Rehabilitation Science PhD Program

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO
ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

STUDENT HANDBOOK

Last updated: August 2025

www.RehabSciencePhD.com

Table of Contents

Program Guidelines Disclaimer

As a member of the Rehabilitation Science PhD Program, you are expected to adhere to all established policies and procedures of the University, the Office of Research Edcuation, the Graduate School and this PhD Program.

CU Anschutz – University Policies	https://catalog.ucdenver.edu/cu-anschutz/university-policies/
Office of Research Education	https://medschool.cuanschutz.edu/ore/forms-and-resources
Graduate School	https://graduateschool.cuanschutz.edu/forms-resources/resources

For any policies, please make sure to review the Graduate School Policies and Procedures.

Program Overview

Mission: The mission of the University of Colorado Rehabilitation Science PhD program is to discover and apply knowledge that improves health and well-being. The mission is fulfilled through developing national leaders in rehabilitation research who advance evidence-based practice.

Vision: The University of Colorado Rehabilitation Science PhD Program will be a premier training program in rehabilitation research with a reputation for excellence in innovation, research, teaching, and community engagement to advance clinical care.

Who We Are: CU Rehabilitation Science is comprised of core and associated faculty, postdoctoral fellows, students and research assistants with a broad background, including physical therapy, occupational therapy, medicine, psychology, engineering, and public health, all working together to improve the lives of people who live with disabilities.

Program Director's Welcome

Rehabilitation Science is an interdisciplinary field of study that integrates knowledge from the basic and clinical sciences to improve our understanding of human movement, physical function, and disability across the lifespan. The goal of the Rehabilitation Science (RHSC) Program at the University of Colorado is to prepare future generations of researchers to advance the science and practice of physical rehabilitation. We offer a flexible and interdisciplinary curriculum, with a wide range of courses in the basic and clinical sciences across three University of Colorado campuses. As a student in our program, you will have opportunities for individualized mentorship from nationally recognized scientists representing a variety of specialized disciplines within the broader field of Rehabilitation Science. Examples include Bioengineering, Clinical Science, Data Informatics, Exercise Science, Geriatrics, Health Services, Implementation Science, Integrative Physiology, Internal Medicine, Neurology, Nutrition, Orthopedics, Pediatrics, Physical & Occupational Therapy, and Pulmonary Sciences. This interdisciplinary approach will prepare you to lead collaborative research teams by integrating knowledge from multiple perspectives ranging from the molecular to the systems level to solve complex problems of physical disablement.

In 1990, the National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research was established at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to help coordinate a focus on medical rehabilitation research. The Institute of Medicine, a component of the National Academy of Sciences that serves as an advisor for national science policy,

established a committee to evaluate the role of Rehabilitation Science and engineering in healthcare. Their 1997 report concluded that "research in the separate health, health professional, and engineering disciplines, although complementary, is not optimally interfaced or balanced… [there is] a need to enhance the federal effort in rehabilitation science and engineering by expanding research, raising visibility, and improving coordination". In 2005, the Director of the NIH met with six organizations representing a coalition of more than 30 rehabilitation provider and patient groups in a roundtable discussion of strategies to expand the role of Rehabilitation Science within the NIH. Recently, an American Physical Therapy Association task force stated that "a sufficient number of doctoral prepared people with strong research backgrounds is not available to increase the body of knowledge in physical therapy, to meet the standards for academic credibility and institutions of higher education, and to educate the entry-level practitioner of the future. Furthermore, the number of graduate students currently enrolled in doctoral education programs is far below the number necessary to meet future needs." These are just a few examples of the emerging national focus on rehabilitation research that will demand the skills of our graduates well into the future.

RHSC Program faculty are committed to providing a highly collaborative training environment that will satisfy your scientific curiosity, and help you achieve your professional goals. On behalf of the faculty, I would like to welcome to the University of Colorado and thank you for choosing our program. We look forward to working together!

Sincerely,

Jennifer Stevens Lapsley, PT, Ph.D.
Program Director

Office of Research Education Contacts

Program Director: Jennifer Stevens Lapsley, PT, Ph.D.

- 303.724.9170
- jennifer.stevens-lapsley@cuanschutz.edu

ORE Program Administrator: Carley Surina, MA

- 303.724.5082
- carley.surina@cuanschutz.edu

Office of Research Education (located in the Fitzsimons Building, 5th Floor West, Suite W5107)

Angie Ribera: Associate Dean of Research Education, angie.ribera@cuanschutz.edu
- Point of contact for faculty, program, and organizational concerns and planning

Andy Bradford: Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, andy.bradford@cuanschutz.edu
- Point of contact for student and related concerns

Jodi Cropper: Business Services Program Director, jodi.cropper@cuanschutz.edu
- Point of contact for financial and organizational planning concerns and coordination

Morgan Texeira: Program Manager, morgan.texeira@cuanschutz.edu

- Point of contact for program specific concerns and additional point of contact for Program Administrators

Stephen Frazier: Business Service Professional, stephen.frazier@cuanschutz.edu

- Point of contact for ORE administrative concerns, organizational planning and ORE leadership availability

Curriculum Overview

Registration Process

- Academic Calendars (see The Graduate School calendar)
- Register for Classes (see The Graduate School)
  - The paying of tuition, fees and student health insurance occurs the week following the deadline for semester add/drop period, which can be found on the academic calendar . The Program Administrator will complete the process of submitting the appropriate form to the Bursar's Office. For those students receiving financial aid, please work with the Program Administrator to avoid any disruption in aid awarding.

Year 1

Fall Semester		
Registration Information	**Course Title**	**Credits**
RHSC 7000	Foundations in Rehabilitation Science *Can also be taken in year 2*	2
RHSC 7001	Rehabilitation Science Seminar I	1
RHSC 7910	Research Practicum in Rehabilitation Science I	3
See options – Appendix 2	Biostatistics	3-4
Spring Semester		
Registration Information	**Course Title**	**Credits**
RHSC 7911	Research Practicum in Rehabilitation Science II	3
See options – Appendix 2	Biostatistics II	3-4
See options – Appendix 2	Research Ethics *Can also be taken in Fall year 2*	1
RHSC 7002	Professional Skills in Academia *Can also be taken in year 2*	2

Summer Semester		
Registration Information	**Course Title**	**Credits**
RHSC 8990	Doctoral Thesis	1
Students are welcome to find other coursework to take in the summer		

- **Rotations**
  - **Purpose:** Research practicum rotations are designed to introduce students to diverse research methodologies, teach approaches to scientific problem-solving, and provide an opportunity to explore compatibility with faculty as potential thesis advisors. They also allow students to gain a variety of research experiences, with the primary goal of identifying a future thesis advisor.
  - **Requirements:** Rotations must be completed with RHSC-affiliated faculty, unless special permission is granted by the GTC. Students typically complete two rotations in their first two semesters, with an optional third summer rotation approved in special instances. Rotations may be completed with the same or different mentors.
  - **Process:** **ORE Milestone Rotation Request form** can be used when first year students have identified their rotation mentor. Please follow Program specific guidelines, including the submission deadline. Three forms will be submitted throughout the academic year.
    - If you need a Third Rotation (with PD approval), you must request approval from your Program Director. The Program Administrator and Program Director will work with the Office of Research Education accordingly.
    - Students identify potential mentors using resources on the RHSC website and must obtain Program Director approval before contacting faculty. Rotations are arranged in consultation with the Program Director. Students are responsible for scheduling and conducting rotations in a timely manner.
  - **Rotation Expectations:**
    Each rotation requires submission of a brief (1–2 page) project description, signed by the faculty mentor, by the end of the first month. Students are expected to commit 6–10 hours per week to research in the lab, typically during normal work hours when not attending classes. At the end of the rotation, students present an oral post-rotational seminar during the RHSC Seminar Series, which should include the rationale, methods, results (or anticipated results), interpretation, discussion, and potential future research directions. Presentations typically last 15–20 minutes with five minutes for questions.
  - **Grading:**
    Each rotation receives a letter grade assigned initially by the faculty advisor, which may be adjusted by the Course Coordinator based on additional input by up to half a grade.
- **Research Update Talks**
  - First- and second-year RHSC students are required to give oral 'Research in Progress' presentations during the RHSC Seminar Series in the fall. These talks focus on ongoing or planned thesis research and should include the study's rationale, methods, and results (or anticipated results). Presentations should also address the impact of the study on rehabilitation practice and discuss potential future research directions. Each presentation

typically lasts 15–20 minutes, followed by five minutes for audience questions. These presentations provide students with an opportunity to practice communicating their research clearly and receive feedback from faculty and peers.

- **Preliminary Exam**
  - Students must pass the Preliminary Examination at the end of their first year to maintain academic standing and eligibility for continued financial support. The exam is both written and oral and assesses knowledge of rehabilitation frameworks, research design, and statistics. Passing demonstrates readiness to select a thesis advisor and advance in the program.
- **Transfer to Thesis Lab**
  - **Predoc Financial Support Agreement** for those faculty mentors who choose to take on a new predoctoral mentee.
  - **Thesis Advisor Selection:** Thesis advisors provide individualized mentorship and training while students complete their dissertation research. Selecting a thesis advisor is one of the most important decisions in a graduate student's career. It is recommended to choose a thesis advisor from faculty affiliated with the Rehabilitation Science Program prior to matriculation. An updated list of RHSC Affiliated Faculty is available on the RHSC Program website. Students should select a thesis advisor no later than the Preliminary Examination, though it may be chosen anytime during the first year. Advisors are expected to provide full financial support throughout the dissertation phase, have substantial graduate teaching experience, and a strong record of scholarship. If a student cannot select a thesis advisor by the Fall semester of their second year, the RHSC Program may dismiss the student.
  - **Practicum Mentor Location:** When selecting your first research practicum, choose a mentor located on the Anschutz Medical Campus. Commuting to other campuses can be difficult during the first semester due to a full academic schedule.
- **Residency**
  - Per University policy, it is required that students begin the process of establishing their residency as soon as they accept their offer to join the PhD program. This process must be started promptly to ensure you meet the necessary deadlines by the end of your first year. For more information, please visit the University website – **Residency**
  - Students who fail to qualify for in-state residency will be responsible for the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition.

Year 2

- Minimum registration requirement for full-time graduate students is 5 credits. Anything above 5 credits must be approved by faculty mentor.
  - The exception is the summer semester, in which students may enroll for only 1 credit of 8990.

Fall Semester		
Registration Information	**Course Title**	**Credits**
RHSC 7001	Rehabilitation Science Seminar II	1
See options – Appendix 2	Statistics/Data Management elective *Can also be taken in Spring Year 2*	≥1
See options – Appendix 2	Scientific Writing	1-2

	Can also be taken in Spring Year 2	
See options – Appendix 2	Specialized Electives	Variable
Spring Semester		
Registration Information	**Course Title**	**Credits**
See options – Appendix 2	Statistics/Data Management elective *Can also be taken in Fall Year 2*	≥1
See options – Appendix 2	Scientific Writing	1-2
RHSC 7002	Professional Skills in Academia *Can also be taken in year 1* *This course alternates years*	2
See options – Appendix 2	Specialization Electives	Variable
Summer Semester		
Registration Information	**Course Title**	**Credits**
RHSC 8990	Doctoral Thesis	1

- **Research Update Talks**
  - First- and second-year RHSC students are required to give oral 'Research in Progress' presentations during the RHSC Seminar Series in the fall. These talks focus on ongoing or planned thesis research and should include the study's rationale, methods, and results (or anticipated results). Presentations should also address the impact of the study on rehabilitation practice and discuss potential future research directions. Each presentation typically lasts 15–20 minutes, followed by five minutes for audience questions. These presentations provide students with an opportunity to practice communicating their research clearly and receive feedback from faculty and peers.
- **Comprehensive Exam**
  - Students must pass the Comprehensive Examination near the end of the second or by January 15th of the third academic year to continue in the Ph.D. program and maintain financial support. The exam includes written and oral components focused on the proposed thesis project. Passing confirms readiness for thesis research and advancement to candidacy.
  - **Required forms** to be completed using DocuSign
    - Application for Candidacy form
    - Exam Request form
    - Once a date has been set with your Thesis Advisory Committee, you must contact your Program Administrator to initiate forms. You will also discuss room bookings at this time. All forms must be submitted to the Administrator at least a month prior to the exam date.

Year 3+

- Minimum registration requirement for full-time graduate students is 5 credits. Anything above 5 credits must be approved by faculty mentor.
    - The exception is the summer semester, in which students may enroll for only 1 credit of RHSC 8990.
- Students defending in the current semester must register for 5 credits of RHSC 8990. If a student is defending in between semester dates as defined by the Academic Calendar, the student must register for 5 credits of RHSC 8990, in the proceeding semester of the scheduled defense date.

Fall Semester		
Registration Information	**Course Title**	**Credits**
RHSC 8990	Doctoral Thesis	5 (variable)
Spring Semester		
Registration Information	**Course Title**	**Credits**
RHSC 8990	Doctoral Thesis	5 (variable)
Summer Semester		
Registration Information	**Course Title**	**Credits**
RHSC 8990	Doctoral Thesis	1

- Research Update Talks
    - Third-year and advanced students are not required to enroll in RHSC 7001; however, attendance at the fall Work in Progress talks is mandatory. This requirement ensures continued engagement with current research, maintains connection to program activities, and provides support to peers presenting their research.
- Thesis Committee meetings
    - Students must hold **Thesis Progress Update Meetings** with the TAC at least once per year. These meetings allow students to report progress, discuss results, and communicate any changes to the original aims, approach, or timeline. The TAC may require more frequent meetings if deemed necessary.
    - **Research in Progress seminars** (Spring) offer students an additional forum to present their work, receive input from faculty and peers, and practice presentation skills. However, these seminars **do not replace** the mandatory annual, closed-door meetings with the TAC.

Examinations and Evaluations

Preliminary Exam

- Every first-year student takes the Preliminary Qualifying Exam at the end of the first year of graduate school. BSP students that plan to join **RHSC** will participate in the program's preliminary exam.
- MSTP trainees transferring into **RHSC** current preliminary exams are accepted as an equivalent to the program preliminary exam. MSTP trainees will complete an MSTP specific preliminary exam prior to program transfer.

- **Timing and Overview:** First-year students take the Preliminary Examination in May/June. It is both written and oral, administered by the Graduate Training Committee (GTC). After reviewing both portions, the GTC assigns an overall grade of **Pass**, **Fail**, or **Pass with Conditions**.
- **Mastery of conceptual frameworks in rehabilitation is a graduation requirement for RHSC students.** It is strongly recommended that students review the following resources to strengthen their understanding. All students must demonstrate their ability to apply established conceptual frameworks and appropriate measures of impairment, activity limitations, and participation when designing and analyzing research hypotheses.
    - **Online Course:** *The International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health: Overview (No CEUs)*
        - Go to: www.apta.org
        - **Members:** Log in using your member number.
        - **Non-members:** Scroll to "New Customers," register with a valid email address, create a login/password, then log in again.
        - Access the course via the APTA Learning Center.
        - Scroll to "Online: The International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health: Overview (No CEUs)" and select *Purchase Now* (course is free).
        - For technical support, contact APTA at 1-800-999-APTA.
    - **Beginner's Guide to ICF**: Download PDF
    - **Jette and Schenkman Articles:**
        - Article 1
        - Article 2
    - **December 2011 Issue of *Physical Therapy***: View here
- **Written Examination:** Administered on a Program computer, students have three hours to critically evaluate a published research article, applying knowledge in 1) Rehabilitation Frameworks and 2) Research Design and Statistics. Written questions emphasize hypothesis generation, study design, statistical methods, and interpretation of results. Students should review **RHSC 7000**, **BIOS 6601/11**, and **BIOS 6602/12** before the exam.
- **Oral Examination:** Following the written portion, the GTC administers a one-hour oral exam to clarify written responses, evaluate critical thinking, and assess mastery of fundamental concepts.
- **Supplemental Study Resources:** Online ICF courses, key literature, and journal resources are recommended to reinforce conceptual frameworks and research methods.
- **Examination Results:**
    - **Pass** – majority affirmative votes from GTC.
    - **Pass with Conditions** – additional work required, to be completed within four months.
    - **Fail** – may result in dismissal; one retake allowed at the Program's discretion within six months.

Comprehensive Exam

- **Overview:** Administered by the Comprehensive Examination Committee (CEC) no later than January 15 of the third year. Students must have completed 30 didactic credit hours and be enrolled in at least five thesis credit hours during the semester of the exam.
- **Committee Composition:** The CEC includes five members, at least three RHSC faculty (including the thesis advisor if desired), and at least one external member. The Chair must be RHSC faculty, cannot

be the thesis advisor, and should have prior committee experience. Committee may be revised if research focus changes.

- **Examination Procedures:**
  - **Written Component:** NIH NRSA-style proposal (Specific Aims + Research Strategy), seven single-spaced pages, submitted two weeks before oral exam. Must be independently prepared. See NRSA Proposal Instructions.
  - **Oral Component:** 30–40 minute public presentation followed by closed-session questioning by the CEC. Students are tested on proposal topic and broader coursework knowledge. Exam requires ~3 hours total.
- **Post-Examination Registration:** Register for Doctoral Thesis hours (8990) continuously until thesis defense. Minimum 30 thesis hours required.
- **Examination Results:**
  - **Pass** – majority affirmative votes.
  - **Pass with Conditions** – additional work required, to be completed within six months.
  - **Fail** – may result in dismissal; one retake allowed within six months
- **App Candidacy form**
- **Exam request form**
  - Once a date has been set with your Advisory Committee, you must contact your Program Administrator to initiate forms. You will also discuss room bookings at this time. All forms must be submitted to the Administrator at least a month prior to the exam date.
- As you prepare for your Comprehensive Exam, please ensure that all your committee members have a faculty appointment listed in the Graduate School Faculty Directory.
- All forms are found in the Graduate School website under the "Forms" section.
  - Graduate School - Resources & Forms - CU Anschutz

Thesis Defense

- **Committee Formation:** Within one month of passing the Comprehensive Exam, form a Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC) with your thesis advisor, Program Director, and GTC. The TAC must include three UCD|AMC graduate faculty (including your advisor); the chair must be RHSC faculty and not your primary advisor.
- **Thesis Preparation:** The thesis should include 3–5 chapters and at least one accepted publication. Follow Graduate School formatting guidelines and schedule a thesis pre-check at least two weeks before defense. Provide the final draft to TAC members two weeks before the defense. *For more information, see Appendix 4.*
- **Scheduling:** Register for five thesis credit hours in the defense semester and submit all required forms at least four weeks in advance.
- **Defense:** The defense consists of a 45-minute public presentation with Q&A, followed by a 2–3 hour closed session with the committee.
- **Outcomes:**
  - **Pass:** Majority vote.
  - **Pass with Conditions:** Revisions due within 60 days.
  - **Fail:** Dismissal from the Graduate School.

Final defense of the thesis/dissertation must be completed by Graduate School deadlines.

- **Biosketch Form**
  - This is a graduate school form, not the NIH form
- **Exam Request**

- **Thesis Approval form**
- ProQuest **General Information for Submitting Dissertation & Thesis** page 13 on Graduate School website
- **Watch** how to prepare the correct forms and upload your dissertation.
- If defending after the semester ends you must register for 5 credits of 8990 in the proceeding semester. (Thesis defenses must be tied to the end of the semester deadlines dates please see the links below)

You can find all forms for the comprehensive exam and thesis defense on the Graduate School website under the "Forms" section.

- **Graduate School - Resources & Forms - CU Anschutz**

Thesis Defense Resources and Dissertation Guidelines

- **Thesis & Dissertation/ProQuest Format & Guidelines**
- **Graduate School Deadlines, Forms, Policies**
- See appendix 4 for program specific guidelines

Policies and Procedures

Rehabilitation Science PhD Program

Financial Support and Concurrent Employment Policies

The Rehabilitation Science PhD Program is committed to ensuring that students complete their degree within a maximum of five years while maintaining strong research productivity, preparing them for competitive funding opportunities and successful careers. To achieve these goals, the following policies apply:

- **Enrollment & Eligibility:** Students must maintain full-time enrollment (≥5 credits/semester); part-time study is not permitted. Those interested in part-time study should contact the Clinical Science Program at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. Financial support is only available to U.S. citizens eligible for federal grants while enrolled.
- **Stipends & Benefits:** All students receive an annual cost-of-living stipend determined by the Graduate School. Students are provided full tuition waivers and medical/dental insurance, which may be waived with proof of comparable coverage.
- **Funding Structure:** During the first year, the Graduate School covers stipend, tuition, fees, and insurance for the first two semesters. In subsequent years, funding may come from a combination of faculty grants, training grants, DPT teaching assistantships, internal/external clinical revenue, and individual scholarships. Limited program funds may be available for students without an identified mentor or experiencing a temporary funding lapse. Funding decisions are made by the Rehabilitation Science Advisory Committee, in consultation with mentors.
- **Research, Teaching, and Clinical Responsibilities:** Students receiving a cost-of-living stipend are expected to work in an affiliated research lab during normal working hours year-round, except during University holidays. Beginning in Year 2, students may also participate in teaching in the DPT program under mentor guidance, including lectures, grading, tutoring, and lab assistance. Typically, teaching assignments require <80–100 hours per year and are designed to complement the student's expertise. Depending on available funding to support students, teaching revenue can offset training costs, with no direct payment to students. However, if resources permit, students may be paid for up

to 100 hours of teaching time/year. Faculty mentors may fund a student at the full stipend rate to exempt them from teaching duties. Clinical work is permitted only after Year 1 and must be negotiated annually with the Program Director and cannot exceed 10hrs/wk.

- **External Funding & Grants:** Students are encouraged to apply for individual grants and scholarships. If awards exceed the standard stipend, a portion may be allocated to cover training and research costs, as negotiated in writing with the mentor.
- **Conditions for Continued Support:** Financial support continues only if students maintain satisfactory academic progress, qualify for in-state tuition after Year 1, pass the Preliminary Examination at the end of Year 1, pass the Comprehensive Examination near the end of Year 2 or start of Year 3, have a thesis advisor able and willing to provide support, and schedule and complete the Thesis Defense within approximately 4–5 years. Graduate School rules require thesis defense within seven years of matriculation, and NIH pre-doctoral support is generally limited to seven years, making five-year completion strongly preferred for training grant continuation.

Leave Policy

The PhD Program follows NIH-aligned leave policies to ensure students can maintain research and academic progress while accommodating personal needs. Students funded by non-NIH sources should follow the respective funding agency's guidelines.

- **Vacation and Holidays:** Graduate students shall receive all CU Anschutz campus holidays and may receive an additional 10 weekdays (excluding weekends) of vacation per academic year, with no year-to-year accrual. Graduate students shall continue to receive stipends during vacations and holidays. Graduate students taking courses are expected to attend all classes and take all exams as scheduled. The times between academic terms and the summers are all considered active parts of the training period and leave must be taken in accordance with this policy. Graduate students supported via extramurally funded projects or training grants must comply with sponsor requirements regarding effort.
- **Sick Leave:** Students are allowed up to 15 calendar days per year of paid sick leave, with extensions possible under exceptional circumstances approved by the funding agency. Sick leave may be used for pregnancy- or childbirth-related medical conditions in accordance with the Pregnancy Discrimination Act.
- **Parental Leave:** Graduate students may continue to receive stipends for 11 weekdays (excluding weekends and campus holidays) of sick leave per academic year, with no year-to-year accrual. Under exceptional circumstances, additional sick days may be granted following a written request from the student and approval by the student's thesis advisor (if determined) and graduate program director. Sick leave may be used for medical needs related to pregnancy and childbirth. Absences needed to address chronic health conditions and/or disabilities as part of an Office of Disability, Access, and Inclusion (ODAI) formal accommodation plan may be treated separately from sick leave. Graduate students supported via extramurally funded projects or training grants must comply with sponsor requirements regarding effort.
- **Extended or Unpaid Leave:** Individuals requiring more than 11 weekdays (excluding weekends and campus holidays) of sick leave or more than 8 work weeks (excluding weekends and campus holidays) of parental leave per academic year must seek approval from their thesis advisor and their graduate program director for an unpaid leave of absence. A leave of absence must be requested by the student and approved by their thesis advisor (if known) and program in advance of taking the leave of absence. The leave period and conditions must be documented at the times of leave and of re-entry into the program. A copy of this agreement must be submitted to the Graduate School in advance of the leave of absence. Graduate students supported via extramurally funded projects or training grants must comply with sponsor requirements regarding effort.

For full guidance, students should review the Graduate School leave policy: CU Anschutz Graduate School Leave Policy.

- Milestone updates and changes
- Code of Conduct Policy

Office of Research Education

- Office of Research Education
- Conflict of Interest (reference to Comps and Thesis committees)
    - Honor Code and Committee Procedures
- Anschutz Email address communication
- Financial Aid for Graduate Students
- After the first full year, all domestic students will receive support of in-state but not out-of-state tuition (assuming satisfactory academic progress). Accordingly, new students need to establish Colorado residency during their first year. The process requires much documentation and has many steps that often require up to a year to complete. To ensure that they have in-state resident status by the beginning of year two, new students need to immediately obtain documentation to support their petition for State Residency. Specific details and instruction are provided by your program administrator. Please refer to the Registrar's Office for more information, https://www.cuanschutz.edu/registrar/residency
- Tuition, fees and stipend
    - All incoming Graduate Students are offered a financial aid package from the Graduate School that includes an annual stipend of **$41,910** (approved for **Academic Year 2025-2026**), tuition costs, and payment of individual student health insurance and activity fees. The Stipend is evaluated on an annual basis for the cost of living. Please note that this support covers the period July 1, through June 30 for continuing PhD students, and August 15, through June 30 for first year PhD students. Payment of annual stipend, along with tuition costs, fees and individual health insurance is dependent upon satisfactory academic progress as defined in the Graduate School and Program policies.

Program Events and Activities

Symposium

All students are required to attend the Annual Rehabilitation Science Symposium. The symposium features a keynote speaker, providing an opportunity to learn from a leading expert in the field. Dedicated time is built in for students to connect directly with the speaker, ask questions, and network. The symposium also includes a student poster session, and all students are encouraged to present posters if they have research or projects to share. This event is an important opportunity for professional development, networking, and showcasing student research within the program.

Resources and Support

Students can access a variety of campus services through the links provided below. The Office of Student Affairs is committed to supporting CU Anschutz students by offering guidance and assistance in navigating campus resources. For detailed information about available services or to schedule an appointment, please visit the Office

of Student Affairs webpages. For additional questions or support, you may contact the office via email at StudentAffairs@cuanschutz.edu.

- Office of Student Affairs
  - Campus Life
  - Student Support
  - Health & Wellness
  - Student Resources
  - Student Services
- Students Resource Directory
  - Includes all campus resources
- Academic Calendar
- Residency
- Badging Office
- Student Parking & Transportation
  - Eco Pass
  - Campus Circulator (Transportation service)
  - Medical Campus Rail Shuttle
- Office of Information Technology
- Student Health Insurance
- Office of Research Education – Concern Reporting Form (Maxient)
- CU Anschutz Student Outreach and Support Referral
- CU Anschutz Student Request for Medical Leave of Absence
- Graduation Deadlines Thesis, Anschutz
- Thesis & Dissertation/ProQuest Format & Guidelines

Appendices

Appendix 1

RHSC COMPREHENSIVE EXAM PREPARATION CHECKLIST

3–6 Months Before Exam

Outline your project and discuss with your mentor:

- Aims (3 independent, stand-alone aims)
- Methods (data source, studies)
- Analysis/Approach (quantitative or qualitative, stats plan)
- Timeline (data collection, analysis start, defense month/year)
- Potential committee members (needed expertise)

Organize your committee:

- RHSC requires a minimum number of faculty (e.g., advisor + chair)
- Additional members may need unofficial RHSC appointments (Program Administrator can assist with paperwork)

~2 Months Before Exam

Send draft to mentor for early feedback

Schedule an all-committee run-through:

- Prepare slides (aims, approach, timeline)
- Gather feedback to avoid surprises later
- Set the official exam date during this meeting

Verify committee appointments:

- Check the Graduate Faculty Directory
- Confirm each committee member has a regular or special appointment in RHSC (primary or additional)
- If anyone is missing an appointment, email the Program Administrator to start the process

1 Month Before Exam

Optional: Send updated draft to committee for feedback

Begin presentation prep:

- Plan ~45 min talk (+ 5–10 min on background, motivations, future timeline)

Complete required forms (at least 2 weeks before exam):

- Application for Candidacy
- Exam Request Form
- Both forms can be found on the Graduate School Resources page → Forms link

Complete flyer request form with headshot, proposal title, date/time/location (including Zoom info) for Program Administrator → Flyer Request Form

Book exam room → Room scheduler link

2 Weeks Before Exam

Final comps document sent to committee (check handbook for exact deadline)

Practice presentation with peers or a small student group

Appendix 2

COURSEWORK

The Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree is the highest academic degree conferred by the University. To state the requirements of the degree in terms of credit hours would be misleading because the degree is not conferred merely upon the satisfactory completion of a course of study, however faithfully pursued. Students who receive this degree must demonstrate that they are proficient in a focused field of study and that they can critically evaluate their own and others' work in this field; furthermore, they must demonstrate the ability to work independently in their chosen field and must make an original contribution of significance to the advancement of knowledge.

The Graduate School requires a minimum of 30 credit hours of course work (core, elective, practical, and seminar courses taken prior to the comprehensive examination) and 30 credit hours of thesis/research credits taken prior to the thesis examination. All work undertaken as a graduate student must be in compliance with the academic Code of Honor institution (refer to the UCD| AMC Graduate Student Handbook available from the Graduate School web site).

The RHSC graduate curriculum includes didactic core and elective courses, research practicum experiences, and a seminar series. All coursework is completed in the first two years of the Program and includes foundational instruction in Rehabilitation Science (10 cr), research design, statistical methods, and data management (8-10 cr), scientific writing (1-2 cr), research ethics (1 cr), professional skills (2 cr), and advanced electives pertinent to the student's primary area of specialization within the broader field of rehabilitation (5-8 cr).

Elective Coursework

Elective coursework should be selected by the student after consultation with the faculty mentor, the Program Director, and the GTC. Please note that courses from clinical degree programs (e.g., MD, PhD, DDS, RN, etc.) cannot be counted toward the Ph.D. degree. Students may select elective courses offered on the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, the Boulder campus, and/or the Denver campus.

Required Coursework

- **BIOS 6601/6602 or 6611/6612, Biostatistics**: A sequence of two lecture based courses in applied biostatistical methods including descriptive and statistical inference, odds ratio and relative risk, probability theory, parameter estimation, tests for comparing statistics of two or more groups, correlation and linear regression, univariate linear modeling and multiple regression, and statistics to

modeling more complex relationships using linear regression, logistic regression, and Cox regression. The statistical software package SAS is used extensively. The 6611/6612 sequence requires a strong quantitative background in matrix algebra and calculus.

- **Advanced Elective in Statistics or Data Management**: Students are required to complete at least one advanced elective course in statistics, database management, or programming to supplement analytic skills acquired in the BIOS 6601/6602 or 6611/6612 sequence. Refer to the AMC School of Public Health Course book for available options. Students with an interest in clinical trials should refer to the AMC Clinical Science Program Course book for additional options in clinical trials research design and analysis.
- **Ethical Conduct of Research:** In compliance with NIH policy, all graduate students are required to complete a course in the ethical conduct of research. Options include **CLSC 7151** (Lectures in Ethics and Regulations in Human Subjects Review) which focuses on IRB processes for human subjects research, or **PHCL 7605** (Research Ethics) which provides a more general overview of research ethics applicable to all biomedical sciences.
- **Scientific Writing:** An applied writing and peer review course that prepares students to write research grant submissions. Topics include writing the various sections of grant applications: background, specific aims, hypotheses, methods, analysis, potential problems, and the summary. Options include **CLSC 7101** (Grant Writing I) which requires students to complete a full grant application on their thesis topic, or **IDPT 7200** (Scientific Writing for Doctoral Students). Students with a specialization in sensorimotor control may also select **NRSC 7661** (Grant Proposal Writing Workshop) which includes preparation of an NRSA fellowship application and mock NIH review panel.
- **RHSC 7000, Foundations of Rehabilitation Science**: A lecture and small-group discussion course that provides an overview of the field of rehabilitation science and an introduction to disablement frameworks with an emphasis on biopsychosocial models of the enabling-disabling process across the life span. Topics include definitions and domains of rehabilitation science, and the application of disablement models to contemporary problems within the field.
- **RHSC 7002, Professional Skills in Academia:** A lecture and small-group discussion course that provides an overview of instructional methods and professional skills for academic educators and scientists. Topics include instructional methods for graduate education, and development of professional skills in communication, management, networking, and promotion for academic careers in Rehabilitation Science. Students participate in doctoral seminars with their peers and faculty to explore professional aspects of their future careers (e.g., publishing, manuscript review, grant review, project management). Mentorship and professional development activities are emphasized.
- **RHSC 7001, Rehabilitation Science Seminar:** Two research seminar courses taken within the first two years of enrollment expose students to the breadth of research being conducted by local and national leaders in Rehabilitation Science. Students attend regular seminars by invited speakers, followed by discussion sections in which students assess the implications of each seminar topic on the full spectrum of disablement constructs ranging from pathophysiology to community participation.
- **RHSC 7910/7911, Research Practicum in Rehabilitation Science I/II:** Two practical research experiences taken within the first two semesters of enrollment expose students to a variety of experimental tools and techniques available to Rehabilitation scientists. Research rotations are selected by each student with the permission of an affiliated faculty mentor. Each research experience concludes with an oral presentation (post-rotation talk) in which students discuss their research activities and suggest ideas for future research in related areas of the disablement framework.

Appendix 3

PRIORITIES FOR FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

- **Orientation:** Attend both Graduate School and Program orientations, including online modules.
- **Program Director Meeting:** Schedule an early meeting to discuss goals, concerns, and academic expectations.
- **Financial & Administrative Tasks:** Open a bank account and set up direct deposit for stipend payments. Submit required payroll documents, including a driver's license/state ID and social security card.
- **Residency Documentation:** Collect documents to support in-state tuition eligibility after the first year.
- **Campus ID:** Obtain a University photo ID to access offices, labs, library, and parking facilities.
- **Communications:** Check university email daily; this is the official communication channel.
- **Research Practicum:** Select a mentor located on Anschutz Medical Campus to avoid commuting challenges during the first semester.

Appendix 4

PROGRAM SPECIFIC THESIS DEFENSE GUIDELINES

- **Committee Formation:** Within one month of passing the Comprehensive Examination, students must form a Thesis Advisory Committee (TAC) in consultation with their thesis advisor, Program Director, and Graduate Training Committee (GTC). The TAC must include three UCD|AMC faculty members (including the thesis advisor) with graduate faculty status and affiliation with the RHSC Program. Additional members from outside UCD|AMC may be included if their expertise is relevant. The TAC Chair must be an RHSC faculty member and cannot be the primary thesis advisor. Members of the Comprehensive Examination Committee may also serve on the TAC, pending Program Director approval.
- **Thesis Content and Preparation:** The RHSC Program recommends three to five chapters/studies, although this may vary depending on scope. At least one chapter should be accepted for publication prior to the defense, and all chapters should be submitted for publication before graduation whenever possible. The thesis must demonstrate original research, mature scholarship, and critical judgment, following Graduate School formatting specifications (Thesis Formatting Guidelines). Final drafts must be provided to all TAC members at least two weeks before the defense date.
- **Scheduling the Defense:** Students must be registered for five thesis credit hours in the semester of the defense and submit the required forms at least four weeks in advance. Students defending between semesters must register for the following semester. Instructions and scheduling forms are available through the Graduate School.
- **Thesis Format:**
    - **Chapter I: Introduction and Specific Aims** – Concise overview of the conceptual framework, explicit aims, hypotheses, and anticipated impact.
    - **Chapter II: Background** – Critical analysis of the field, theoretical constructs, and knowledge gaps addressed by the project.

- **Chapters III–V:** Each chapter should include Abstract, Background, Methods, Results, and Discussion for each study, formatted as for a peer-reviewed manuscript.
- **Final Chapter: Conclusion** – Integrated summary of findings, implications for the field, and future research directions.

- **Defense Procedure:** The public defense includes a 45-minute presentation summarizing the rationale, aims, methods, results, and conclusions, followed by audience questions. A closed session with the Thesis Examination Committee follows, lasting approximately 2–3 hours.
- **Examination Results:**
  - **Pass:** Requires a majority affirmative vote.
  - Pass with Conditions: The committee may require revisions or additional work, to be completed within 60 days.
  - **Fail:** Results in dismissal from the Graduate School.

Appendix 5

TRANSFER CREDITS AND INDEPENDENT STUDY

- **Transfer Credits:** Graduate-level coursework (5000-level or above) from accredited institutions or CU non-degree enrollment may be transferred, with a maximum of 30 semester hours applicable toward a PhD. Courses must have been completed within seven years or validated through examination and must not have been applied toward another degree. Approval is required from the RHSC Program Director and Graduate Training Committee before submission to the Graduate School. Clinical coursework (MD, DPT, OT, RN, etc.) is not eligible for transfer.
- **Independent Study (RHSC 8900):** Allows students to pursue advanced instruction in specialized areas not offered as electives. Proposals must be 1–2 pages and include goals, objectives, assessment criteria, educational methods, credit hours (approximately 20 contact hours per credit), and faculty advisor information. Up to six credit hours may count toward the PhD degree.
- **Academic Standards:** Students must maintain a GPA ≥3.0, with required courses completed at a B- or higher. Failure to meet these standards results in Academic Probation, with two semesters to improve. Grades below B- in required courses are unsatisfactory; more than one such grade may lead to dismissal. Students may repeat a course once with approval, and the two grades are averaged in GPA calculation.

Appendix 6

FACULTY INFORMATION/RESOURCES

- **Quick Reference table for membership**