

*Department of Nutrition Sciences*  
*PhD Nutrition Sciences*

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**2023-2024**  
**STUDENT HANDBOOK**



# UAB SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS

## DEPARTMENT OF NUTRITION SCIENCES

### PHD PROGRAM

#### 2023-2024 ACADEMIC HANDBOOK



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PhD Program Director

04/13/2023

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Date



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Barbara Gower, PhD, Interim Chair  
Department of Nutrition Sciences

04/13/2023

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Date



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Andrew Butler, Dean  
School of Health Professions

08/10/2023

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Date

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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 (SPAHE). 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, 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.

**Kristin Chapleau, Director of Student Services and Advising**

205-996-4721; [kjohnsto@uab.edu](mailto:kjohnsto@uab.edu)

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

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

**Mary Foster, Dean's Executive Assistant**

205-934-5149; [fostermg@uab.edu](mailto:fostermg@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; [ltest@uab.edu](mailto:ltest@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 available at [www.uab.edu/academiccalendar](http://www.uab.edu/academiccalendar).

### 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 Senior 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: <https://www.uab.edu/one-stop/policies/academic-integrity-code>.

### ADVISING

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

Anrika Steen, Academic Advisor III, SHPB 424E – 996-1689; [anrikam@uab.edu](mailto:anrikam@uab.edu)

Eileen Hatfield, Academic Advisor II, SHPB 230 – 205-934-4185; [mehatfie@uab.edu](mailto:mehatfie@uab.edu)

Chris Smith, Academic Advisor III, SHPB 230 – 205-934-5974; [cjsmith1@uab.edu](mailto:cjsmith1@uab.edu)

Adam Pinson, Academic Advisor III, SHPB 424A – 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, serving as liaisons between the department and university-wide student organizations, serve as a student voice in school and university committees, and with the timely goal of creating a sense of community for all SHP students. 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 policy for undergraduates 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 an 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 have 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. In these instances, instructors must devise a system for reasonable accommodation including, for example, policies allowing for dropped exams/quizzes, make-up exams, rescheduling of student classroom presentations or early or later submission of written assignments.

## AWARDS AND HONOR SOCIETIES

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

- Alfred W. Sangster Award for Outstanding International Student – This award is presented annually to an international student in recognition of his or her academic and non-academic achievements.
- 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.
- 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. Nominations are coordinated by program directors, but may also be made by faculty, students, patients, or preceptors.
- 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. Nominations are made by program directors.
- 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. Nominations are made by program directors or faculty.
- 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.

Please refer to the program section of this handbook for awards and honors available to students in individual programs.

## BACKGROUND CHECK

Students in SHP programs are required by policy to undergo a background check using the school’s approved vendor, CastleBranch <https://discover.castlebranch.com/>, at the time of program admission, and again, prior to placement in a fieldwork I rotation. In addition, some sites are requiring the social media background check. This package code is different than the initial package code given. Instructions for requesting the background check and appropriate consent forms are provided to students by their programs. Please refer to the policy section of this handbook for the policy statement.

## 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** Monitor your email regularly. Your UAB email is the official communication medium for courses, news, information, and announcements. 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.

## **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, 35233

Hours: M – F 8:00am – 6:00pm | 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 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 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).

## 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 9th Ave. South. For more information, call 205-934-5816 or <https://www.uab.edu/students/counseling/>.

## COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated many changes in our academic and administrative operating practices. The University continues to consult experts in the field to assess the pandemic and make data-driven decisions to safely pursue our vital mission. Students can view current COVID information and official policies at [www.uab.edu/uabunited](http://www.uab.edu/uabunited).

- Masking – Masks are not required in university meetings, events, classrooms or laboratories unless there is a non-COVID environmental health and safety policy or guideline that otherwise requires a mask for the setting or activity performed. Many individuals in our campus community may choose to wear a well-fitting mask. Members of the campus community are encouraged to respect the decisions others make in keeping with UAB's Shared Values.
- If you are not vaccinated, we highly encourage you to obtain the COVID vaccine – students may receive the vaccine at no cost through Student Health Services, at walk-up clinics, or through UAB Medicine. Scheduling information is available at <https://www.uab.edu/uabunited/covid-19-vaccine>
- If you are vaccinated, please upload an image of your vaccination card through the Student Health Patient Portal at [https://studentwellness.uab.edu/login\\_directory.aspx](https://studentwellness.uab.edu/login_directory.aspx).
- Students who experience COVID symptoms should not come on campus or clinical sites and should contact Student Health immediately for further instruction.
- Maintain hand hygiene with frequent handwashing and disinfectant solutions.
- Clean your work areas with disinfectant solution regularly.
- Eat only in designated spaces. Student may consume water in classrooms but should comply with any restrictions on food and other beverages that may be in place.

Students should refer to their course syllabus for additional requirements and guidelines.

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI)

Collaboration, integrity, respect and excellence are shared values of our institution and are the core of what it means to be a UAB community member. And a key foundation at UAB is diversity, equity, and

inclusion. At UAB, everybody counts every day. UAB is committed to fostering a diverse, respectful, and inclusive campus environment that values all community members regardless of background and embraces individual differences. UAB values and cultivates equity, diversity, and inclusion in our research, learning, clinical and work environments. Our students, faculty, and staff add diversity to our community through life experiences, perspectives and viewpoints that are enriching for the learning and work environment and are reflective of the students and communities we serve. Because UAB serves a diverse population, ODEI, along with our School of Health Professions initiatives, aims to create an inclusive environment for all UAB faculty, staff, students, and patients through education, training, and awareness programs.

[UAB Office of the Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#)

[SHP Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Site](#)

## DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS)

“DSS provides an accessible university experience through collaboration with UAB partners. These partnerships create a campus where individuals with disabilities have equal access to programs, activities, and opportunities by identifying and removing barriers, providing individualized services, and facilitating accommodations.”

“DSS serves as the university-appointed office charged with providing institution-wide advisement, consultation, and training on disability-related topics which include legal and regulatory compliance, universal design, and disability scholarship.”

To apply for accommodations, contact DSS. **Note:** *You must have your Blazer ID and password.*

Telephone: (205) 934-4205 | (205) 934-4248 (TDD) Fax: (205) 934-8170

Email: [dss@uab.edu](mailto:dss@uab.edu) Website: [www.uab.edu/students/disability/](http://www.uab.edu/students/disability/)

## DRUG SCREENING

By policy, SHP students in programs requiring fieldwork placement (clinical, internship, practicum) are required to undergo a routine drug screen using the school’s approved vendor, CastleBranch, [www.castlebranch.com](http://www.castlebranch.com), at the time of program admission and again prior to placement in a fieldwork placement. Instructions for requesting the drug screen and appropriate consent forms will be provided to students by their programs. Please refer to the policy section of this handbook for the school and university policy statements. If you have questions, please contact [shrp-shpasdnfacffrs@uab.edu](mailto:shrp-shpasdnfacffrs@uab.edu).

## 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:

- 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
- Twitter@UABALERT: [www.twitter.com/uabalert](http://www.twitter.com/uabalert)
- [facebook.com/UABALERT](https://www.facebook.com/UABALERT)
- 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 sites:

<https://sa.uab.edu/enrollmentservices/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](#).

## FINANCIAL AID

Financial Aid Counselors are available each day in the One Stop Student Services Office located in the Hill Student Center. Additional financial aid information is located at [www.uab.edu/financialaid](http://www.uab.edu/financialaid).

## 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. Additional information about meal plans and campus dining facilities is available at [www.uab.edu/dining](http://www.uab.edu/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 [www.uab.edu/graduate/](http://www.uab.edu/graduate/). Policies and Procedures for the Graduate School can be located in the Graduate School Catalog [2022-2023 Catalog of Graduate Programs < Catalog | The University of Alabama at Birmingham \(uab.edu\)](#).

## GRADUATION

All students must complete an application for degree six months prior to graduating and not later than the deadline in the academic calendar. <https://www.uab.edu/commencement/faqs>. The University holds commencement every semester. Check the commencement website for the most current information: <https://www.uab.edu/commencement/>.



## **MEDICAL CLEARANCE**

SHP students in programs that are on campus (not fully online), are required to receive medical clearance at the time of program admission. UAB Student Health Services utilizes a secure web-based process for the storage of required documents accessed through BlazerNET. More information is available at the Student Health Services website: [www.uab.edu/students/health/medical-clearance/immunizations](http://www.uab.edu/students/health/medical-clearance/immunizations).

## **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: <https://secure2.compliancebridge.com/uab/portal/getdoc.php?file=322>

## **INSURANCE WAIVERS**

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: <https://www.uab.edu/students/health/insurance-waivers/waivers>

## **HIPAA TRAINING**

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act 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 [www.uab.edu/learningsystem](http://www.uab.edu/learningsystem). Compliance with the training requirement is monitored monthly.

## **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 [www.uab.edu/irb](http://www.uab.edu/irb).

## **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 is available at [www.uab.edu/research/administration/offices/OSP/Pages/Training.aspx](http://www.uab.edu/research/administration/offices/OSP/Pages/Training.aspx).

## 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. Locations of the centers are available at <https://www.uab.edu/titleix/pregnancy-parenting/campus-community-support/lactation-centers>. The School of Health Professions' lactation room is in the Susan Mott Webb Nutrition Sciences Building at 1675 University Boulevard, room 219A. 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. <https://library.uab.edu/locations>

### 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 S.

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 Boulevard

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: 913 13<sup>th</sup> Street South

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:

<http://catalog.uab.edu/undergraduate/aboutuab/nonacademicpolicies/>

Graduate Non-Academic Policies:

<http://catalog.uab.edu/graduate/academicprogress/#academicethicsandmisconducttext>

## 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. 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). Additional information is available at [www.uab.edu/onestop](http://www.uab.edu/onestop).

## PARKING

Student vehicles must be registered with UAB Parking and Transportation Services, located at 608 8<sup>th</sup> Street South. The office is open Monday – Friday from 7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. 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. Additional information is available at [www.uab.edu/parking](http://www.uab.edu/parking).

## PATIENT CARE PARTNERSHIP

Students in health professions programs learn general information about the health care industry as well as knowledge and skills specific to their chosen profession. The American Hospital Association (AHA) ([www.aha.org](http://www.aha.org)) is an excellent resource for industry information. One role fulfilled by the AHA is that of patient advocate. The Patient Care Partnership brochure (link below) outlines rights and responsibilities of patients during hospital stays.

[www.aha.org/aha/issues/Communicating-With-Patients/pt-care-partnership.html](http://www.aha.org/aha/issues/Communicating-With-Patients/pt-care-partnership.html).

## 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 35294, 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. Check the website for information about hours and services at [www.uab.edu/campusrecreation](http://www.uab.edu/campusrecreation).

## SCHOOL OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS SCHOLARSHIPS

The SHP has several scholarship opportunities for students enrolled in SHP programs. The Scholarship Committee, comprised of faculty and administrators, review and select awardees.

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

*Carol E. Medders Endowed Scholarship* – Funding for students enrolled in a graduate program in the School of Health Professions. Awards are based on academic achievement and unmet financial need.

*Ethel M. and Jessie D. Smith Endowed Nursing and Allied Health Scholarship* – Funding for students enrolled in SHP programs with GPA 3.0 or above and unmet financial need. Student must be a resident of the state of Alabama at the time of enrollment.

*Lettie Pate Whitehead Foundation Scholarship* – Funding for female students from selected states (AL, FL, GA, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN) enrolled in SHP programs. Award amounts are variable and are based on unmet financial need.

*National Alumni Society Dean's Scholarship* – Funding from the UAB National Alumni Society for two scholarships per year, one to a graduate student and one to an undergraduate student.

*Sandra Dunning Huechtker Endowed Memorial Award* – Funding for students enrolled in SHP program with GPA 3.0 or above and unmet financial need.

*SHP Dean's Scholarship* – Funding to recruit or retain outstanding students. Awards are based on academic achievement, and unmet financial need.

You may visit the UAB School of Health Professions Scholarship page to learn more <https://www.uab.edu/shp/home/about-us/shp-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 see the program section of this handbook for that information.

## 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)

UAB Social Media Guidelines are outlined at <https://www.uab.edu/toolkit/social/guidelines>.

## STUDENT ADVOCACY, RIGHTS AND CONDUCT (SARC)

Student Advocacy, Rights and Conduct (SARC) 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 about SARC can be found here: [Student Advocacy, Rights & Conduct - Student Affairs - News | UAB](#). The UAB student conduct code may be accessed online: [Student Conduct Code \(uab.edu\)](#).

## STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

The University provides prevention, counseling, and treatment services to students through Student Health Services located at 1714 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue South. The clinic is open from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Monday – Thursday; 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Friday. Detailed information about services and operating practices is located on the SHS website at [www.uab.edu/studenthealth](http://www.uab.edu/studenthealth). Appointments may be scheduled by calling 205-934-3580.

## TUITION AND FEES

Tuition and fees for the University are published annually under the "Current Students" tab of the UAB website. They may be paid through BlazerNET. SHP programs have specific fees attached to programs, courses, and/ or laboratories. See the school fees at <https://www.uab.edu/students/paying-for-college/detailed-tuition-and-fees>.

Payment deadlines for each semester are published on the official academic calendar and on the UAB website at [www.uab.edu/whentopay/](http://www.uab.edu/whentopay/). 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. Severe weather precautions are published at [www.uab.edu/emergency/preparedness](http://www.uab.edu/emergency/preparedness). Other information sources include:

- Webpage: [www.uab.edu/emergency](http://www.uab.edu/emergency)
- B-ALERT System: [www.uab.edu/balert](http://www.uab.edu/balert)
- 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 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. Please refer to the following link for additional information on withdrawal guidelines: <https://www.uab.edu/students/one-stop/classes/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 drug screening and criminal background check using the approved vendor ([CastleBranch](#)). These screenings should be completed prior to the end of the first term of enrollment. A second routine drug screening and criminal background check using the approved school vendor, or a vendor required by the assigned clinical facility, will be completed prior to placement in assigned fieldwork. Any required additional screenings, and/or those specified by waived programs, will be at the discretion of the program.

Students enrolled in SHP undergraduate programs requiring an internship or other site placement as a component of degree requirements will complete a learning module in the campus learning management system by the end of the first semester of enrollment. They will submit the results of a drug screening and criminal background check from an approved vendor, prior to the end of the semester, immediately preceding the semester for which the internship or site placement occurs.

- School-negotiated fees for these screenings will be the responsibility of the student.
- Students who have completed the screenings as a condition of enrollment in a previous SHP program are waived from the requisite unless the current program of enrollment also includes an internship or fieldwork placement component for degree completion.
- Drug screening and background check results performed by an approved vendor, within the most recent twelve months, may fulfill the SHP requirement
- 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 you fail the drug screening, or your background check contains issues that may prevent you from receiving or sitting for licensure, a representative from the Office of the Associate Dean for Academic and Faculty Affairs will contact you. Depending upon the outcome, you may be dismissed from the program. See your program's guidelines regarding specific consequences.

Programs requiring a 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 and Health Sciences, MS

Biotechnology, MS  
 Dietitian Education Program, Graduate Certificate  
 Genetic Counseling, MS  
 Health Administration (Residential), MSHA  
 Health Care Management to Occupational Therapy Doctorate Fast Track  
 Health Physics, MS  
 Medical Laboratory Science, MS  
 Nuclear Medicine & Molecular Imaging Technology, MS  
 Nutrition Sciences, MS
 

- Dietetic Internship Clinical Track
- Dietitian Education Program
- Prior Learning Clinical Track
- Research Track

 Nutrition Sciences, PhD  
 Occupational Therapy Doctorate – (entry level)  
 Physical Therapy, DPT  
 Physician Assistant Studies, MSPAS  
 Rehabilitation Science, PhD

Programs requiring the background check and drug screening learning module during the first semester of enrollment, a criminal background check and drug screening by the end of the semester immediately preceding fieldwork placement or internship (if applicable) are the following:

Health Care Management, BS  
 Biomedical Sciences, BS  
 Biobehavioral Nutrition and Wellness, BS

Programs waived from the Background Check and Drug Screening requirement 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 Service Research, MS  
 Healthcare Simulation, MS  
 Nutrition for Community Health, Graduate Certificate  
 Nutrition Sciences, MS
 

- Clinical Track-Prior Learning
- Lifestyle Management and Disease Prevention Track



Low Vision Rehabilitation, Graduate Certificate  
Occupational Therapy Doctorate (Post Professional)  
Physical Therapy Residencies (Neurologic, Orthopedic)

**Attachments:**

- Procedure for Criminal Background Check and Drug Screening
- Student Instructions
- Consent to Drug Testing and Release of Drug Test Results
- Consent to Criminal Background Check and Release of Results

\*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.

## **Attachment 1:**

### **Procedure for Criminal Background Check and Drug Screening**

1. Program directors (or designees) provide all accepted students with instructions for completing a background check and drug screening.
2. Students request the specified package on the approved SHP vendor website and pay the required fees.
3. Assigned designee(s) in the SHP Office for Academic and Faculty Affairs review and provide compliance reports for programs.
4. In the event a report reveals information which may prevent a student from being placed in a fieldwork rotation or potentially makes them ineligible for professional certification or licensure, the SHP Office of Academic and Faculty Affairs works in conjunction with the program director to notify the student. If such information exists, the student must acknowledge in writing their decision to continue in the program's didactic phase with the understanding that a degree cannot be awarded without completion of required fieldwork placement.
5. Prior to fieldwork placement, program directors (or designees) will provide students with instructions to complete a repeat background check and drug screening. In addition, some sites require a social media background check. The package code for this is different than the initial drug screen and background package code. If a vendor is specified by the placement site or preceptor, the preceptor (or designee) will provide students with instructions.
6. Students are responsible for all additional fieldwork placement requirements.
7. The program director discusses with individual student's implications for information which may inhibit an assigned fieldwork placement.
8. Students provide preceptors or internship supervisors with the required information from the results of their background check and drug screening reports if required.

## Attachment 2:



### 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>.

**Attachment 3:**

**UAB School of Health Professions**

**Consent to Drug Testing and Release of Drug Test Results**

For and in consideration of my participation in clinical education experiences, I understand that I will be required to submit to drug testing as a prerequisite to my assignment to a clinical site. I hereby consent to be tested for drugs and consent to the release of any such drug test results to the Office of Academic and Faculty Affairs, my Program Director, and the subsequent release of such drug test results to the clinical site to which I am assigned.

I understand that any clinical site to which I am assigned has the right to require additional drug testing as a condition of my placement. I hereby consent to any facility-required drug testing and consent to the release of such drug test results to my Program Director.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian  
(required only if student is under 19)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Attachment 4:**

**UAB School of Health Professions**

**Consent to Criminal Background Check and Release of Results**

For and in consideration of my participation in clinical education experiences, I understand that I will be required to submit to a criminal background check as a prerequisite to my assignment to a clinical site. I hereby consent to have a criminal background check and consent to the release the results to the Office of Academic and Faculty Affairs, my Program Director, and the subsequent release of the results to the clinical site to which I am assigned.

I understand that any clinical site to which I am assigned has the right to require additional background check as a condition of my placement. I hereby consent to any facility-required background check and consent to the release of the results of the check to my Program Director.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian  
(required only if student is under 19)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **EMERGENCY PLAN - SHPB**

The current SHPB Emergency Plan can be accessed at <https://www.uab.edu/shp/home/emergency-plan>.

## **FINAL COURSE GRADE APPEAL PROCESS**

[www.uab.edu/shp/home/images/PDF/grievance\\_procedures.pdf](http://www.uab.edu/shp/home/images/PDF/grievance_procedures.pdf)

## **PLAGIARISM**

[www.uab.edu/shp/home/images/PDF/Plagiarism\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.uab.edu/shp/home/images/PDF/Plagiarism_Policy.pdf)

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

# **UAB POLICIES**

## **CLASSROOM BEHAVIORS**

### **ATTENDANCE / ABSENCE (UNDERGRADUATE)**

<http://catalog.uab.edu/undergraduate/progresstowardadegree/#enrollmenttext>

## **HEALTH**

### **BLOOD AND BODY FLUID EXPOSURE**

<https://www.uab.edu/employee-health/employees/needle-sticks-exposures>

### **IMMUNIZATIONS**

<https://secure2.compliancebridge.com/uab/portal/getdoc.php?file=322>

## **SUBSTANCE USE/ABUSE**

### **ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES, USE AND CONSUMPTION**

<https://secure2.compliancebridge.com/uab/portal/getdoc.php?file=373>

### **DRUG FREE CAMPUS (GENERAL POLICY)**

<https://secure2.compliancebridge.com/uab/portal/getdoc.php?file=416>

### **NON-SMOKING**

<https://secure2.compliancebridge.com/uab/portal/getdoc.php?file=392>

## **TECHNOLOGY GUIDELINES**

### **COMPUTER AND NETWORK RESOURCES (ACCEPTABLE USE)**

<https://secure2.compliancebridge.com/uab/portal/getdoc.php?file=300>

### **COMPUTER SOFTWARE COPYING AND USE**

<https://secure2.compliancebridge.com/uab/portal/getdoc.php?file=153>

## **INCLUSIVENESS**

### **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND DISCRIMINATORY HARASSMENT**

<https://secure2.compliancebridge.com/uab/portal/getdoc.php?file=98>

## **RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY ACTIVITIES**

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY CODE**

<https://www.uab.edu/one-stop/policies/academic-integrity-code>

### **ETHICAL STANDARDS IN RESEARCH AND OTHER SCHOLARLY ACTIVITIES**

<https://secure2.compliancebridge.com/uab/portal/getdoc.php?file=398>

### **PATENT (INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY)**

<https://secure2.compliancebridge.com/uab/portal/getdoc.php?file=397>

## **CAMPUS SAFETY**

### **FIREARMS, AMMUNITION, AND OTHER DANGEROUS WEAPONS**

<https://secure2.compliancebridge.com/uab/portal/getdoc.php?file=330>

*Note: Additional university policies may be located by searching the UAB Policies and Procedures Library available online at [www.uab.edu/policies/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.uab.edu/policies/Pages/default.aspx).*

## SECTION 3 – PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### WELCOME TO THE DEPARTMENT OF NUTRITION SCIENCES

Welcome to the Ph.D. program in 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 multi-professional 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.

While most larger nutrition programs in the United States are fragmented, the DNS is a single, multi-professional 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 both clinical and human nutrition as well as basic molecular nutrition. Students have the opportunity to participate in basic, clinical, and translational research within our three National Institutes of Health (NIH)–funded research centers in the Department of Nutrition Sciences—the Nutrition Obesity Research Center, the Diabetes Research Center, and the Nutrition for Precision Health Clinical Center—as well as other world-renowned research facilities on UAB’s campus, including the O’Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center.

The program you are entering will prepare you for a rewarding career in the field of nutrition science. Through the PhD program in Nutrition Sciences, 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, animal 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 2,000-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 of the major 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 facility for a dual energy x-ray absorptiometry (DEXA), bioelectrical impedance analysis (BIA) devices, exercise testing equipment, and a mass spectrometer equipped with a gas chromatograph for stable isotope analyses.

The DNS is unique in housing three prestigious NIH-funded centers— the [Nutrition Obesity Research Center](#) (NORC), the [Diabetes Research Center](#) (DRC), and the Nutrition for Precision Health Clinical Center. 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.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

Admission for the PhD in Nutrition Sciences program is for the fall term only, with the application deadline occurring on or before **FEBRUARY 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, 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
- Current resume or curriculum vitae
- Three letters of recommendation from professionals with knowledge of the applicant's background and abilities
- Beginning with the fall 2023 applications, applicants may submit Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores if they choose to do so, but these are no longer required. If submitted, scores will be considered if they benefit the student's application, but they will not be used as a 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 into an American system by an external company, such as [World Education Services International Credential Evaluation](#) (WES) and [Educational Credential Evaluators](#) (ECE). Please note, it is not sufficient to provide an English language translation of your previous program of study. The evaluation by one of these approved services is necessary for the admissions committee to adequately compare your transcript with those of students with a degree from a U.S. institution.

## ADMISSION DECISIONS

Applications are evaluated by a departmental 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 Department of Nutrition Sciences.

## MASTER OF SCIENCE (MS) IN NUTRITION SCIENCES

Students admitted to the PhD program who do not have a graduate degree are required to obtain a Master of Science (MS) in Nutrition Sciences in their first years of study. Students generally complete these requirements by the end of their second year of the PhD program. The MS Program Director will assist students throughout this portion of their program of study.

In addition to core course requirements, students in pursuit of an MS in Nutrition Sciences degree must have an established Graduate Study Committee, a master's level candidacy approval form, and appropriate IRB or IACUC certifications and must successfully complete two semester hours of Master's Level Non Thesis Research (NTR 698) and six hours of Master's Level Thesis Research (NTR 699). Applicants should note that course credit applied to the MS degree cannot be applied to the PhD. The PhD Program Director will guide students as they select courses that need to replace any that were already applied to the MS degree.

Additional information can be found in the MS in Nutrition Sciences Research Track student handbook. To access this student handbook online, please visit the [MS Research Track website](#).

## 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 a 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 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.

## 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. 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 your 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 these assistantships are offered so that the student can maintain focus on the PhD program and professional development associated with the program. As such, outside work can become distracting and 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 for you throughout your program of study. Please familiarize yourself 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. You 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 this 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

Your BlazerID is automatically assigned to you once you complete your graduate application. If you cannot find your BlazerID in the graduate school application portal, contact your Academic Advisor for assistance. You will need to create a unique password.

### UAB EMAIL

Once you have your unique BlazerID and create your password, you will have access to all of UAB's systems – including your 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 for your UAB email address.

### COURSE REGISTRATION

You must register for all courses for which you wish to earn graduate credit. The UAB class schedule is accessible via [BlazerNET](#) located at [www.uab.edu/blazernet](http://www.uab.edu/blazernet). You are able to register for courses and adjust your 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 you have a tuition scholarship, it is very important that you provide a copy of your 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 of your 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)

You can review your degree progress online through the [Graduation Planning System](#) (GPS), which shows your satisfied requirements and those not yet satisfied for your degree. You will also find a selection of [GPA calculators](#). You can 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) 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. Your GPA is determined by dividing the total quality points awarded by your 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

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 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](#).

## DNS ACADEMIC ETHICS & MISCONDUCT STATEMENT

The DNS recognizes and strongly endorses the principles of integrity and ethical behavior as they apply to the behavior of its faculty, staff, and students who are engaged in research, scholarship, teaching, and service activities. Ethical and professional behaviors are key parts of your education in our department, and we are committed to promoting professionalism in all aspects of your training. Therefore, procedures for managing academic and professional conduct will be followed. Examples of misconduct include abetting, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, and misrepresentation. For the definition of these terms, please refer to the UAB Graduate School's Academic Ethics & Misconduct information [here](#).

A key component of academic and scientific integrity is the proper attribution and acknowledgment of the contributions of others to the acquisition of new knowledge. In an effort to promote responsible conduct of research and academic integrity, the DNS has developed the following statement and procedures concerning plagiarism:

Plagiarism, as defined by the UAB Graduate School, is “claiming as your own the ideas, words, data, computer programs, creative compositions, artwork, etc., done by someone else. Examples include improper citation of referenced works, use of commercially available scholarly papers, failure to cite sources, and copying others’ ideas.” The DNS is particularly concerned with the education of our students, which includes ethics, honor codes, and the responsible conduct of research in science. From this perspective, the following procedures have been identified to address the University and School policy on plagiarism.

All papers submitted for grading in any School of Health Professions programs may be reviewed using various plagiarism monitoring methods, such as the software Turnitin.com.

Please note that artificial intelligence (AI)–enabled programs (e.g., ChatGPT) may be used for assignments and scientific abstracts, manuscripts, reviews etc., only with the express permission of the faculty instructor and faculty mentor, as appropriate. Failure to disclose use of such programs in the preparation of an assignment may be considered misconduct and handled according to the relevant policies of department, school, and University.

## DEPARTMENT GRIEVANCE POLICY

Although it is rare, issues can arise between a student and professor, faculty mentor, 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 Department of Nutrition Sciences.
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 in this area include experimental design, nutritional biochemistry, energy requirements, body composition, geriatric nutrition, community nutrition, and disease prevention, among others. To see what our 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:

- Design research: develop research ideas and testable hypotheses that are informed by published literature in the field
- Conduct research: planning research studies and collecting data
- Analysis of data: understand and apply statistical methods to analyze data and interpret the results
- Communicate science: discuss and disseminate research ideas and findings through written and verbal methods

Most students complete the requirements of their doctoral degree within four to five years of full-time study. 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 24 additional graduate semester hours of elective coursework.

## 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](#).

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 (1–2 credit hours, taken a minimum of two times)	2	Fall, Spring, Summer
NTR 736	Scientific Methods	3	Fall (Even)
NTR 747	Molecular Biology and Nutrition Sciences	3	Fall (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 extremely 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 program and our areas of research and training emphasis.

## 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
NTR 762	Research Proposal Development	3	Spring
NTR 769*	Race, Nutrition, and Health	3	Spring (Even)

\*Denotes an online course

\*\*NTR 755 may only be taken following the completion of the UAB Graduate School's Center for Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning (CIRTL) teaching certificate. More information may be found [here](#).

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.

## RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS

Research rotations (NTR 733 Laboratory Instruments and Methods in Nutrition Research) are an integral component of the first year of Nutrition Sciences 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 work in at least three 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 10 to 12 weeks. The recommended research rotation is as follows:

Rotation Number	Recommended Time Period
1	2 <sup>nd</sup> week of the fall semester to mid-December
2	1 <sup>st</sup> week of January to late March
3	3 <sup>rd</sup> week of March to mid-June

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.

## NON-DISSERTATION RESEARCH HOURS

After completing research rotations (NTR 733) and establishing a faculty mentor, students are expected to register for non-dissertation (NTR 798) research hours under the direction of their faculty mentor. A minimum of 12 credit hours in non-dissertation research is required of all PhD in Nutrition Sciences students prior to admission to candidacy.

## ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY

Admission to Candidacy is a process 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.

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) F-31 mechanism. Writing an F-31 grant according to the NIH's standards provides doctoral students the opportunity to develop their independence as researchers and to clearly plan their dissertation research. Therefore, to provide a unique learning and training opportunity to our students, the PhD in Nutrition Sciences program uses the NIH F-31 format as part of the Candidacy Examination. Though F-31 submission to NIH is not a requirement as part of the Candidacy Examination, it is highly encouraged.

## CANDIDACY PROCEDURES

*Please follow all guidance from the UAB Graduate School. The process described here incorporates their requirements and our departmental recommendations.*

The process to follow 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 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 your *Proposal Draft*.
6. After approval from your faculty mentor, send the mentor-approved *Proposal Draft* to your committee and the PhD Program Director (i.e., the top box in Figure 1).
7. The faculty mentor, committee, and PhD Program Director will review the document and then meet to discuss (the 2<sup>nd</sup> box on Figure 1). It is recommended that this group has 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, but the student's faculty mentor, committee, and the Program Director will decide whether they would like the student present for the meeting.
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 Figure 1).
9. With approval from your faculty mentor, send the *Final Proposal* to your committee and the PhD Program Director and schedule the Candidacy Examination. **The *Final Proposal* must be sent to the faculty mentor, committee, and the PhD Program Director at least 10 business days prior to the date of the Candidacy Examination.**
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.

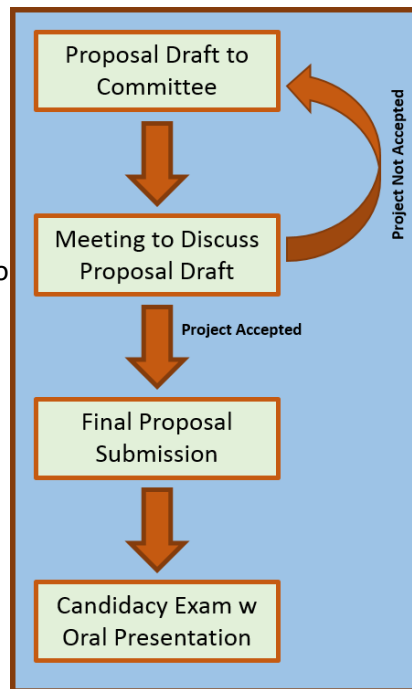


Figure 1: Summary of Candidacy Exam

It is the student's responsibility to coordinate with the Program Manager for the Education Mission to have the announcement for the public presentation made and sent out at least two weeks prior to the scheduled public presentation.

It is highly recommended that students meet with their advisor to coordinate the submission of the proposal to NIH. If the document is submitted for funding, the student and advisor will design and add

to the proposal the mentoring component of the F31 (which is part of the application). The student and the advisor will have support from the office of the DNS Education Mission in this part of the process.

Non-US 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, including R03 or R21.

## CANDIDACY PROPOSAL

Applications for an Individual Fellowship Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award should use the SF424 (R&R) Fellowship Application Guide that 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 decision of the Department of Nutrition Sciences. 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 IC or AHRQ.

**c) Approach**

- i. 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.
- ii. Describe any new methodology and its advantage over existing methodologies. Describe any novel concepts, approaches, tools, or technologies for the proposed studies.
- iii. 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)**

- i. 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 your experience and determine your 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.

**e) 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 6 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 Department of Nutrition Sciences' evaluation criteria for an F31 are based on the following four aspects:

1. *Candidate.* The candidate's previous academic and research performance and the 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 would be based mainly on the Research Proposal aspect. Students should note that although the primary evaluation is based on the written document, the committee is using 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 to evaluate student 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 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Through its Professional Development Program, 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 Profession Development Program [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 will consist of five or six faculty members who guide the student to develop an effective research agenda and to 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.

Two members of the Dissertation Advisory Committee should be from outside the student's specialization, and each should be able to offer relevant insights and expertise to help guide the student. 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.

Graduate faculty status is required for all faculty members who serve on Dissertation Advisory Committees. To see whether a faculty member is appointed to graduate faculty status, please check the [Graduate Faculty Listing](#) on the UAB Graduate School's webpage. To request an appointment to the graduate faculty (whether Level I, Level II, or Ad Hoc), please 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.

**It is the responsibility of the student to plan and execute regular meetings with their Dissertation Advisory Committee.** It is the PhD Program Director's recommendation to have these meetings at least once every six months. These meetings should be no longer than one hour, should be scheduled in advance, and should consistently have at least three Dissertation Advisory Committee members present. An update of the student's research progress should be evaluated during each of these meetings.

## 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 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.

## IRB APPROVAL

Student researchers have the same submission options as any investigator at UAB. In most cases, it is advisable that the student independently submit an application to the IRB, especially those working toward their dissertation. **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:

- 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 and faculty are encouraged to call the IRB with any questions. The offices 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 WRITTEN DOCUMENT AND ORAL DEFENSE

### WRITTEN DOCUMENT

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

- **Model 1.** 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.** This model includes multiple chapters describing an introduction, literature review, methods, results, discussion, conclusions, and a reference list that describes the scientific discovery of the student.

The specific model used for writing your dissertation must be approved by your faculty advisor, Dissertation Advisory Committee, and the PhD 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 publishing of at least two peer-reviewed publications (not abstracts) prior to graduation. One of these papers must be a first-author publication.**

For those students who earn their MS in Nutrition Sciences as part of their PhD training, the published thesis is not counted toward the PhD publication requirements. Further, if a student uses the dissertation model based on at least three publications (Model 1), any publication used to previously obtain another degree is not accepted as part of the dissertation.

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](#).**

**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 as a whole.

### DISSERTATION PRESENTATION

**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 remains in the defense room for a private questioning 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 term.

## 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 24 semester hours of approved electives/research.
- 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 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 your requirements to ensure that you 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.

You must be registered for at least one (1) credit hour during your term of graduation. If you are covered by the student health insurance policy, hold an assistantship, or have 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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