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Program Description

The mission of the Masters of Laboratory Investigation (MLI) Program is to enhance the academic, scientific, and technical expertise of research personnel who will continue to work in an academic research environment; to foster their professional growth; and to improve the career potentials of our brightest and most qualified researchers who may not wish, or are uncertain, about pursuing a Ph.D.

Requirements for Completing the MLI Degree

The Master of Laboratory Investigation curriculum enables students, with the help of mentors and committee members, to plan a course of study in light of their talents, interests, and professional objectives. The program strives to foster the personal growth and intellectual investment in Vanderbilt research assistants who will continue to work in a research environment. The MLI degree program requires students to complete thirty-six semester credit hours. However, no more than twelve hours can be taken in an academic year, unless approved by the program director. To complete thirty-six hours of credit, students will choose between three program tracks.

Please see the School of Medicine catalog for detailed degree requirements and description of program tracks.

MLI Courses

All MLI courses are listed in the School of Medicine Academic Catalog (beginning on page 108). MLI course numbers begin with the letters MLI. Other courses may be taken for credit in the program, but this requires the prior approval of the program director and the student’s committee.

Required Coursework

MLI 5010: Lab Theory 1
Fall Semester;
4 Credit Hours

MLI 5040: Responsible Conduct in Research
Summer Semester
0 Credit Hours

Policies

Admission Requirements

The requirements for Admission to the Master of Laboratory Investigation Program are found in the School of Medicine catalog.
Background Check

All students entering the Master of Laboratory Investigation program are required to complete a criminal background check after they receive their acceptance into the program and before classes start. The program provides the student the information needed to obtain a background check when the student accepts the offer of admission into the program. A background check report completed in relation to employment at Vanderbilt University that is less than a year old is acceptable as a substitute. Regardless of how it is obtained, the report from the background check must be provided to the program before the student will be allowed to start classes.

Compliance Training Requirements

All students must complete Vanderbilt University (VU) and, if applicable, Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC) training requirements. Some of these requirements may be completed through employment at VU or VUMC. The program will communicate all training requirements to students.
Tuition Assistance (AY2017-18)

The MLI Program extends tuition and fees assistance to its degree-seeking students. This benefit may be used to help defray tuition expenses for up to thirty-six semester hours of credit during the period of enrollment in the degree program. The program covers a majority of the student’s academic tuition and fees (75% of tuition and fees each semester). The student is responsible for paying 15% of the tuition and fees per semester. Additionally, the laboratory supporting each student is responsible for paying 10% of the tuition and fees per semester. In some cases, the laboratory may choose to pay some, or all, of the student’s portion of tuition and fees (15%).

Tuition breakdown by percentage:
- MLI Program responsibility: 75%
- Student’s supporting laboratory responsibility: 10%
- Student’s out-of-pocket responsibility: 15%

MLI students employed by VU or VUMC may be eligible for employee tuition benefits. Students should consult the Human Resources website for the employer in order to learn more about benefits and how to apply for them.

Loss of Employment Status

For students who lose their positions of employment due to their sponsoring laboratory’s loss of grant funding, the program will pay 75% percent of tuition.

Committee Requirements

Each student is required to assemble a committee of faculty members who will direct their research, as well as their selection of course work and technique modules throughout the degree program. A committee includes a minimum of two to three faculty members. The student’s principle investigator or employer will head the committee. The Director of the MLI program is a member of the committee, along with one other faculty member, as needed.

Each semester, students are responsible for calling and organizing a committee meeting. During this meeting, students present the progress of their research and coursework. The committee provides the student with advice regarding research direction and course selection. Each semester, students are required to submit a completed Committee Meeting Form, which documents that they have satisfied their committee’s progress expectations.

Submission of a completed Committee Meeting Form is also required for registration the next semester. The MLI program director or coordinator will file the form for the student after the committee meeting. Course registration will be locked for the student until the completed form is submitted.

Guided Study Courses
For a Guided Study Course, MLI 6020, MLI 6025 or MLI 7999, a Guided Study Course form must be filled out completely and submitted to the Program Coordinator. The Program Coordinator will then register the student for the course based on the information provided on the form.

Admission to Courses outside of MLI

MLI students are able to choose any course taught within the Graduate School in the biomedical sciences. Course offerings will be posted prior to the beginnings of each semester. Students must seek the approval of the course instructor. Once granted approval, students must submit the approval via e-mail to the Program Coordinator. The coordinator will then register the student for the approved course.

Interdisciplinary Graduate Program BioRegulation Modules

MLI students may take up to 6 credit hours of IGP bioregulation modules. Bioregulation modules are one course credit each and offered in the Spring Semester. The program coordinator will send out the list of modules at the beginning of November. The modules do not require approval from the course instructor, and students should not email course instructors. A student interested in taking a module, completes the form sent by the IGP Program Manager declaring which modules they would like to take. If the module is available, the student will receive an email of approval and instructions on how to register for the module.

Students should not over register for modules. Modules are taught each spring semester. You will not be able to drop a module without a written approval from the Program Director or Program Manager.

Grading System

Information pertaining to the grading system may be found in the School of Medicine catalog.

Courses in which a student has earned a grade lower than a C may be repeated with the consent of the adviser. Although both grades will be recorded on the transcript, the second grade earned will be the one used in computing the student’s grade average.

Seminar courses or independent study courses will be eligible for pass/fail credit status. All other courses taken for the MLI program will be graded using the grades described in the School of Medicine catalog. Those approved courses that are taken on credit/non-credit or pass/fail basis will count toward one’s total graduation requirements.

Academic credit is not awarded for courses for which final grades of W, F, or I are recorded. Therefore, those courses do not count toward graduation requirements. Additional coursework must be taken in order to obtain the required credits for graduation. Additionally, students are not eligible to use program tuition assistance toward the cost of any additional coursework required to make-up for courses for which a final grade of W, F or I were recorded.
Satisfactory Academic Progress and Adverse Actions

Each student’s program is tailored to meet the student’s academic and professional goals. The student’s graduate committee is responsible for providing the student with direction relevant to course selection and research. The committee is also responsible for evaluating the student’s progress through the program at least once per year. Due to the nature of the program, each student’s progress will occur at a different rate, but a student must maintain satisfactory academic progress, as determined by the student’s committee, to remain in the program. The normal time for completion of graduation requirements for the MLI is three years. The maximum time for completion of degree requirements, exclusive of approved leaves of absence, is five years.

Information pertaining to progress, adverse actions and appeal can be found in the School of Medicine catalog.

Leave of Absence Policy

The MLI program is intentionally designed for individuals who are and will continue to be full-time biomedical researchers. Therefore, the program offers a Leave of Absence policy to students who may need to take a semester off due to workload or personal issues. Before deciding whether or not to request a Leave of Absence, please discuss your situation leave with your committee to see if arrangements can be made to accommodate your course load.

If accommodation cannot be made, the student is required to submit a Leave of Absence request to the Program Manager prior to the beginning of the leave, unless extraordinary circumstances exist. If approved, the student will receive a letter with information on how to enter the program again without having to reapply. Please see the School of Medicine Catalog for more information and requirements related to leaves of absence.

Requirements for Graduation

MLI students must complete 36 credit hours of coursework with grades approved by the MLI program. A student with a grade point average of below 3.0 will not be allowed to graduate.

Students on the Research or Modified Research Track are required to give a presentation of the research, manuscript or poster to a formal audience, which will include the student’s committee.

Commencement

The University holds its annual Commencement ceremony following the spring semester. Degree candidates must have completed successfully all curriculum requirements and have passed all prescribed examinations by the published deadlines to be allowed to participate in the ceremony. A student completing degree requirements in the summer or fall semester will be invited to participate in Commencement the following May; however, the semester in which the degree was actually earned will be the one recorded on the diploma and the student’s permanent record. Students unable to participate in the graduation ceremony will receive their diplomas by mail.
School of Medicine Honor Code

Vanderbilt University School of Medicine students in all degree programs are bound by the VUSM Honor Code. The School of Medicine Honor Code is described in detail in the School of Medicine Academic Catalog.

Additional University Guidance, Regulations, and Resources

Information detailing academic, professional, social and personal resources and requirements are included in the Vanderbilt University Student Handbook and the Annual Enrollment Bulletin. Access to these documents may be gained through the following links:

Vanderbilt University Student Handbook
2017/2018 Enrollment Bulletin
Master of Laboratory Investigation
Committee Meeting

Date of Committee Meeting: ____________________________

Student Name: ____________________________________________
Regarding: Fall Spring Summer Year__________

Summary of Student’s Research & Coursework Progress:

Committee’s Research Direction:

Committee’s Course Selection Notes:

This faculty committee has found that _______________________________ has satisfied the progress expectations set forth from previous meetings. We have advised the student on research direction and course selection for the semester listed above.

______________________________  __________________________  
Ray Mernaugh  
Director Of Masters of Laboratory Investigation

______________________________  __________________________  
Student’s Mentor  

______________________________  __________________________  
Additional Mentor (If necessary)  


Master of Laboratory Investigation Independent Study

Student’s Name: ____________________________________________________________

☐ Research Project – MLI 6020 (*Modified Research Track*)

☐ Independent Study – MLI 6025 (*Individualized Professional Research or Training Goals*)

☐ Thesis Research & Defense – MLI 7999 (*Research with Thesis Track*)

Semester: ☐ Fall ☐ Spring ☐ Summer Year: __________

Course Instructor: __________________________________________________________

Course Objective (Please be specific as to what the student will be researching, what the gain of knowledge will be, and goals of the course):

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Grading Scale:
A: Student met all goals of the course, and improved their knowledge in the specific topic of research
B: Student met most goals of the course, and improved their knowledge in the specific topic of research
C: Student met some goals of the course, and somewhat improved their knowledge in the specific topic of research
D: Student did not meet the goals of the course, but somewhat improved their knowledge in the specific topic of research
F: Student did not meet the goals of the course, and did not improve their knowledge in the specific topic of research

Instructor Signature: ____________________________________________ Date: __________

Please return this form to Faith Bishop, faith.t.bishop@vanderbilt.edu, by the start date of each semester.
Leave of Absence Request Form

Student’s Name: __________________________________________

Student ID#: __________________________________________

Beginning Date of LOA: ________________________________

Returning Date: _______________________________________

The purpose of this leave of absence (please check one):

☐ Medical ☐ Personal ☐ Work Related*
☐ Continuing work from past semester* ☐ Financial

Please provide an explanation if an asterisk is above:

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Approvals: 

Mentor Approval: ____________________________ Date: ____________

Director Approval: ____________________________ Date: ____________