please go to [www.uab.edu/blazerexpress/](http://www.uab.edu/blazerexpress/).

## BOOKSTORE

There is one bookstore located on the UAB campus, offering a wide variety of products and services to students, including online purchasing and shipping. The bookstore stocks UAB memorabilia and college wear in addition to all required textbooks and course material.

### UAB Barnes and Noble Bookstore

Location: 1400 University Blvd, Hill Student Center, Birmingham, AL. 35233

Hours: M – F 8:00am – 5:00pm | Sat 10:00am – 2:00pm | Sun Closed

Telephone: (205) 996-2665      Website: <https://uab.bncollege.com/shop/uab/home>

## CAMPUS ONECARD

The UAB OneCard is the official university identification card. It is used for personal identification, for entry to campus events and the recreation center, for library checkout, and for other UAB services. It also serves as a declining balance card for the UAB meal plans and for Blazer Bucks accounts. Additional information is available at [www.uab.edu/onecard](http://www.uab.edu/onecard).

## CAMPUS MAP

UAB's campus map can be found at the following: [www.uab.edu/map/](http://www.uab.edu/map/)

## CAMPUS SAFETY

Campus safety procedures and resources can be accessed at <https://www.uab.edu/students/home/safety>.

## CANVAS LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Canvas Learning Management System is the platform used for managing instructional materials online. Canvas course sites are accessed through BlazerNET or at [www.uab.edu/elearning/canvas](http://www.uab.edu/elearning/canvas). Students should monitor their course sites routinely for communication from faculty and to manage course assignments.

## CATALOG

The UAB Catalog is published annually and includes UAB's courses, policies, and curricula. Students can link to the Undergraduate or Graduate catalog at [www.uab.edu/catalog](http://www.uab.edu/catalog).

## COMMUNITY STANDARDS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

[Community Standards and Accountability](#) is responsible for upholding the integrity and purpose of the university through the fair and consistent application of policies and procedures to students' behavior to ensure a community that respects the dignity and right of all persons to reach their highest potential. SARC delivers programs and services in order to promote student safety and success, the pursuit of knowledge, respect for self and others, global citizenship, personal accountability and integrity, and

ethical development. More information can be found here: [UAB Student Advocacy, Rights & Conduct](#). The UAB student conduct code may be accessed online: [UAB Student Conduct Code](#).

## COUNSELING SERVICES

Student Counseling Services offers no cost, confidential counseling for UAB students related to physical, emotional, social, intellectual, or spiritual concerns. Student Counseling Services is located in the Student Health and Wellness Center at 1714 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue South (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor), Birmingham, AL. 35233. For more information, call (205) 934-5816 or <https://www.uab.edu/students/counseling/>.

## DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS)

Accessible Learning: UAB is committed to providing an accessible learning experience for all students. If you are a student with a disability that qualifies under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and you require accommodations, please contact Disability Support Services for information on accommodations, registration, and procedures. Requests for reasonable accommodations involve an interactive process and consist of a collaborative effort among the student, DSS, faculty, and staff. If you have a disability but have not contacted Disability Support Services, please call (205) 934-4205 or visit [Disability Support Services](#).

If you are a student registered with Disability Support Services, it is your responsibility to contact the course instructor to discuss the accommodations that may be necessary in each course. Students with disabilities must be registered with DSS and provide an accommodation request letter before receiving academic adjustments. Reasonable and timely notification of accommodations for the course is encouraged and provided to the course instructor so that the accommodations can be arranged.

## DRUG SCREEN

Students in SHP programs are required by policy to undergo a drug screen using the school's approved vendor, [CastleBranch](#), at the time of program admission, and again, prior to placement in a fieldwork placement (clinical, internship, practicum, residency, etc.). Additional screens may be required by the individual sites therefore, students should work with the program to ensure compliance requirements are met. Instructions for requesting the drug screens are provided to students by their programs.

**The Office of Academic and Faculty Affairs is responsible for ensuring student compliance throughout the program. Students found to be non-compliant will not be allowed to matriculate in the program (orientation, attend class, fieldwork placement, etc.) until all requirements are met. Program Directors, Fieldwork Coordinators, and students will be notified of non-compliance and a hold will be placed on the students' account.**

- The initial background check must be completed prior to the first day of class.
- Subsequent background checks must be completed prior to the first day of the semester of a fieldwork placement (clinical, internship, practicum, residency, etc.).

## EMERGENCIES

Report suspicious or threatening activity to the UAB Police Department immediately. Law officers are available 24 hours, seven days a week. Also, more than 300 emergency blue light telephones connected directly to the police dispatch are located throughout campus.

**UAB Police:** Dial 911 *from a campus phone*  
or call: (205) 934-3535 | (205) 934-HELP (4357) | (205) 934-4434

Emergencies affecting campus are communicated via the following:

- UAB Severe Weather & Emergency Hotline: (205) 934-2165
- University home web page: [www.uab.edu](http://www.uab.edu)
- Webpage: [www.uab.edu/emergency](http://www.uab.edu/emergency)
- Announcements on BlazerNET
- Cell phone messages and SMS text – register for B-ALERT notices via <https://idm.uab.edu/ens/b-alert>

## FERPA TRAINING

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 provides protection for all educational records related to students enrolled in an educational program. Information about your rights and protection of your records is available at the following site: [FERPA](#). If you have questions or concerns about FERPA issues, you may email [FERPA@uab.edu](mailto:FERPA@uab.edu). All SHP students are required to complete [FERPA Training](#). Compliance with the training requirement is monitored monthly.

## FINANCIAL AID

Financial Aid Counselors are available each day in the One Stop Student Services Office located in the Hill Student Center, 1400 University Blvd. Suite 103, Birmingham, AL 35233. If you have general questions, you can call the Office of Student Financial Aid at (205) 934-8223 or send an email to [finaid@uab.edu](mailto:finaid@uab.edu). For additional financial aid information: [Cost & Aid](#).

## FOOD SERVICES

Dining facilities available on campus closest to the SHP buildings include the Commons on the Green – located on the Campus Green, south of 9th Avenue and the Campus Recreation Center. For additional information about meal plans and campus dining facilities: [Student Dining](#).

## GRADUATE SCHOOL

The UAB Graduate School offers doctoral programs, post-master's specialist programs, and master's level programs. Graduate programs in SHP are coordinated through the Graduate School and students must adhere to the Graduate School policies and procedures. Graduate School information for current students is available at [Graduate School](#). Policies and Procedures for the Graduate School can be located in the [Graduate School Catalog](#).

## GRADUATION

All students must complete an application for degree six months prior to graduating and no later than the deadline in the academic calendar. The University holds commencement every semester. Check the commencement website for the most current information: [UAB Commencement](#).

## HEALTH INSURANCE

To ensure that all students have adequate health care coverage, including ongoing primary and specialty care, the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) requires all students to have major medical health insurance. Students can provide proof of their own private coverage or be enrolled in the Student Health Insurance Plan. The plan is a 1-year commercial policy provided by United HealthCare and is re-negotiated annually. This policy is a comprehensive health insurance policy at an affordable cost that is specifically designed to meet the needs of UAB Students. If you are required to have insurance but have sufficient coverage on another plan and wish to opt out of the Student Health Insurance Plan, you are required to submit a waiver to Student Health Services at the beginning of every semester. More information including submitting a waiver can be found at this website: [Student Health Insurance Waivers](#).

## HIPAA TRAINING

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) includes significant requirements for protecting individual privacy of health information. All students in the School of Health Professions must complete an online tutorial and be tested on HIPAA regulations at the time of program admission. A BlazerID is required to access the training site, located at [HIPAA](#). Compliance with the training requirement is monitored monthly.

## HONOR SOCIETIES

All students in the School of Health Professions are eligible for consideration for the following society memberships.

- Alpha Eta Society – The UAB Chapter of this Society recognizes students registered in the final term of a baccalaureate or graduate health professions program. Inductees must have a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 (4.0 = A) and be in the upper 10% of their program. Nominations are made by program directors in spring and summer terms.
- Phi Kappa Phi – This is the oldest, and most selective, all-discipline honor society in the nation. Membership is by invitation to the top 7.5% of junior students and the top 10% of seniors and graduate students. Nominations are made by program directors.

## IMMUNIZATION POLICY

To provide a safe and healthy environment for all students, faculty, and staff at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), first-time entering students, international students and scholars, and



students in clinical & non-clinical programs, provide proof of immunization against certain diseases: [Student Immunizations](#).

## **INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN USE (IRB)**

Student researchers must comply with all requirements for protection of human subjects. Detailed information is available on the [IRB website](#).

## **INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY**

Intellectual property refers to an asset that originated conceptually, such as literary and artistic works, inventions, or other creative works. These assets should be protected and used only as the creator intends. Training materials defining inventor status, patent criteria, and other intellectual property issues are available at: [University Policies on Patents, Copyright, and Intellectual Property](#).

## **LACTATION CENTERS**

Through the work of the UAB Commission on the Status of Women, the University has provided several lactation centers for students, faculty, and staff across the campus. [Center locations](#). The School of Health Professions' lactation room is in the Susan Mott Webb Nutrition Sciences Building at 1675 University Blvd, Room 219A, Birmingham, AL 35233. Female students enrolled in the School of Health Professions have access to the room via their student ID/OneCard. If you cannot access the room, contact the building administrator, Julia Tolbert-Jackson at (205) 934-4133.

## **LIBRARIES AND LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER**

UAB's libraries house excellent collections of books, periodicals, microforms, and other media. Students have online remote access to catalogs and online collections. Computers are available for student use during regular hours of operation. [UAB Libraries](#).

### **SHP Learning Resource Center (LRC)**

The School of Health Professions Learning Resource Center (LRC) provides a unique set of enterprise solutions that promote an exciting, intriguing, and innovative learning environment. It provides a state-of-the-art media studio; audio/visual support; and information technology management of public, classroom, and testing labs.

Location: 1714 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue South (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor), Birmingham, AL. 35233.

Phone: (205) 934-5146

Email: [shplrc@uab.edu](mailto:shplrc@uab.edu)

### **Lister Hill Library of the Health Sciences**

This is the largest biomedical library in Alabama, and one of the largest in the south. Located across the crosswalk from the School, the LHL has extension libraries in University Hospital and The Kirklin Clinic. Dedicated librarians hold "office hours" in the Learning Resource Center weekly.

Location: 1700 University Blvd. Birmingham, AL. 35233

Website: <https://library.uab.edu/locations/lister-hill>

Phone: (205) 975-4821

### **Mervyn H. Sterne Library**

A collection of more than one million items supporting teaching and research in the arts and humanities, business, education, engineering, natural sciences and mathematics, and social and behavioral sciences.

Location: 917 13<sup>th</sup> Street South, Birmingham, AL. 35233

Website: <https://library.uab.edu/locations/sterne>

Phone: (205) 934-6364 (Reference) | (205) 934-4338 (User Services)

## **NON-ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT POLICY**

The Student Conduct Code promotes honesty, integrity, accountability, rights, and responsibilities expected of students consistent with the core missions of the University of Alabama at Birmingham. This Code describes the standards of behavior for all students, and it outlines students' rights, responsibilities, and the campus processes for adjudicating alleged violations. Behavior that violates UAB standards of conduct listed within the Student Conduct Code and elsewhere will be subject to disciplinary action through the appropriate conduct process. Whether it is determined that an individual or group is responsible for the violation(s), either by direct involvement or by condoning, encouraging, or covering up the violation, appropriate response will occur with respect to the individual(s) and/or group involved.

[Undergraduate Non-Academic Policies](#)

[Graduate Non-Academic Policies](#)

## **ONE STOP STUDENT SERVICES**

If you have questions or need assistance with an academic or administrative process, the UAB One Stop is where to go! Advisors will help you solve your problem or do the legwork for you if another UAB resource is needed. One Stop is located in the Hill Student Center, 1400 University Blvd. Suite 103, Birmingham, AL 35233. You may contact the [One Stop](#) office by phone or email at (205) 934-4300; (855) UAB-1STP [(855) 822-1787]; [onestop@uab.edu](mailto:onestop@uab.edu).

## **PARKING**

Student vehicles must be registered with UAB Parking and Transportation Services, located at 608 8<sup>th</sup> Street South, Birmingham AL. 35294. The office is open Monday – Friday from 7:30am – 5:00pm. Parking is allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Parking fees are established by location, payable by semester or year, and are billed to the student's account. For additional information: [UAB Student Parking](#).

## **PLAGIARISM AND TURNITIN**

Plagiarism is academic misconduct that will result in a grade of zero and may result in dismissal from the School of Health Professions and UAB (see Academic Integrity Policy). All papers submitted for grading

in any SHP program may be reviewed using the online plagiarism monitoring software. Please note that all documents submitted to [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com) are added to their database of papers that is used to screen future assignments for plagiarism.

## RECREATION CENTER

The [Campus Recreation Center](#), located at 1501 University Blvd, Birmingham, AL 35233, is open to faculty, staff, students, and their families. A valid student identification card or membership card is required for access. Facilities include basketball courts, racquetball courts, weight rooms, swimming pools, exercise rooms, and indoor track.

## SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS AWARDS

All students in the School of Health Professions are eligible for consideration for the following awards.

- Alfred W. Sangster Award for Outstanding International Student – This award is presented annually to an international student in recognition of their academic and non-academic achievements.
- Cecile Clardy Satterfield Award for Humanism in Health Care – This award is made annually to recognize one outstanding student for humanitarianism, professionalism, and commitment to health care.
- Charles Brooks Award for Creativity – This award is made annually in recognition of creative accomplishments such as written publications or artistic contributions which complemented the student's academic activities.
- Dean's Leadership and Service Award – Presented to a maximum of three outstanding SHP students annually, this award recognizes leadership to the School, UAB, and the community.

For more information: [UAB School of Health Professions Student Awards and Scholarships](#). Please refer to the program section of this handbook for awards available to students in individual programs.

## SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS SCHOLARSHIPS

The SHP has several scholarship opportunities for students enrolled in SHP programs. The Scholarship Committee, comprised of faculty from each department, reviews and, selects awardees.

Scholarships available to students in any SHP program are the following:

*The Carol E. Medders Endowed Scholarship in Health Professions* was established by Carol Medders, former Director of Admissions for the School of Health Professions Student Services. Applicants must be currently enrolled in a full-time, degree-granting program in the School of Health Professions and should demonstrate academic excellence and financial need. The award recipient should be enrolled in a program that has a competitive application process and academic course load that prohibits them from holding full-time employment. This scholarship is awarded for the Spring Semester.

The *Ethel M. and Jesse D. Smith Endowed Nursing and Allied Health Scholarship* is an endowment that provides scholarships for both the School of Health Professions and School of Nursing. Applicants must be enrolled in a School of Health Professions undergraduate program and be a resident of the state of Alabama. Applicants should demonstrate academic excellence and financial need. This scholarship is awarded in the Fall.

The *Lettie Pate Whitehead Foundation* provides funding for scholarships focused on the foundation's founding mission—to provide financial assistance to women who express financial need in nine southeastern states. At the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Lettie Pate Whitehead Scholarships are awarded to women who, in addition to financial need, have an interest in pursuing studies in nursing or other health-related professions. Both undergraduate and graduate students within the Schools of Nursing and Health Professions are eligible. This scholarship is awarded each semester.

The *Dr. Edward D. and Sandra Dunning Huechtker Endowed Memorial Award* provides assistance to deserving students in need of financial support to continue in the pursuit of their goal of a career in the health professions. This award is open to undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in one of the School of Health Professions majors. Applicants should demonstrate academic excellence and financial need. This scholarship is awarded in the Spring Semester.

The *School of Health Professions Junior Advisory Board Endowed Scholarship* was established to provide financial awards assisting students with the completion of professional licensure and certification exams necessary to practice in their fields and/or the costs associated with professional development and job preparation. This scholarship is awarded in the Spring semester.

For more information: [UAB School of Health Professions Student Awards and Scholarships](#). Application announcements are made by the Office of Academic and Faculty Affairs. Many programs in SHP also have scholarships available to currently enrolled students in those programs. Please refer to the program section of this handbook for more information.

## SHARED VALUES

Collaboration, integrity, respect, and excellence are core values of our institution and affirm what it means to be a UAB community member. A key foundation of UAB is diversity. At UAB, everybody counts every day. UAB is committed to fostering a respectful, accessible and open campus environment. We value every member of our campus and the richly different perspectives, characteristics and life experiences that contribute to UAB's unique environment. UAB values and cultivates access, engagement and opportunity in our research, learning, clinical, and work environments. The School of Health Professions aims to create an open and welcoming environment and to support the success of all UAB community members.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media can serve as useful communication tools. However, health professions students should use the forums judiciously. The school's official sites are the following:

- Twitter: [https://twitter.com/UAB\\_SHP](https://twitter.com/UAB_SHP)
- Facebook: [www.facebook.com/UABSHP](http://www.facebook.com/UABSHP)
- YouTube: [www.youtube.com/uabshp](http://www.youtube.com/uabshp)
- Vimeo: <http://vimeo.com/uabshp>
- LinkedIn: [UAB SHP LinkedIn](http://www.linkedin.com/company/uabshp)
- Website: [www.uab.edu/shp](http://www.uab.edu/shp)

For more information: [UAB Social Media Guidelines](#).

## STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

The University provides prevention, counseling, and treatment services to students through Student Health Services (SHS) located at 1714 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue South (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor), Birmingham, AL. 35233. The clinic is open from 8:00am – 5:00pm Monday – Thursday; 9:00am – 5:00pm Friday. They are closed for lunch between 12:00pm – 1:00 pm weekdays. For more information: [Student Health Services](#). Appointments may be scheduled by calling (205) 934-3580.

## TITLE IX

In accordance with Title IX, the University of Alabama at Birmingham does not discriminate on the basis of gender in any of its programs or services. The University is committed to providing an environment free from discrimination based on gender and expects individuals who live, work, teach, and study within this community to contribute positively to the environment and to refrain from behaviors that threaten the freedom or respect that every member of our community deserves. For more information about Title IX, policy, reporting, protections, resources and supports, please visit the UAB Title IX webpage for UAB's Title IX Sex Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, and Sexual Violence Policy; UAB's Equal Opportunity and Discriminatory Harassment Policy; and the Duty to Report and Non-Retaliation Policy. For more information: [UAB Title IX](#).

## TUITION AND FEES

Tuition and fees for the University are published annually under the "Students" tab of the UAB website. They may be paid through BlazerNET. SHP programs have specific fees attached to programs, courses, and/ or laboratories. For more information: [Tuition & Fees](#).

Payment deadlines for each semester are published on the official academic calendar. Please note that failure to meet payment deadlines can result in being administratively withdrawn from courses.

## WEATHER

Severe weather situations that may affect the safety of students, faculty, and staff are communicated through the same channels as other emergencies. For more information: [Emergency Management](#). Other information sources include:

- [B-ALERT System](#) (contact information must be setup and current)
- UAB Severe Weather & Emergency Hotline: (205) 934-2165
- WBHM Radio (90.3 FM)

### **WITHDRAWAL FROM COURSE / PROGRAM**

Withdrawal from a course or from your program is an official process and should be discussed with your academic advisor and / or program director. Most programs in the School of Health Professions are full-time and the curricula specifically sequenced. Withdrawal from a course may risk your wait time to register for the class again. You might have to wait for a full year before resuming enrollment in the program. Withdrawals are made through the UAB registration system via the Student Resources tab in BlazerNET. Notice of program withdrawal should be given in writing to the program director. For more information: [UAB Add/Drop and Withdrawal Policy](#).

## SECTION 2 – SHP AND UAB POLICIES

### SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS POLICIES

#### BACKGROUND CHECK AND DRUG SCREEN POLICY

With the exceptions noted below, students admitted to clinical and non-clinical programs in the School of Health Professions (SHP) will complete a routine criminal background check and drug screen using the approved vendor ([CastleBranch](#)). These screenings should be completed prior the first term of enrollment. Subsequent routine criminal background checks and drug screens using the approved school vendor will be completed prior to fieldwork placement (clinical, internship, practicum, residency, etc.).

Students enrolled in SHP undergraduate programs will complete a learning module in the campus learning management system by the first semester of enrollment. If a fieldwork placement (clinical, internship, practicum, residency, etc.) is required, students must complete criminal background checks and drug screens prior to the first day of the semester of a fieldwork placement.

- Fees for these screenings will be the responsibility of the student.
- The rules and regulations governing individual fieldwork placement sites may include additional provisions and/or more stringent guidelines which supersede this policy. Fees for these screenings are the responsibility of the student.
- Should your criminal background check contain issues, or you fail a drug screen that may prevent you from receiving or sitting for board certification/licensure, a representative from the Office of Academic and Faculty Affairs will contact you. Depending upon the outcome, students will have a registration hold placed on their account until in compliance and this may result in being dismissed from the program. See program's guidelines regarding specific consequences.

Programs requiring a criminal background check and drug screening by the end of the first semester of enrollment and again, prior to fieldwork placement (if applicable in the program requirements), are the following:

Administration Health Services, PhD  
Biomedical Sciences to Biotechnology Fast Track  
Biomedical Sciences to Clinical Laboratory Science Fast Track  
Biomedical Sciences to Health Physics Fast Track  
Biomedical Sciences to Nuclear Medicine & Molecular Imaging Sciences Fast Track  
Biomedical and Health Sciences, MS  
Biotechnology, MS  
Biotechnology, PhD  
Dietitian Education Program, Graduate Certificate  
Genetic Counseling, MS  
Health Administration (Residential), MSHA  
Health Care Management to Healthcare Quality and Safety Fast Track  
Health Care Management to Health Informatics Fast Track

Health Care Management to Occupational Therapy Doctorate Fast Track  
Health Physics, MS  
Medical Laboratory Science, MS  
Nuclear Medicine & Molecular Imaging Sciences, MS  
Nutrition Sciences, MS  
– Dietetic Internship Clinical Track  
– Dietitian Education Program  
– Research Track  
Nutrition Sciences, PhD  
Occupational Therapy, OTD – (entry level)  
Physical Therapy, DPT  
Physician Assistant Studies, MSPAS  
Rehabilitation Science, PhD

The following students enrolled in SHP undergraduate programs will complete a learning module in the campus learning management system by the first semester of enrollment. If a fieldwork placement (clinical, internship, practicum, residency, etc.) is required, students must complete criminal background checks and drug screens prior to the first day of the semester of a fieldwork placement.

Health Care Management, BS  
Biomedical Sciences, BS  
Biobehavioral Nutrition and Wellness, BS  
Disability Studies and Rehabilitation Science, BS

Programs waived from the Criminal Background Check and Drug Screening requirements are the following: \*

Applied Mixed Methods Research, Graduate Certificate  
Biotechnology Regulatory Affairs, Graduate Certificate  
Clinical Informatics, Graduate Certificate  
Health Administration (International and Executive tracks), MSHA  
Health Informatics, MSHI  
Healthcare Finance Management, Graduate Certificate  
Healthcare Leadership, DSc  
Healthcare Leadership, Graduate Certificate  
Healthcare Quality and Safety, MS  
Healthcare Quality and Safety, Graduate Certificate  
Health Services Research, MS  
Healthcare Simulation, MS  
Healthcare Simulation, Graduate Certificate  
Nutrition for Community Health, Graduate Certificate  
Nutrition Sciences, MS  
– Clinical Track-Prior Learning  
– Lifestyle Management and Disease Prevention Track



Low Vision Rehabilitation, Graduate Certificate  
Multi-Tiered Approach to Trauma, Graduate Certificate  
Occupational Therapy Doctorate (Post Professional)  
Physical Therapy Residencies (Neurologic, Orthopedic)  
Primary Care Physical Therapy for Underserved Populations, Graduate Certificate

\*Students enrolled in exempt programs who participate in a course(s) incorporating community, corporate or other high impact, out-of-classroom activities such as service learning, capstone projects or other hands-on learning experiences, may be required by placement sites to submit background check and drug screening results. Students are responsible for the fees associated with such screening.



## STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS FOR UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS

### About CastleBranch.com

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CastleBranch is a secure platform that allows you to order your background check & drug test online. Once you have placed your order, you may use your login to access additional features of CastleBranch, including document storage, portfolio builders and reference tools. CastleBranch also allows you to upload any additional documents required by your school.

### Order Summary

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#### Required Personal Information

- o In addition to entering your full name and date of birth, you will be asked for your Social Security Number, current address, phone number, and e-mail address.

#### Drug Test (LabCorp or Quest Diagnostics)

- o Within 24-48 hours after you place your order, the electronic chain of custody form e-chain will be placed directly into your CastleBranch account. This e-chain will explain where you need to go to complete your drug test.

#### Payment Information

- o At the end of the online order process, you will be prompted to enter your Visa or MasterCard information. Money orders are also accepted, but will result in a \$10 fee and additional turn-around-time.

### Place Your Order

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Go to: [www.castlebranch.com](http://www.castlebranch.com) and enter package code:

AH01 - Background Check and Drug Test

You will be required to enter your program under "Student Information" classification

You will then be directed to set up your CastleBranch profile account.

### View Your Results

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Your results will be posted directly to your CastleBranch profile account. You will be notified if there is any missing information needed in order to process your order. Although 95% of background check results are completed within 3-5 business days, some results may take longer. Your order will show as "In Process" until it has been completed in its entirety. Your school's administrator can also securely view your results online with their unique username and password. If you have any additional questions, please contact the Service Desk at 888.723.4263 x 7196 or visit the website to submit your question at: <https://www.castlebranch.com/contact-us>.

## **DISMISSAL OF STUDENT FOR FAILURE TO MAKE SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS**

[Dismissal of Student and Appeal Process](#)

## **EMERGENCY PLAN – SHPB/LRC/WEBB**

[SHPB/LRC/WEBB Emergency Plan](#)

# UAB POLICIES

## ACADEMIC PROGRESS

[GRADUATE](#)

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## HEALTH

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## INCLUSIVENESS

[EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND DISCRIMINATORY HARASSMENT](#)

## POLICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

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## RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY ACTIVITIES

[ACADEMIC INTEGRITY CODE](#)

[ETHICAL STANDARDS IN RESEARCH AND OTHER SCHOLARLY ACTIVITIES](#)

[PATENT](#)

## SUBSTANCE USE/ABUSE

[ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES, USE AND CONSUMPTION](#)

[DRUG FREE CAMPUS](#)

[NON-SMOKING](#)

## TECHNOLOGY

[TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES](#)

## SECTION 3 – PROGRAM POLICIES

### WELCOME TO THE DEPARTMENT OF NUTRITION SCIENCES

The Department of Nutrition Sciences (DNS) at UAB has a rich history of nutrition education and research, with a heritage of nearly one hundred years of involvement in the field, beginning with three medical doctors, Drs. James McLester, Tom Spies, and Charles Butterworth. Their interest in the use of vitamins for the treatment and prevention of disease is responsible for the origin of UAB’s commitment to nutrition, which began in the 1920s. For a complete history of the DNS, visit the “History” page on [our website](#).

The Nutrition Sciences program at UAB is recognized as one of the top programs in the United States and has had a profound national impact on the health care practices of Americans. The DNS is a leader in providing multiprofessional nutrition support services, exceptional training programs for physicians and other health professionals, federally supported research endeavors, and nationwide public service activities. Everything you need to learn to save lives, prevent disease, and improve quality of life is at UAB.

The DNS is a multidisciplinary department that is highly integrated into UAB’s campus. This provides an ideal academic setting for excellence in nutrition education and training. The DNS has long-standing research programs in nutrient metabolism, cancer, obesity, and energy metabolism and regulation, which encompass human nutrition as well as basic molecular nutrition. Local students have the opportunity to participate in basic, clinical, and translational research within our National Institutes of Health (NIH)–funded research centers in the DNS—the Nutrition Obesity Research Center and the Diabetes Research Center —as well as other world-renowned research facilities on UAB’s campus, including the O’Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center. Local students also have the opportunity to study the clinical side of nutrition in the heart of Alabama’s top medical center, surrounded by UAB Hospital, Birmingham VA Medical Center, and Children’s of Alabama.

The program you are entering will prepare you for a rewarding career in the field of nutrition science. Through the PhD in Nutrition Sciences program curriculum, you will develop a wealth of knowledge while advancing your skills in critical problem solving in a team environment.

### FACULTY AND STAFF

The diversity inherent in the field of nutrition sciences is reflected in our faculty, staff, and students. To learn more about our Nutrition Sciences faculty and staff, please visit our [webpage](#).

## DEPARTMENT OF NUTRITION SCIENCES RESEARCH FACILITIES

### SUSAN MOTT WEBB NUTRITION SCIENCES BUILDING

Constructed in 1983, the six-story Susan Mott Webb Nutrition Sciences Building provides dedicated laboratories, research facilities, offices, and classrooms for our faculty and students. The Susan Mott Webb Nutrition Sciences Building is centrally located within UAB's main campus and is within easy walking distance of all major campus facilities.

The DNS benefits from the on-campus presence of and collaboration with outstanding regional and national institutes and centers, including the 1,207-bed University Hospital complex, which constitutes one of the major medical facilities in the eastern United States.

Research laboratories within the Webb Nutrition Sciences Building provide all the equipment needed for basic, animal, and clinical nutrition research in both human and animal samples. Notably, the Webb Nutrition Sciences Building operates one of the most complete Energy Metabolism/Body Composition Research Laboratories in the country. This laboratory contains indirect hood calorimeters, a 24-hour room calorimetry suite for assessing energy metabolism, a facility for a dual energy x-ray absorptiometry (DEXA), bioelectrical impedance analysis (BIA) devices, exercise testing equipment, and an isotope ratio mass spectrometer equipped with a gas chromatograph for assessing stable isotope abundance.

The DNS is unique in housing two prestigious NIH-funded research centers— the [Nutrition Obesity Research Center \(NORC\)](#) and the [Diabetes Research Center \(DRC\)](#). These centers are directly involved in our student training and research experiences and provide accessibility to core facilities and educational opportunities.

### CENTERS FOR RESEARCH AT UAB

UAB boasts many specialized research Centers of Excellence, including the Comprehensive Cardiovascular Center, Nathan Shock Center of Excellence in the Basic Biology of Aging, Sparkman Center for Global Health, Comprehensive Neurovascular and Stroke Center, Center for Healthcare Management and Leadership, UAB Center for Palliative and Supportive Care, Alzheimer's Disease Center, Center for Disability Health and Rehabilitation Science (DHARS), Hypertension Center, and many others. Most of these specialized centers are actively involved in training activities for students.

Students have ready access to most UAB resources, either directly or through their program director, academic advisor, or other faculty members. Certain centers on campus, such as the O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center, have a broad spectrum of diagnostic and analytical services available to UAB faculty.

## OVERVIEW OF UAB'S PHD IN NUTRITION SCIENCES PROGRAM

### PROGRAM ACCREDITATION

UAB is accredited by the **SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS COMMISSION ON COLLEGES (SACSOC)** to award baccalaureate, master's, doctorate, and professional degrees. Contact the Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097 or call (404) 679-4500 with questions about UAB's accreditation.

### OVERALL OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM

The primary objective of the doctoral program is to ***prepare students for a career as an independent investigator in nutrition sciences research***. By the conclusion of this program, students are expected to begin to think independently and be able to synthesize prior research, propose original research studies to address gaps in the literature, critically evaluate research designs and methodology, analyze and interpret results, and disseminate and defend their work in verbal and written form.

### APPLICATION PROCESS

Admission to the PhD in Nutrition Sciences program is for the fall term only, with the application deadline occurring on or before **DECEMBER 1** annually. Please see our website for the current deadline. Applicants should have a minimum of a Baccalaureate degree in a recognized field of biological, physical, chemical, exercise, nutrition, agricultural, or engineering science from an accredited university. To meet the UAB Graduate School and DNS admission standards, a student must submit a completed application through the UAB Graduate School's [online application system](#). The following are included in the application:

- Non-refundable application fee
- Letter of application that addresses the applicant's short- and long-term professional goals, research and training experiences, and reasons for applying to this program
- Official transcripts from all colleges and universities attended submitted directly to the UAB Graduate School (unofficial transcripts and those submitted directly to the DNS PhD program director or staff will not be considered as part of the application)
- Current resume or curriculum vitae
- Three letters of recommendation from professionals with knowledge of the applicant's background and abilities. These letters must be signed and should be on institutional or company letterhead if at all possible.
- As of fall 2023, Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores are no longer required as part of the admission process. If submitted, scores will be considered if they benefit the student's application or provide more context about the students' academic potential, but they will not be used as the sole reason to decline admission.

English proficiency testing is required for international applicants whose native language is not English. These scores must be reported to the UAB Graduate School directly from the testing service. Students who have a degree from a foreign university must have all foreign transcripts evaluated for equivalency

with a degree from a United States institution by an external company that is [NACES approved](#). Please note, it is not sufficient to provide an English language translation of previous programs of study. The evaluation by one of these approved services is necessary for the admissions committee to adequately compare transcripts with those of students with a degree from a U.S. institution. In some circumstances the International Students and Scholars office at UAB may be able to evaluate a foreign transcript in-house and thereby waive the requirement for a NACES-approved transcript evaluation. Prospective students should contact that office at [iss@uab.edu](mailto:iss@uab.edu) well in advance of the application deadline to determine if they will need to get a NACES-approved evaluation.

Review of applications will begin one week after the deadline for submission, and only fully complete applications will be considered. Students with only U.S. transcripts should plan to submit all parts of the application not less than one week prior to the deadline. Students with transcripts from a foreign institution should submit all parts of the application not less than two weeks prior to the deadline.

## ADMISSION DECISIONS

Applications are evaluated by the DNS PhD Program Committee and recommendations given to the PhD program director, who then makes admission recommendations to the UAB Graduate School. Students recommended for admission to the PhD in Nutrition Sciences program will receive notification from the dean of the UAB Graduate School. A notification of acceptance is also sent by email from the PhD program director, followed by an official letter from the DNS.

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

### TUITION SCHOLARSHIPS

Tuition scholarships are available to outstanding applicants accepted to the PhD in Nutrition Sciences program. Awarded tuition scholarships generally cover the cost of tuition up to 27 credit hours per year, as well as institutional fees. Awarded tuition scholarships are evaluated for renewal on a yearly basis. Renewal is based on the recipient's independent demonstration of excellence in academic performance, leadership in the PhD program, progress and productivity in both academics and research, and the availability of departmental funds. The maximum period of awarded tuition support for any recipient is five years. Conditions of receiving a tuition scholarship are as follows.

1. Students must enroll as a full-time graduate student. This includes registering for and successfully completing 23–27 semester hours of graduate course work (usually distributed as nine semester hours in each of the three semesters). Tuition scholarships apply only to coursework taken as a requirement of the PhD in Nutrition Sciences program. Therefore, students who are awarded a tuition scholarship are required to consult with the PhD program director before registering for courses each academic term.
2. Recipients of tuition scholarships must maintain an outstanding academic record. The tuition



scholarship will be terminated if a student does not demonstrate competitive academic performance or is placed on academic probation by the UAB Graduate School.

## STIPEND OPPORTUNITIES

Stipend opportunities are available to outstanding applicants accepted to the PhD in Nutrition Sciences program. Opportunities for stipends are different for every student and depend on the student's qualifications as an applicant as well as funding within the DNS. Stipend opportunities may be available through graduate fellowships, graduate research or teaching assistantships, or individual/independent scholarships.

After the second year and until the completion of all PhD in Nutrition Sciences requirements, students are expected to have financial support in place. Examples of stipend support mechanisms include:

- Securing stipend support from the student's faculty mentor–funded research grants. Faculty mentors are identified within the first year of the graduate program.
- Individual funding through a pre-doctoral award mechanism or a pre-doctoral training grant, such as a T32.
- Financial aid through appropriate university venues or independent financial solvency.

The PhD program director will assist the student with identifying a suitable faculty mentor but cannot guarantee that this mentor will be able to provide a stipend. The faculty mentor and PhD program director may appoint students as a graduate research assistant, graduate assistant, or, if certain requirements are met, graduate teaching assistant. The service provided in any of these cases will be designed to enhance the student's professional development while contributing to the teaching and/or research initiatives of the university.

A student who accepts an assistantship shall not hold any form of employment outside of the assistantship. Exceptions are rare but may be granted by the dean of the UAB Graduate School for situations in which outside work is clearly beneficial to the overall training of the student. The remainder of academic efforts should be devoted to carrying out the requirements of the PhD program, including the original research necessary to fulfill dissertation requirements. Students should keep in mind that assistantships are offered so that the student can focus on professional development associated with the PhD program. As such, outside work is viewed as a distraction that could slow progress toward meeting the PhD program requirements.

## GETTING STARTED

The **UAB GRADUATE CATALOG** as well as the **UAB POLICIES AND PROCEDURES** guidelines are important resources throughout the program of study. Please become familiar with these.

## THE UAB GRADUATE CATALOG

The UAB Graduate Catalog outlines all of the policies and procedures pertaining to academic performance, degree progress, academic and non-academic conduct, and student responsibilities. Students are expected to be familiar with these policies and to abide by them. The Graduate Catalog can be found [here](#).

In addition to the UAB Graduate Catalog, the DNS Student Handbooks outline Nutrition Sciences–specific requirements. All degree-seeking students are expected to follow the Nutrition Sciences requirements as well as those specific to their track. Therefore, the information within this handbook serves as a contract between you and the PhD in Nutrition Sciences graduate program.

## UAB POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Please refer to the School of Health Professions and UAB policies included in Section 2 of this Student Handbook.

## BLAZERID

Students are automatically assigned a BlazerID following application to the program. If you cannot find your BlazerID in the graduate school application portal, contact the Academic Advisor for assistance. You will need to create a unique password.

## UAB EMAIL

After the BlazerID is successfully created, students will have access to a UAB email address. All students are expected to communicate using their UAB email address for any UAB-related matter. Please follow UAB's [Brand and Communication Toolkit](#) when creating an email signature.

## COURSE REGISTRATION

Students should register for all courses in which graduate credit is pursued. The UAB class schedule is accessible via [BlazerNET](#) located at [www.uab.edu/blazernet](http://www.uab.edu/blazernet). Students are able to register for courses and adjust their schedule by adding and dropping courses through the end of the drop/add period, which can be found on the [Academic Calendar](#).

Policies about tuition and fees, student account payment deadlines, payment processes, withdrawal from courses, leave of academic absence, withdrawal from the UAB Graduate School, and exceptions to policies can be found in the [Graduate Catalog](#).

All students are strongly encouraged to register no later than two weeks before the beginning of the semester. If a student has a tuition scholarship, it is very important to provide a copy of the registration tuition and fees due at the request of the program manager. Statements must be submitted no later than 10 days prior to the start of each term. Failure to do so may result in a lapse in health insurance and late fees added to the account.

## ACADEMIC PROGRESS

The UAB Graduate School requires that a doctoral degree be conferred within seven years following the start date. Throughout the graduate program of study, your status in the program is critically evaluated in terms of academic progress and productivity toward completion of degree requirements.

## GRADUATION PLANNING SYSTEM (GPS)

Degree progress can be reviewed online through the [Graduation Planning System](#) (GPS), which provides completed requirements and those not yet satisfied toward the degree plan. The website also has a selection of [GPA calculators](#). Learn more about how to access and read the GPS [here](#).

## GRADING AND GRADE POINT AVERAGE (GPA)

The grade of A indicates superior performance, B is adequate performance, and C is performance only minimally adequate for a graduate student. Any graduate student completing a course at the 500 level or above with a performance below the C level will receive a grade of F. The Graduate School does not use the grade of D. Whereas a grade of C is accepted in a given course to receive a passing grade, a B average overall (3.0 on a 4.0 scale) is required to maintain good academic standing in the program.

Four (4.0) quality points are awarded for each semester hour in which an A is earned, three (3.0) for a B, and two (2.0) for a C. No quality points are awarded for a grade of F. GPA is determined by dividing the total quality points awarded by semester hours attempted at the graduate level.

For courses designated as pass/not pass, a grade of P (passing) signifies satisfactory work. A grade of NP (not passing) indicates unsatisfactory work, although no penalty is assessed with respect to GPA.

The [GPA Calculator](#) can be used to explore how the classes you enroll in will affect your GPA each term.

## ADDITIONAL ACADEMIC PROGRESS POLICIES

Policies about temporary grade notations, academic standing, repeated courses, grade replacement, grade changes, and time limitations can be found in the [Graduate Catalog](#).

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY CODE

UAB established a new Academic Integrity Code effective August 23, 2021. This code, which applies to undergraduate, graduate, and professional students as well as all academic activities, defines academic misconduct and outlines procedures for breaches of the code. Policies are established for the resolution of charges of academic misconduct, and these processes are managed by the academic integrity coordinator (AIC). In the School of Health Professions, the AIC is the associate dean for academic and faculty affairs. The full text of the Academic Integrity Code is available [here](#).

## DEPARTMENT GRIEVANCE POLICY

Although it is rare, issues can arise between a student and professor, student and student, faculty mentor, program manager, or program director. To ensure that concerns are addressed in an





appropriate and timely manner, students should follow the program's procedure for resolving issues and document each stage of the process. The program is required to maintain a record of student complaints for a period of seven years, including the resolution of complaints. The following are the steps that must be taken for an academic grievance by a student:

1. Address concerns or problems with the responsible party, i.e., professor, faculty mentor, or program director. Students should make all attempts to communicate and resolve concerns with the responsible party prior to contacting the program director.
2. If no resolution is found, identify the problem and clearly document the situation in writing. Present documentation to the program director, who will then arrange a combined meeting with all parties involved to work to resolve the issue.
3. If the grievance is with the program director, submit documentation to the chair of the DNS.
4. If at this point the issue is not resolved, documentation of the problem and grievance process will be submitted to the School of Health Professions associate dean for academic and faculty affairs for review.
5. If these steps do not culminate in a resolution, the student should follow the university's [Student Complaint Policy](#).

## PHD PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND COURSEWORK

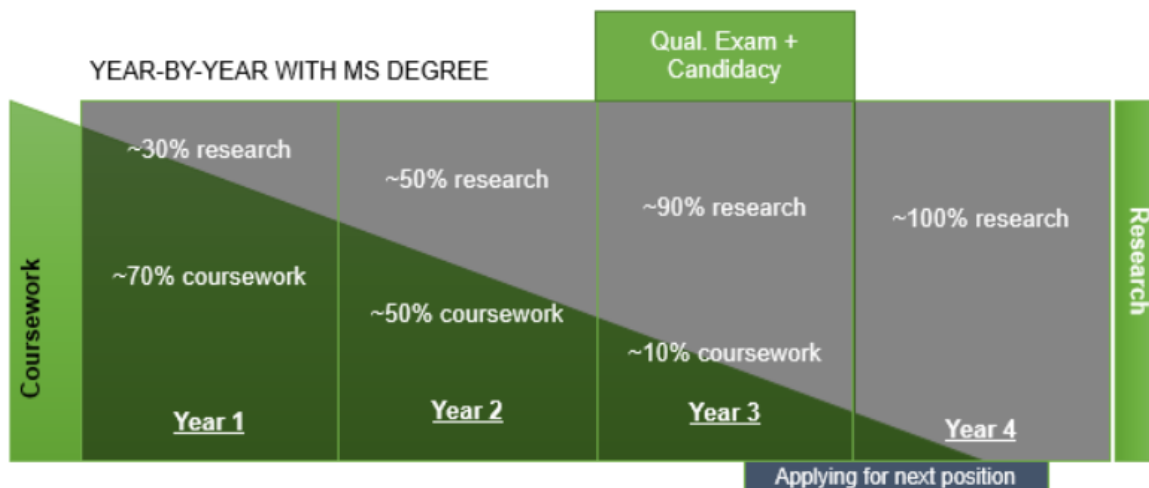
The PhD in Nutrition Sciences program provides training and research experiences in basic and translational nutrition science. Students learn the science of nutrition as it relates to maintaining the health of individuals and populations, as well as the biochemical basis and application of nutrition to promote health and prevent disease. Possible areas of study include experimental design, nutritional biochemistry, energy requirements, body composition, geriatric nutrition, community nutrition, and disease prevention, among others. To see what current students are studying, visit our [PhD in Nutrition Sciences webpage](#).

In general, students acquire four specific skillsets during their time in the program. These skills are acquired through a combination of coursework and practical application during research experiences. These skillsets are:

			
<b>Design</b>	<b>Conduct</b>	<b>Analyze</b>	<b>Communicate</b>
Develop research ideas and testable hypotheses informed by published research	Plan research Collect data using valid and reliable methodology	Analyze data Understand statistics Interpret results	Disseminate findings via presentations and manuscripts

**IMPORTANT: These skills are evaluated during candidacy** (including but not limited to: inception and design of research; synthesizing the literature, planning research projects; verbal and written communication) **and the final dissertation defense** (including but not limited to: conduct of research; analysis and interpretation of results; verbal and written communication). Mentors and students are expected to work together to ensure that the dissertation proposal and research project provide sufficient opportunity to demonstrate students' skills.

The UAB Graduate School allows a maximum of seven years to complete a doctoral degree. The PhD in Nutrition Sciences program at UAB requires the completion of 36 semester hours in core courses, 12 semester hours in non-dissertation research, 12 semester hours in dissertation research, and 12 additional graduate semester hours of elective coursework. An example timeline is provided below:



## CORE COMPLETION REQUIREMENTS

The core completion requirements provide the basic knowledge expected of all students in the PhD in Nutrition Sciences program. A description of each of these courses can be found within the [UAB Graduate School Catalog](#). Collectively, these required courses provide training in Foundations of Nutrition Science (9 hours), Research Methods and Statistics (17 hours), and Current Research in Nutrition Sciences (8+).

Prefix	Course Title	Credits	Semester Offered
NTR 621*	Applied Statistics to Nutrition Sciences I	3	Fall
NTR 703	Applied Statistics to Nutrition Sciences II	3	Spring
NTR 637*	Applied Research in Nutrition Sciences	3	Spring
NTR 690*	Seminar	2	Fall
NTR 718*	Nutritional Biochemistry	6	Summer
GRD 717	Principles of Scientific Integrity	3	Fall, Spring
NTR 733	Laboratory Instruments and Methods in Nutrition Research	2	Fall, Spring, Summer
NTR 736	Scientific Methods	3	Fall (Even)
NTR 747	Molecular Biology and Nutrition Sciences	3	Spring (Even)
NTR 779*	Obesity in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century	3	Spring (Odd)
NTR 788	Advanced Nutrition Seminar (1 credit hour, taken five times)	1	Fall, Spring
<b>Total semester hours of core requirements</b>		<b>32</b>	

\*Denotes an online course

Students are encouraged to use the [Graduation Planning System](#) to track progress toward successful completion of academic requirements. The Graduation Planning System is also available through each student's [BlazerNet homepage](#). Students should also consult with the program director or program manager for assistance.

It is rare for a student to be granted an exemption for any of the required courses in the doctoral program. This is because although students may have taken a similar course in a prior program, they have not learned the content in the context of our areas of research and training emphasis. However, the PhD program director, the relevant course instructor, and other members of the faculty may recommend an exception to a required course after reviewing the students' prior transcripts and research experience.

### APPROVED ELECTIVES

The following is an overview of the approved electives for students in the PhD in Nutrition Sciences program. Other electives may be approved by the PhD program director.

Prefix	Course Title	Credits	Semester Offered
NTR 601*	Advanced Medical Nutrition	3	Spring
NTR 604*	Principles and Practice of Nutrition Support	3	Fall
NTR 609*	Applied Nutrition for Physical Activity and Disease Prevention	3	Fall
NTR 631*	Community Interventions for Healthy Lifestyles	3	Spring
NTR 632*	Nutrition Counseling and Education	4	Fall
NTR 750	Body Composition and Energy Metabolism	3	Summer (Even)
NTR 755**	Teaching Practicum in Nutrition Sciences	3	Fall, Spring, Summer
NTR 761	Enhancing Research Productivity through Intensive Writing	3	Fall

\*Denotes an online course

\*\*NTR 755 may only be taken with approval from the PhD program director.

The DNS regularly reviews the curriculum and program. Changes to the curriculum are directed by input from our faculty, alumni, and job market demands as well as research advancements in nutrition science.

**Journal Clubs:** Given the individualized nature of the PhD program, we do not offer a journal club for all DNS PhD students. However, journal clubs are immensely valuable because they provide students with space and time to think, and they give students an insight into how the faculty, staff, and other trainees think and critique research. ***Students are STRONGLY advised to work with their faculty mentors to identify and participate in a regular journal club pertinent to the topic of their research.*** Participation includes reading materials in advance, actively engaging in the discussion, and leading the journal club at least once annually. Students should talk to the program director if they have trouble finding an appropriate journal club

## RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS

Students in the doctoral program register for research credit as they advance through their training program. In the first year, students register for NTR733 (Laboratory Instruments and Methods in Nutrition Research) while they conduct research rotations with different mentors. Once paired with a faculty mentor with whom they will conduct their dissertation research, students will register for NTR798 (Doctoral Level Non-Dissertation Research) until they have passed candidacy. NTR799 (Doctoral Level Dissertation Research) is taken after passing the candidacy exam.



## **NTR733 LABORATORY INSTRUMENTS AND METHODS IN NUTRITION RESEARCH**

Research rotations are an integral component of the first year of DNS doctoral studies. These rotations provide students the opportunity to identify their specific area of research interest and identify a faculty mentor for the duration of their time in the PhD program. Most students will have at least 2–3 research rotations for first-hand experiences in conducting basic and/or clinical research with multiple potential mentors. Students must receive explicit approval from the PhD program director prior to each rotation. These research rotations typically last one semester but can be arranged differently with permission of the program director. Students and mentors are expected to establish goals for each rotation. These goals should include an introduction to the overall research topic, brief review of relevant literature, introduction to at least one method used in the conduct of research, and understanding of key concepts including assumptions, validity, strengths, and limitations of the selected method.

Authorship in scientific publications is not an expectation of research rotations; however, students should be learning the skills that will support scientific writing in subsequent years. A greater emphasis is placed on authorship during the second year of the program, through the student's original research, grantsmanship, and collaborative professional scholarship efforts. The faculty mentor and program director should be consulted to identify opportunities to learn scientific writing and data presentation skills.

### **NTR798: NON-DISSERTATION RESEARCH HOURS**

After completing research rotations (NTR 733) and establishing a faculty mentor, students will register for non-dissertation (NTR 798) research hours under the direction of their faculty mentor. If the student's primary research mentor is outside of the DNS, the student will register under a co-chair or close collaborator from within the DNS or under the program director. The faculty member under

whom the student registers each semester will provide a Pass, No Pass, or Incomplete grade during the grading period for each semester (see box above). A minimum of 12 credit hours in non-dissertation

### ***How are NTR733, NTR798, and NTR799 graded?***

The mentor and student must identify several written objectives for each semester in which the student registers for research credit. These objectives are expected to be achievable within the semester and correspond with the student's progress through the program. For example, being present and doing what is asked might be sufficient to earn a passing grade (P) in the first semester of training, but thereafter, students are expected to work more independently, show more initiative, and require less explicit direction from their mentors as they advance through the program. Failure to demonstrate such growth could result in an NP grade.

Students should be aware that failure to complete pre-determined objectives could result in an "I" (incomplete) or an "NP" (No Pass) grade for that semester. If this happens, the student and mentor are expected to consult the program director and create a plan for the student to make more progress in subsequent semesters.

NOTE: On rare occasions, a student may not have room in their schedule to register for NTR733, 798, or 799 in a specific semester. Given the research-intensive nature of the doctoral program, all students should remain actively engaged in research regardless of whether they have registered for research credit.

research is required of all PhD in Nutrition Sciences students prior to admission to candidacy. After successfully passing candidacy, the student can register for NTR799.

## ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY

Candidacy is a formal milestone in doctoral training. Students are eligible to apply for candidacy when they have (1) completed all required courses, (2) passed their qualifying (comprehensive) exam, (3) presented an acceptable proposal for their dissertation research, and (4) obtained IRB or IACUC approval for the dissertation project(s).

The candidacy process is used to evaluate whether students have acquired the scientific skills to transition into the independent research enterprise that underlies a doctoral dissertation. Prior to beginning dissertation requirements, students must be proficient in the skills of scientific and experimental design, statistical methodology/modeling, scientific writing, and scientific oral communication and presentation. Students should also have excellent knowledge of the existing literature related to the topic of their intended dissertation work. Overall, the Candidacy Examination has been designed to evaluate these skills. More specifically, students are evaluated on topics including but not limited to their ability to synthesize the existing literature, identify a research question and explain why it is important, formulate and justify a research hypothesis, and design an original research study that will address the question.

In the DNS, the qualifying exam and dissertation proposal are entwined such that the student will write their dissertation proposal and, once their committee is satisfied that they are ready to defend it, the student will then present their proposal publicly. As part of the defense, the student must show adequate knowledge and understanding of the subject matter and research process by addressing questions from the general audience and the committee.

The written portion of the qualifying exam is an F31-style document consisting of the Specific Aims page, the Research Strategy (Significance and Approach), and Timeline. This format is used because it provides doctoral students with the opportunity to develop their independence as researchers and to clearly plan their dissertation research. The UAB Graduate School encourages students to apply for external funding during their graduate studies, particularly through use of the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) F31 mechanism. Though F31 submission to NIH is not a requirement as part of the Candidacy Examination, it is highly encouraged.

**The scope and topic of the dissertation proposal** should reflect research that (1) is publishable, (2) has potential to make a genuine contribution to nutrition sciences, (3) provides an opportunity for the student to conduct original hypothesis-driven research, and (4) permits the student to demonstrate that they can apply the training they have received to their research. If the dissertation proposal does not meet these criteria, it will not be possible for the committee to determine whether the student should be approved for admission to candidacy. If in doubt about the topic and scope of a dissertation proposal, seek advice from the program director.

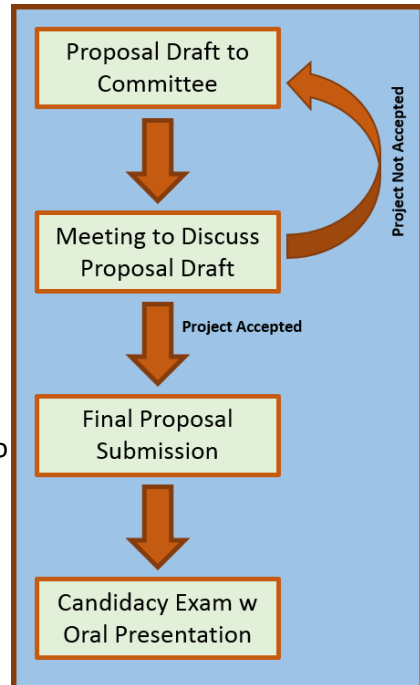
## CANDIDACY PROCEDURES

Please follow all guidance from the UAB Graduate School. The process described herein incorporates those requirements and our departmental recommendations.

Prior to the semester in which the student wishes to complete candidacy, the student is expected to verify with the program director that they have met all program requirements to be eligible for candidacy. To be eligible for candidacy, the student must have completed required coursework, the program director and graduate school must have approved their dissertation committee, and they must have IRB or IACUC approval for the dissertation project(s).

The process for the candidacy examination is as follows:

1. Discuss the committee composition with faculty mentor(s) and the program director. Complete the [DNS PhD committee form](#) and submit it to the PhD program director for approval.
2. Once the PhD program director has approved the committee, complete and submit the [Graduate School Committee form](#).
3. Develop the Specific Aims page with your mentor. It is strongly recommended that you meet with your committee to discuss the Specific Aims and scope of your dissertation proposal and your progress to date prior to finalizing your *Proposal Draft*.
4. Prepare the *Proposal Draft* in the format of an F31 grant. The *Proposal Draft* will represent only the scientific aspect of the application (research proposal) and should not exceed 10 pages (F31 applications usually request six pages for the research component).
5. Get feedback from your faculty mentor and make revisions to the *Proposal Draft*.
6. After approval from the faculty mentor, send the mentor-approved *Proposal Draft* to your committee and the PhD program director (i.e., the top box in the figure at right).
7. The faculty mentor, committee, and PhD program director will review the document and then meet to discuss (the second box in the figure). It is recommended that this group have at least 10 business days to review the *Proposal Draft* before they meet, but this time can be shortened if everyone agrees. The student will be responsible for organizing this meeting, and the student should be available if called upon, but they should not join the meeting unless called upon.
8. After the meeting to discuss the *Proposal Draft*, feedback will be provided to the student. The outcome of this meeting is "Pause" or "Proceed."
  - a. If the committee accepts the project and agrees that the student should proceed, the student will incorporate feedback from the committee while preparing the *Final Proposal* version of the document.
  - b. If the committee does not accept the project and requests that the student pause, the



student will revise the *Proposal Draft* with guidance from the faculty mentor and then send the new *Proposal Draft* to the committee (restarting the process from the top box in the figure above).

9. With approval from the faculty mentor, send the *Final Proposal* to the committee and the PhD program director and schedule the Candidacy Examination. **The *Final Proposal* must be sent to the faculty mentor, committee, and PhD program director at least 10 business days prior to the date of the Candidacy Examination.** The student is also responsible for providing all relevant information about the Candidacy Examination (title, committee members, date, time, location) to the program manager no less than 10 business days before the event so that an announcement can be distributed.
10. The Candidacy Examination will consist of the submission of the *Final Proposal* and a public presentation of the background and the research plan, followed by a private meeting with the committee for discussion and/or approval of the proposal. Positive completion of these processes will represent the completion of candidacy.

It is highly recommended that students meet with their advisor to coordinate the submission of the proposal to NIH. If the document is to be submitted for funding, the student and advisor will need to design and add to the proposal the mentoring component of the F31 (which is part of the application). The student and the advisor may seek support from the PhD program director and program manager in this part of the process.

Non-U.S. citizens will also write the F31; however, they will be encouraged to develop a plan with their mentor for transferring the information of the written proposal into another type of funding mechanism for which they are eligible.

**Planning for Candidacy:** The student should find the deadline for candidacy on the Graduate School [website](#) and work backwards to create a plan for completion before the deadline. Mentors and students should anticipate that the process will take a minimum of 2–3 months. Ample time is needed for the iterative process of mentor review, student revisions, and mentor re-review BEFORE the draft is sent to the committee in advance of the *Proposal Draft* meeting. ***The student may request advice and input from committee members to address specific questions about the proposed research; however, committee members should not review and provide feedback on the complete written draft until the final mentor-approved version has been distributed to the entire committee and program director.*** At the *Proposal Draft* meeting, the program director will collate all feedback for the mentor and student related to whether the student is ready to proceed with their candidacy defense or should pause to do additional work.

## CANDIDACY PROPOSAL

Applications for an Individual Fellowship Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award should use the SF424 (R&R) Fellowship Application Guide, which may be downloaded [here](#).

Some relevant information to take into account (taken from the directions in the link above):

1. The proposal submitted to the student's committee should have the appropriate face page. The "cover page" used now for F31s can be found by performing a google search using the terms "download RR SF424."
2. The Research Training Plan Section must not exceed 10 pages (there is a one-page limit for the Specific Aims and a nine-page limit for the Research Strategy), including all tables, graphs, figures, diagrams, and charts. Please note that the 10-page limit is a DNS requirement. If a student decides to submit the F31 for extramural funding, the limit will be seven pages (a one-page limit for the Specific Aims and a six-page limit for the Research Strategy). The Research Training Plan should include the following sections:

**a) Specific Aims Page.** List the broad, long-term objectives and the goal of the specific research proposed, e.g., to test a stated hypothesis, create a novel design, solve a specific problem, challenge an existing paradigm or clinical practice, address a critical barrier to progress in the field, or develop new technology. Summarize the expected outcome(s) and impact of the proposed project. The Specific Aims should be limited to one page.

**b) Research Strategy.** Organize the Research Strategy section using the sub-sections outlined below. The Research Strategy should not exceed six pages.

Significance

- i. Briefly sketch the background leading to the present application, critically evaluate existing knowledge, and explain the importance of the problem or critical barrier to progress in the field the proposed project addresses.
- ii. Specifically identify the gaps that the project is intended to fill and explain how the proposed project will improve scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice.
- iii. State concisely the importance and health relevance of the research described in this application by relating the specific aims to broad, long-term objectives and to the mission of the NIH Institute & Center or Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

**c) Approach**

- iv. Describe the overall research design concept or clinical framework, procedures, and analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project. Include how the data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted.
- v. Describe any new methodology and its advantage over existing methodologies. Describe any novel concepts, approaches, tools, or technologies for the proposed studies.
- vi. Discuss the potential difficulties and limitations of the proposed procedures and alternative approaches to achieve the aims. Point out any procedures, situations, or materials that may be hazardous to personnel and the precautions to be exercised.

*Note: If your proposal has multiple Specific Aims, then you may address Significance and Approach for each Specific Aim individually, or you may address Significance and Approach for all of the Specific Aims collectively.*

**d) Preliminary Studies for New Applications (if appropriate)**

vii. Provide an account of preliminary studies, if any, that are pertinent to this application (including data collected by others in the lab). This information will help reviewers and NIH staff evaluate competence to pursue the proposed project. It will also help demonstrate the utility of the proposed project as a training experience. When applicable, provide a succinct account of published and unpublished results and/or experience pertinent to the proposal, indicating progress toward their achievement.

**c) Project Timetable.** Provide a tentative sequence or timetable for the project. A timetable like this is not required as part of the Research Strategy section for the F31 (there is a timetable component in the training section, which is not required for the proposal); however, it is helpful to do this so the committee can see it.

*Note: This timetable does NOT count toward the page limit for the proposal.*

3. A bibliography/references cited should be included as part of the proposal but **is NOT counted as part of the 7 to 10-page limit** for the body of the proposal. The NIH does not require a specific citation format, so students may choose the references cited format of their choice.

4. Proposal formatting and font:

- Use paper size no larger than the standard 8.5" x 11".
- Provide at least 0.5-inch margins (top, bottom, left, and right) for all pages. No information can appear in the margins.
- Font size must be 11 points or larger. It is acceptable to use smaller text size in figures, graphs, diagrams, and charts as long as it is legible when the page is viewed at 100%.
- Type density must be no more than 15 characters per linear inch (including characters and spaces).
- Line spacing must be no more than six lines per vertical inch.
- There are no restrictions on the text color, although black or other high-contrast text colors are recommended.
- The NIH recommends using one of the following fonts, although other fonts (both serif and sans-serif) are acceptable if they meet the criteria listed above:
  - Arial, Georgia, Helvetica, Palatino Linotype

## CANDIDACY EVALUATION

The DNS's evaluation criteria for an F31 are based on the following four aspects:

1. *Candidate.* The candidate's previous academic and research performance and their potential to become an important contributor to biomedical, behavioral, or clinical science.
2. *Sponsor and Training Environment.* The quality of the training environment and the qualifications

of the sponsor as a mentor within the proposed research training experience.

3. *Research Proposal*. The merit of the scientific proposal and its relationship to the candidate's career plans.
4. *Training Potential*. The value of the proposed fellowship experience as it relates to the candidate's needs in preparation for a career as an independent researcher.

However, the evaluation that will count as part of the candidacy exam will be based mainly on the Research Proposal aspect. Students should note that although the primary evaluation is based on the written document, the committee will use the written document and other information about the student's progress as an indicator of whether the student is ready to proceed to candidacy. The manner in which the document is written (e.g., quality of the writing, completeness of the significance, rigor of the methodological approach and description, overall flow and development of ideas, etc.) helps the committee evaluate the student's readiness to proceed. It is recommended that the student's faculty mentor and other members of the candidacy committee evaluate the research proposal using the typical NIH review criteria, as described below:

**Significance:** Does this study address an important problem? If the aims of the application are achieved, how will scientific knowledge or clinical practice be advanced? What will be the effect of these studies on the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field?

**Approach:** Are the conceptual or clinical framework, design, methods, and analyses adequately developed, well integrated, well-reasoned, and appropriate to the aims of the project? Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternative tactics?

**Innovation:** Is the project original and innovative? For example: Does the project challenge existing paradigms or clinical practice or address an innovative hypothesis or critical barrier to progress in the field? Does the project develop or employ novel concepts, approaches, methodologies, tools, or technologies for this area?

**Investigators:** Are the investigators appropriately trained and well suited to carry out this work? Is the work proposed appropriate to the experience level of the principal investigator and other researchers? Does the investigative team bring complementary and integrated expertise to the project?

**Environment:** Does the scientific environment in which the work will be done contribute to the probability of success? Do the proposed studies benefit from unique features of the scientific environment or subject populations or employ useful collaborative arrangements? Is there evidence of institutional support?

**Overall Evaluation:** In one paragraph, briefly summarize the most important points of the critique, addressing the strengths and weaknesses of the application in terms of the five review criteria. Recommend a score reflecting the overall impact of the project on the field, weighing the review criteria, as you feel appropriate for each application. An application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have a major scientific impact and, thus, deserve a high merit rating. For example, an investigator may propose to carry out important work that by its nature is

not innovative, but is essential to move a field forward or improve clinical decisions or outcomes.

It is encouraged that committee members use this information when evaluating the student proposal and provide feedback regarding any deficiencies/concerns that will diminish the scientific quality or feasibility of the proposed study. The meeting among the committee members should focus on the discussion of the proposal within the context of the aspects mentioned above, and should not last for more than one hour.

## **THE GRADUATE SCHOOL'S OFFICE OF INTERDISCIPLINARY GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDIES (IGPS)**

Through its Office of Interdisciplinary Graduate and Professional Studies, the Graduate School offers courses, workshops, and seminars designed to help graduate students develop career-enhancing skills. Current offerings include credit-bearing courses and workshops, as well as free seminars in writing, funding, presentations, and teaching at the college level. We encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities. More information and schedules are available on the Office of Interdisciplinary Graduate and Professional Studies [website](#).

## **APPOINTMENT OF FACULTY MENTOR AND DISSERTATION COMMITTEE**

### **FACULTY MENTOR**

All students are required to identify a faculty mentor (research advisor/mentor) by the end of their first year in the PhD in Nutrition Sciences program. The mentor carries numerous responsibilities, including the many facets of graduate student education and research training, as well as potential financial support for the student's stipend, health insurance, and travel to professional meetings for presentation of their research. It is the mentor's responsibility to be familiar with, and abide by, the policies and procedures of both the DNS and the UAB Graduate School, to encourage the student to progress rapidly and efficiently through all degree requirements while maintaining high-quality work, and to meet deadlines for timely degree completion.

### **DISSERTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

In addition to a faculty mentor, all students will have a permanent Dissertation Advisory Committee (or Graduate Study Committee). This Dissertation Advisory Committee must be appointed prior to initiating the procedures for Admission to Candidacy. The Dissertation Advisory Committee consists of five or six faculty members who guide the student to develop an effective research agenda and successfully complete all dissertation research requirements in a timely and efficient manner. The student's Dissertation Advisory Committee will evaluate the student's ability to independently conduct a scientific study. Students and mentors are expected to consider the requirements and recommendations for committee composition listed below and seek approval from the program director prior to approaching individual faculty about serving on the committee.



Recommendations for membership on the Dissertation Advisory Committee are submitted cohesively by the faculty advisor and the student to the PhD program director [on the appropriate departmental form](#), and upon departmental approval, the committee request form should then be submitted to the UAB Graduate School dean. Graduate Study Committee appointments are made by the UAB Graduate School dean, who is an *ex officio* member of all Graduate Study Committees.

**The composition of the dissertation committee** must follow the criteria established by the Graduate School and the department.

- All five members must be appointed to the graduate faculty. To check faculty status, please consult the [Graduate Faculty Listing](#), and to request an appointment to the graduate faculty (whether Level I, Level II, or Ad Hoc), please consult with the program manager and then follow the three steps outlined on the UAB Graduate School's [webpage](#).
- Appointment to the graduate faculty is at the discretion of the UAB Graduate School dean.
- The chair of the committee must have Graduate Faculty II status (or include a senior co-chair).
- At least one member of the committee must be from outside of the student's department.
- Two members of the committee should be from outside of the student's specialization or field.
- Committee members cannot be related to each other or the student or otherwise violate UAB's policy on nepotism (exception may be granted by the Graduate School dean).
- At least one member of the committee must have expertise in biostatistics.

**Tips for committee selection:**

- Follow guidance in the handbook and on the Graduate School website regarding the composition of the committee.
- Do not offer committee membership to anyone without first checking with the mentor and the program director.
- The committee should include faculty with complementary expertise that covers all key themes or topics in the dissertation.
- Allow several weeks to get committee approval from the program director and Graduate School.

The program director may recommend the addition or removal of a faculty member if there is a perceived gap in expertise, experience, or breadth of knowledge.

The recommended schedule for Dissertation Advisory Committee Meetings is provided in the box below. In addition to this, **it is expected that the student will plan and execute a meeting with their committee at least once every six months to update them on progress.** These meetings should be no longer than one hour, scheduled in advance. All committee members must be present at the Candidacy and Defense meetings. For all other meetings, at least three Dissertation Advisory Committee members should be present.

## IRB APPROVAL

Student researchers have the same submission options as any investigator at UAB. In most cases, it is advisable that the student, especially those working toward their dissertation, independently submit an application to the IRB. **Dissertation projects are often either new projects, in which the student has the leading role, or they are secondary to an existing protocol where the student's work differs from the primary purpose of the existing protocol.** Regardless, dissertation committees prefer to see the student's name on an approval document, and submission to IRB is the best way to ensure that happens.

Research that is limited to secondary analysis of data, records, or specimens that are de-identified or otherwise impossible to be linked to personal identities can be submitted via a Not Human Subjects Research (NHSR) application provided that the custodian of the data can provide written assurance that the student researcher will not have access to identifying data. It is this "de-linking" of data from personal identifiers that allows the IRB to make this determination. Given this, the custodian of the data cannot be listed as research personnel on the student's IRB application, although they may be listed as a faculty advisor. If identifiers or direct human interaction are required for the conduct of the research, then the research should be submitted via an Exempt or Expedited application.

If the student's activity is (or will be, after modification) subsumed under the existing study, the student may be added to an existing IRB protocol via Project Revision/Amendment Form (PR/AF). When choosing this option, the student's full name, dissertation title, description of the project, and whether or not it differs from the existing protocol must be included in the PR/AF. This PR/AF document will be used when submitting candidacy paperwork to the dissertation committee and the UAB Graduate School. If the student was assisting a researcher and was already listed on the protocol as research personnel, then a PR/AF should be submitted when this student's role changes from researcher to dissertation work so that the PR/AF can be used with the paperwork submission.

The two documents that dissertation committee members will accept are listed below. One or both of these documents will also be required by the Graduate School before the student is admitted to candidacy.

<b>Anticipated Committee Meetings</b>			
<b>When?</b>	<b>Required or recommended? Attendees? Private vs. Public</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Pre-candidacy	Recommended Student and committee Private	Discuss and provide input on the Specific Aims page, scope of dissertation project, progress to date	Committee verbally agrees to the direction and scope of the dissertation aims or provides recommendations for revision
Pre-candidacy	Required Committee and program director (PD) (not student) Private	Discuss written dissertation proposal	Determine if student is ready to <u>proceed</u> to candidacy defense (with or without revisions to the written document) or if the student should <u>pause</u> to make substantive revisions to the document or to better prepare for their defense
Candidacy	Required Committee, PD, student Public	Student verbally presents and defends dissertation proposal	Pass or fail
Interim	Recommended if no changes to scope of dissertation project. Required if there	Discuss progress and make decisions about any proposed changes to the dissertation	Committee verbally agrees to any changes in the dissertation project

- IRB approval with the candidate’s name listed as principal investigator with the dissertation title listed
- PR/AF with the candidate’s name added and the dissertation title clearly noted

Students should be aware that it can take weeks or months to receive IRB approval and so it is important to initiate this process as soon as possible in advance of candidacy. Follow all IRB guidance to complete the entire submission packet prior to seeking departmental approval from the chair or chair’s designee (using the PORF form) and then submitting the packet to IRB.

Students and faculty are encouraged to call the IRB with any questions. The office’s contact information, as well as additional information regarding IRB submissions, can be found [here](#).

NOTE: Students conducting research with animal models will need to show IACUC approval for their protocol.

## DISSERTATION REQUIREMENTS

An intensive period of original dissertation research will be performed by the student, the length of which will be decided by the Dissertation Advisory Committee but ultimately must equate to a minimum of 12 semester hours of dissertation research across at least two semesters in order to fulfill graduation requirements. During this time, the student will carry out the research studies presented in the candidacy proposal, which are regularly addressed at the Dissertation Advisory Committee meetings.

## DISSERTATION WRITTEN DOCUMENT AND ORAL DEFENSE

### WRITTEN DOCUMENT

Two models can be used for the written dissertation, as follows:

- **Model 1 (aka Preprint-Reprint).** Includes three papers, one for each of the three specific aims of the dissertation research. At least one of these papers needs to be a first-author paper. The remaining two papers can be coauthored papers. All should be published or publishable (i.e., ready for submission to a journal). An introduction and discussion that encompasses the overall theme for the scientific project will be included at the beginning and conclusion of the document, respectively.
- **Model 2 (aka Traditional or Chapter model).** This model includes multiple chapters describing an introduction, literature review, methods, results, discussion, conclusions, and a reference list. Together, these sections describe the scientific discovery of the student.

Most students in the DNS complete the “preprint-reprint” model for the dissertation. The dissertation committee, in specific circumstances, may recommend the alternate “traditional” or chapter format. The nature of the dissertation work determines which model is used. For example, if the student’s research involves a series of basic science projects that will all be published together in a single manuscript, the chapter format may be more appropriate than the preprint-reprint model. Regardless of the format of the dissertation, the student is required to have two original research manuscripts accepted for publication before they can graduate from the program. The faculty advisor, Dissertation Advisory Committee, and PhD program director must approve the specific model used for writing the dissertation.

Per the Graduate School, the dissertation must reflect “results of the student’s independent study.” Mentors and committee members are asked to provide important guidance as the student develops the dissertation, but the student must write the dissertation themselves. Even if some of the research included is work that the mentor conceived, ***it is critical for the student to take “ownership” of the dissertation because they will have to present and defend it.***

As with the proposal document, it is recommended that committee members NOT provide feedback on the entire written document until the complete mentor-approved version is sent to the entire committee and program director. For committees with a co-chair, the co-chair must also approve the final dissertation before it is distributed to the committee and program director.

Authorship of research papers is a requirement of the PhD degree, independent of the dissertation model of the student. **All students must have actively participated in the development, submission, and publication of at least two original research peer-reviewed publications (not abstracts) prior to graduation. One of these papers must be a first-author publication.** Many journals charge a fee for publication. When identifying journals to submit a manuscript to, students need to carefully check and understand any fee requirements for publication. Students should discuss these fees with their mentor when deciding on the journal. The mentor and department are not obligated to pay publication fees and may not have the funds to do so. DO NOT submit a manuscript to a journal without the express permission of the mentor and senior author, after fully informing them of any associated fees.

Publications based on work completed prior to entry to the PhD program cannot be used as part of the dissertation.

**After completion of the dissertation written document, the copy that is approved by the faculty mentor must be distributed to each Dissertation Advisory Committee member and the PhD program director at least 10 business days prior to the oral dissertation defense.** The dissertation defense is a public event open to the UAB community. Invitations to all PhD student defenses will be distributed virtually to the DNS, School of Health Professions, and UAB campus at large.

Students are responsible for contacting the [UAB Graduate School](#) to obtain the latest information regarding their application for degree and all related paperwork. **Written dissertations must follow the formatting established by the [UAB Format Manual for Thesis and Dissertations](#).**

## DISSERTATION PRESENTATION

**Students must have met publication requirements for the program before formally scheduling the defense.** A tentative hold may be placed on the calendars belonging to committee members and program directors, but this will be removed two weeks prior to the date of the intended defense if the student does not yet have written confirmation of acceptance for publication for two appropriate manuscripts.

### What does “ownership” look like?

Faculty seem to intuitively know what it looks like when a student takes ownership of their research, but it can be difficult to describe this to others. In essence, students need to be able to answer any question about the research in an intelligent and thoughtful manner regardless of whether the student was involved when the data were collected. By the time they defend their dissertation, the question and answer session should resemble a collegial discussion among equals. ***Students are strongly encouraged to attend their peers’ candidacy and final defenses so that they can become accustomed to the types of questions and the depth of the answers provided by presenters.***

The Graduate School requires all committee members be present for the dissertation defense (either in person or virtually). The committee will meet privately with the program director 15 minutes prior to the defense to discuss whether there are any significant concerns that could prevent the student from successfully defending their work and passing the dissertation defense.

**The dissertation defense presentation is a maximum of 40 minutes in length.** After the public defense presentation and time for questions from the audience, the student will remain in the defense room for a private question session with the faculty mentor, the Dissertation Advisory Committee, and the PhD program director. Upon successful defense of the dissertation, the student must turn in a final document, including corrections made according to suggestions of the faculty mentor, Dissertation Advisory Committee, and PhD program director, to the UAB Graduate School **within 10 business days**. Failure to meet this deadline may delay the student's anticipated graduation.

## SUMMARY OF THE STEPS TO EARNING YOUR PHD

Students are expected to complete the following steps in order to earn their PhD in Nutrition Sciences:

- Successfully complete 36 semester hours of core courses, 12 semester hours of non-dissertation research, 12 semester hours of dissertation research, and 12 semester hours of approved electives
- Pass a written/oral qualifying examination (Candidacy Examination)
- Author and publish at least two research papers, of which one the student must be first author – these papers should be accepted for publication by peer-reviewed scientific journals during the time of graduate training in the DNS
- Submit and successfully defend a dissertation reporting results of original scientific research that makes a genuine contribution to the field of nutrition sciences

## APPLICATION FOR DEGREE

Candidates for a degree must notify their program director and the UAB Graduate School of their intent to graduate by submitting the Application for Degree by the appropriate [deadline](#). The application is accessible through BlazerNET by clicking Links/Forms and selecting *Apply for Graduate Degree*.

Upon receipt of the Application for Degree, both the PhD in Nutrition Sciences program and the Graduate School will audit the student's requirements to ensure that they have met the degree requirements and are eligible to graduate with the earned degree. UAB's Graduation Planning System (GPS) contains a personalized degree audit, which includes all courses required to earn the degree, and will display completed, in-progress, and outstanding requirements. GPS is accessible through BlazerNET by clicking the GPS button in the menu on the right side of the page.

Students must be registered for at least one (1) credit hour during the graduation term. If a student is covered by the student health insurance policy, holds an assistantship, or has student loans, it may be necessary to register for a prescribed minimum number of credit hours to retain these benefits. Make sure to check with the appropriate office(s) if retention of these benefits is a concern.

## **AWARD OF DEGREE**

Upon approval by the Graduate School dean and payment of any outstanding financial obligations to the university, the president confers students' degrees by authority of the Board of Trustees. UAB does not determine the official degree type awarded, as this is governed by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education and the Board of Trustees after receiving a program proposal. Students' majors are reflected on their transcripts. For more information, please see the [Graduate Catalog](#).

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Please contact us for additional information about the DNS graduate programs.

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