



**St. Jude Children's
Research Hospital**
Graduate School of
Biomedical Sciences

Applied Biomedical Data Science Master's Program Student Handbook

2025-2026

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Introduction

MS ABDS Program Leadership

Name	Office Location	Email Address	Phone Number
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Debra Ragland, PhD Assistant Dean	Barry S2035	debra.ragland@stjude.org	901-595-4533
Rachel McCollough, MS Program Specialist	Barry S2011	rachel.mccollough@stjude.org	901-595-5917

Students may direct program-related questions, concerns, or other information to MSABDS@stjude.org. This account is monitored by the Assistant Dean and Program Specialist.

Please reach out to the St. Jude Graduate School (SJGS) staff below if you have questions about the following:

- MSABDS@stjude.org
 - General ABDS program questions, student advising, courses and curriculum, ABDS events, ABDS- specific policies, recruitment, and other miscellaneous ABDS concerns: MSABDS@stjude.org
 - Program milestones and requirements
 - Notification of awards publications, grants, or other major accomplishments
- Graduate School requirements: SJGS Registrar, Tiffany Polk-Young
- Financial matters (stipends, tuition, funding sources, reimbursements): Operations Coordinator, Dayna Baker, or Finance Contractor, Jim Keith
- General Technology issues – Contact IS Service Desk
- SJGS Issued Technology issues or software needs – Dell Clemons and Kyle Purpura (must submit ticket via [Grad School's IS request form](#))

St. Jude Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences Mission

Mission

The mission of St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital is to advance cures, and means of prevention, for pediatric catastrophic diseases through research and treatment. The St. Jude Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences drives this mission by educating the

next generation of biomedical researchers to probe the molecular basis of disease, develop novel therapies and train medical professionals to advance global health for children with catastrophic diseases.

Program Requirements and Milestones

Program Overview

The St. Jude Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (SJGS) offers a Master of Science in Applied Biomedical Data Sciences (MS-ABDS) to prepare students to be effective collaborative biomedical data scientists in roles as staff computational biologists, bioinformaticians, or biostatisticians. The program consists of ten months of accelerated coursework in ethics, communications, biostatistics, and bioinformatics and a formal twelve-month academic practicum mentored by an advisory committee of three SJGS faculty members that is led by a data science faculty member and includes a collaborative clinician or laboratory biologist.

Student Learning Objectives

SLO 1: Understand and appropriately apply advanced statistical and computational analysis tools to facilitate scientifically rigorous interpretation of biomedical research data.

SLO 2: In collaboration with biomedical and data science colleagues, develop and execute plans to complete the data scientific components of a biomedical research project including formulation of scientific questions, study design, data acquisition, data management, data analysis, and dissemination of research findings.

SLO 3: Communicate clearly, accurately, and professionally to disseminate scientific concepts and research results in visual, oral, computational, and written form to diverse audiences.

Curriculum Goals

- Establish essential background knowledge
- Discuss in the context of state-of-the-art research
- Expose students to the full spectrum of basic translational to clinical research
- Develop skills to critically interpret current literature
- Cultivate ability to develop and test hypotheses
- Build discussion and presentation skills
- Develop advanced multidisciplinary thinking

Program Curriculum

Term	Year	Course No.	Course	Credits
Fall	1	ADS8001	Ethics and Professionalism in Biomedical Data Sciences	1
Fall	1	ADS8101	Essential Computing Skills for Biomedical Data Sciences	3
Fall	1	ADS8111	Essential Biology for Biomedical Data Sciences	3
Fall	1	ADS8121	Essential Mathematics for Biomedical Data Sciences	3
Fall	1	ADS8131	Data Bases and Data Wrangling	3
Fall	1	ADS8141	Biostatistics for Biomedical Data Sciences I	3
			Fall	16
Spring	1	ADS8142	Biostatistics for Biomedical Data Sciences II	3
Spring	1	ADS8152	Scientific Rigor in Biomedical Data Sciences	2
Spring	1	ADS8162	Omics Data Analysis I	3
Spring	1	ADS8172	Machine Learning	3
Spring	1	ADS8182	Effective Communication for Biomedical Data Scientists	1
Spring	1	ADS8192	Developing Scientific Software Applications	3
Spring	1		<i>*Elective (see below)</i>	
			Spring	Min 16
Summer	1	ADS8194	Practicum in Applied Biomedical Data Science	2
			Summer	2
			Credits Earned Year 1	34
Fall	2	ADS8194	Practicum in Applied Biomedical Data Science	3
			Fall	3
Spring	2	ADS8194	Practicum in Applied Biomedical Data Science	3
			Spring	3
			Credits Earned Year 2	6
			Minimum Credits Required	40
Fall	1	ADS8102	High Performance Computing for Biomedical Data Science	3
Fall	1	ADS8112	Neuroimaging Statistics	3
Fall	1	ADS8122	Statistical Design of Clinical Trials	3
Fall	1	ADS8132	Structural Bioinformatics	1
Fall	1	ADS8242	Omics Data Analysis II	3
Fall		IND8000	Independent Study	Scalable

Overview of Major Milestones

The Graduate School will award the master's degree upon the successful and satisfactory completion of the following requirements:

- Required coursework with a minimum 3.0 GPA;
- Identification and acceptance into a practicum laboratory;
- Attendance and participation in required journal clubs, seminars, and laboratory meetings;
- Successful passing of the Ethics course;
- Written practicum thesis
- Oral practicum thesis defense
- Development of a computational resource

Students are encouraged to track milestone achievement utilizing the 'MSABDS Program Milestone Checklist (see Appendix 1)'.

First Year of Study

First Year Coursework

First year courses survey a series of fundamental biomedical concepts particularly relevant to investigation of the field of data science and computation to end catastrophic pediatric disease. Course lectures are recorded via Webex and uploaded to the Canvas site for students to have access to later if needed. Required coursework includes:

- Fundamental topics in mathematics, biology, ethics, and scientific rigor
- Applied mathematics and data wrangling skills through biostatistics, software and application development, genomics and machine learning
- Advanced knowledge acquisition through elective courses such as neuroimaging, high performance computing, and advanced genomics

Elective and Practicum Mentor Selection Week

Students can learn about potential practicum labs through 1) Website profiles of [faculty](#) 2) Orientation week poster sessions where faculty accepting students will present research and be available for questions 3) Lunch & Learn Research+ Talks scheduled throughout the first year 4) Mentor and elective selection week

Practicum Laboratory Selection

By the end of the selection week, students should identify a practicum laboratory. Relevant considerations might include scientific interest, mentor/student compatibility, laboratory and social environment, funding, publication history, and recommendations of trusted advisors. Students are encouraged to use the Laboratory Fit Considerations Document (see Appendix 2.1) to help make decisions. Students are encouraged to contact faculty directly to discuss potential practicum projects, and to learn more about the research, mentoring style, expectations of students, and the possibility of doing a rotation in the lab. Students are encouraged to review Laboratory Fit Considerations (see Appendix 2.1) when thinking about possible practicum labs.

When the student and faculty member agree to schedule an onboarding meeting, the student and mentor should complete the **Practicum Expectation Alignment Form** (see Appendix 2.2) specifying practicum terms. The completed form should be sent directly to the Associate Dean for final approval and signature. Students will formally present practicum project results to faculty and colleagues at the conclusion of the practicum. During the practicum, students should participate in laboratory activities and demonstrate collegiality, professional behavior, and enthusiasm. Students should communicate absences from lab with the practicum mentor and/or partnered in-lab supervisor. The practicum advisor should complete the **Laboratory Practicum**

Evaluation Form (see Appendix 2.3) and discuss their evaluation with the student prior to submission.

Joining the Practicum Laboratory

After you and a potential permanent faculty mentor agree that you will complete your practicum thesis research under their mentorship, notify the Associate Dean of the selected laboratory no later than two weeks after final selection. Note that joining a permanent practicum thesis laboratory requires the approval of the Graduate School and the relevant Department Chair. You will receive a **Mentorship Agreement Form** (see Appendix 3.1) for you, your advisor, and the Department Chair to review and sign. Please submit the signed document to msabds@stjude.org and the Registrar no later than March 15th of your first year.

If you wish to have co-practicum advisors for your practicum both advisors will need to receive approval from the Graduate School and relevant Department Chairs, as well as complete the necessary **Mentorship Agreement Forms** (see Appendix 3.1) and a **Practicum Co-Advisor Agreement** (see Appendix 3.2).

You should begin working in your practicum laboratory following the spring semester of the first year with a start date agreed upon by you and your advisor.

Update your location information by submitting your new location information, building and room, to msabds@stjude.org.

Second Year of Study

The main goals of the second year are focused on:

- Conceiving, initiating, and developing the practicum project;
- Establishing the practicum committee;
- Development of a computational resource.

Key to success in the second year is working closely with your practicum advisor and committee members to develop knowledge of relevant literature, acquire necessary, technical skills, establish strong professional and collegial working relationships, and develop and generate preliminary data for your project.

Individual Development Plan

Complete an individual development plan (IDP) and discuss the results with your mentor. This is a useful exercise to evaluate your skills, interests, values and set strategic goals. There are many different versions of IDPs. myidp.sciencecareers.org is a popular choice.

Practicum Advisor Eligibility

The advisor or one of the co-advisors must be a data scientist meeting the eligibility criteria of;

1. Being appointed to the St. Jude Graduate School faculty
2. Holding a PhD in a data science discipline or being first or senior author of a peer-reviewed data science methods publication
3. Not being a staff or postdoc of a St. Jude Children's Research Hospital faculty lab.

Practicum Committee Selection and Composition

The student and practicum advisor(s) will work together to identify and select practicum committee members based on relevant expertise, professional advising considerations, committee compatibility, and availability. After the committee members have been identified and confirmed, students must submit the ***Practicum Committee Selection Form*** (see Appendix 3.3) to the Assistant Dean for review and approval no later than July 1st of the student's first year.

The practicum committee comprises of at least three faculty members, including the practicum advisor.

Please additionally follow the requirements below for committee composition:

- The committee must be chaired by the practicum advisor
- At least one committee member must be a data scientist
- More than one St. Jude department must be represented among the committee members.
- Only members of the Research Graduate Faculty and Clinical Graduate Faculty may serve as primary members of the Practicum Committee.
- Only one biologist or Clinical Graduate Faculty member is allowed on the committee.

Changing a Practicum Committee Member

If a student needs to request a change to their practicum committee, they must follow these steps:

1. **Consultation** – The student should first discuss the proposed change with their faculty advisor to ensure alignment with academic and research goals.
2. **Request Submission** – A formal request (Practicum committee member change form, see appendix) must be submitted to the Assistant Dean of the program, including a justification for the change and the name of the proposed new committee member.
3. **Approval Process** – The request will be reviewed by the Associate Dean and may require additional approvals from the academic leadership.

4. **Official Confirmation** – If approved, the student will receive formal confirmation, and the updated committee roster will be recorded with the Graduate School.

Students should initiate this process as early as possible to prevent delays in their practicum progress. For additional guidance, please msabds@stjude.org.

General Practicum Committee Meeting Guidelines (see also Appendix 4.1)

The student is responsible for organizing all practicum committee meetings and the committee members should make every effort to abide by the agreed date/time. All members of the practicum committee (min. 3, max 5), including the practicum advisor, must be present at each meeting. Remote participation is allowed but discouraged.

The student must prepare both a **Semi-Annual Student Progress Report** (see Appendix 4.2) and an oral presentation in advance of each practicum committee meeting.

The **Semi-Annual Student Progress Report** must be sent to the committee and the Assistant Dean at least one week in advance of the committee meeting.

- Students are responsible for completing Part I Academic Progress and Part II Research Progress and Goals.
- At the end of the committee meeting the committee members should complete their formal evaluation of the student's progress.
- The student progress report form is complete once signed and dated by the student and advisor and sent to msabds@stjude.org and Registrar@stjude.org.

The oral presentation should include an outline of progress and future goals towards the Master's degree and career.

Before each meeting, the practicum advisor will leave the room, and the student will be given the opportunity to discuss their experience in the laboratory and any mentorship issues. Before and after each meeting, the student will leave the room to allow the committee to discuss the student's progress.

YR2 Practicum Committee Meetings

During the student's second year, the practicum committee will be required to meet two times to consult on development and appropriateness of the practicum research, and again to conduct the final check for project completion ahead of the written and oral practicum defense. Please refer to the General Practicum Committee Meeting Guidelines above and Appendix 4.1.

The first practicum committee meeting should be scheduled for 1.5 hours in the fall and take place **no later than September 15th**. The **second meeting should be scheduled in the spring, no later than April 15th**.

At the First Meeting

Students should be prepared to share their practicum research proposal with their committee members. The student needs to summarize the research goals for their practicum project.

The student should:

- Introduce themselves
- Introduce their project, including tentative aims planned for the practicum project
- Have a Scientific Question, Available Data, Statistical Considerations prepared
- Have a Scientific Results Template including Narrative, Tables, Figures prepared
- Have a Data Processing and Analysis Roadmap prepared
- Have a Description of their deliverable (software package, dashboard, workflow, pipeline, data resource) prepared

At the Second Meeting

The focus of the second meeting should be preparing the student to wrap up their practicum work to complete requirements for graduation

In addition, at this meeting,

- The student should:
 - Introduce themselves
 - Introduce their project including tentative aims planned for wrapping up the practicum project
 - Set the date for their oral defense (no later than May 1st)
- The committee should complete the Semi-Annual Student Progress Report, providing a written summary of what was discussed and including any recommendations. The document should be signed, dated, and returned to the Registrar and MSABDS.

Proposed changes to the practicum committee after the first committee meeting must be submitted in writing by the student, practicum advisor, or the department chair with a full explanation for approval by the Associate Dean (see 'Changing a practicum committee member' above).

One-on-one meetings with committee members or an additional committee meeting should be scheduled if useful for project development, technical consultation, or professional advice.

There can be an optional third meeting in the winter of the student's second year if the committee deems it necessary. In advance of the meeting the student should complete and submit to the committee the Semi-Annual Student Progress Report (see Appendix 4.2) at least one week in advance.

Practicum Guidelines

Successful completion of the practicum is a major milestone and marks advancement graduation. During the examination, the committee evaluates a written proposal and explores candidate preparation and suitability through oral questioning to assess broad biological and computational knowledge, expertise in the relevant specific field, technical ability, critical thinking, and the ability to formulate, develop, and adapt hypotheses and approaches. The three parts of the examination are a written proposal of practicum research, an oral defense of the premise, and the development of a computational resource (see below), importance, and approaches necessary to develop the investigations.

The student, practicum advisor, and the practicum committee decide together when a graduate student has successfully completed a sufficient body of work to proceed with submission of their written Practicum and completion of the oral Practicum Defense. The Graduate School, advisor, and committee will also evaluate whether the student meets the requirements to receive their master's degree.

This resource will be deposited into the MSABDS student repository and made available for others to use. A demonstration of how this resource can be used should be shared as part of the thesis defense.

Work in Progress (WIP)

Second-year students are required to give a yearly 30-minute presentation as part of the MSABDS Work-in-Progress seminar series organized through the Academic Programs Office (APO). The seminar series is held on Tuesdays from 12-1 PM and should be regularly attended by all students in years 1 and 2.

WIP is a valuable learning opportunity for the student researcher to disseminate knowledge and cultivate presentation skills, whether on his/her research project or an additional focus area. It is also a valuable experience for those attending to learn information outside of their area and provides for a collaborative discussion in a peer setting.

Practicum Thesis Defense

The practicum and thesis defense are the culmination of a student's work.

Practicum:

Students are required to write a practicum thesis and should refer to the Thesis/Practicum Guides on the St. Jude Graduate School Website for formatting and content guidelines.

In brief, the practicum should include:

- A scholarly Introduction to the field and the background/rationale for the specific questions addressed by the thesis research;
- A series of chapters presenting the original research;
- A final chapter discussing major findings/conclusions, recommendations for further study, and possible societal impact of the research presented.

The program allows published papers to be included in full or as part of a data chapter, but most commonly, they should be amended, abbreviated, or extended to logically cohere within the overall narrative of the practicum. For any included work, the full citation should be included, and it should be stated whether the chapter is the published or an edited version. Any published work used within the practicum should additionally be re-formatted to fit thesis guidelines and the contributions of the student and other authors to the scientific (design, experiments, analysis) and written work must be clearly stated. If editing content of a published work to include in the practicum, it should be stated what edits have been made, the nature of the modifications (e.g. inclusion of additional relevant data acquired after publication, expansion of intro or discussion, etc.).

Oral Defense:

The oral defense consists of a public presentation lasting one hour, including a ~50-minute presentation followed by an open ~10 minute question and answer session. There will be a closed defense session immediately following the presentation with the practicum committee and one of the Deans or a Dean's designees. Students should allow two hours for the closed defense.

Computational Resource Requirement:

To be eligible to graduate, the student must have published, have in press, or have accepted at least one computational resource. This can include but is not limited to the following:

1. A cleaned and refined dataset

2. A software package that can be used by other biomedical data scientists regardless of programming language
3. A bioinformatics pipeline or workflow
4. A dashboard that can be used by a non-expert
5. A workbook, R notebook or Jupiter notebook
6. Any other well documented computational resource that be followed easily and used by biomedical data scientists to expand their research
 - a. The committee will need to approve this resource

The committee must complete the Practicum Defense Evaluation Form and Thesis Acceptance form. Should a student pass their thesis defense outright, these forms will need to be turned into MSABDS Staff and the Registrar. See below for information on non-pass/fail scores for a student.

Please refer to Timeline and Process for Master's Completion and Offboarding section for a full guide on applying for graduation, scheduling the defense, and forms needed for completion.

Retake

In the event of a majority score of unsatisfactory/Fail on the Practicum Defense Evaluation Form the committee will outline specifically what action the student will need to remediate the specific area(s) of concern. Any remediation should be completed by the Thesis/Dissertation Final Submission Deadline listed in the St. Jude Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences Academic Catalog (usually late May). Remediation means for a majority score of unsatisfactory/fail might involve re-writing a section of the written proposal, further development of the computational resource, or revisiting an important topic for a focused oral presentation and question session.

If **all** the members of the committee deem all the components of the practicum defense (written, oral, and computational resource) unsatisfactory, this is equivalent to a failure, the student will need to be re-evaluated on all aspects of the practicum defense. In the event of another attempt at the oral thesis defense, the committee will meet with the student privately, thus there will be no public retake of an oral defense. The score received on the second attempt is the final score. The student must receive an overall score of 'Satisfactory'/'Pass' from all committee members for the practicum thesis defense on both the written and oral components.

Failure to Pass Retake of Practicum Thesis Exam

The thesis defense will ideally be completed by the end of the fourth semester. A student who fails the defense of their thesis will be allowed to repeat the defense once

before the program's stated deadline in the student's fourth semester. A second failing grade will result in dismissal from the program

Practicum Thesis Milestones and Suggested Timeline

Year 1

Mid-February

- Mentor and Elective Selection Week

March 15th

- Deadline to confirm practicum mentor selection and turn-in agreements to the MSABDS staff, the graduate school and Associate Dean

Late May

- Begin working in practicum thesis lab

Summer between Years 1 and 2

- July 1st
 - Thesis committee selection forms due

Year 2

- September 15th
 - Initial meeting with practicum thesis committee on practicum project proposal—progress report due at the end of the meeting
- November-January
 - Optional thesis committee meeting (if optional meeting is held, a progress report must be submitted)
 - Graduate Progress Plan Meetings with ABDS Staff
- March 15th
 - Deadline to have final thesis committee meeting—progress report due at the end of the meeting
- April 15th
 - Deadline to submit written thesis to committee
- May 1st
 - Deadline to hold oral defense with committee
- May 22nd
 - Work on revisions, thesis component re-take (if applicable), and/or finalization
- June 1st
 - Faculty and student practicum evaluations due
- First Friday in June: Degree conferral and Commencement ceremony

Academic Progress

Satisfactory Academic Progress

Students are required to demonstrate satisfactory academic progress (SAP) toward degree completion. Academic progress is measured at the end of each academic semester. Students must have a minimum GPA of 3.0 to graduate. Specific milestones required to comply with SAP for each program are described below. Overall performance will be assessed by the Assistant Dean or Associate Dean of each respective program and if a student fails to comply with SAP, a report of the findings will be discussed with the student and placed in the student's file.

Letter grades are associated with numeric values as follows, which are the same across all degree programs:

A+ (4.0), A (4.0), A- (3.7), B+ (3.3), B (3.0), B- (2.7), C+ (2.3), C (2.0), C- (1.7), D+ (1.3), D (1.0), D- (0.7), and F (0.0).

Students may also receive the following marks: Pass/Fail, S/U (Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory), W (Withdrawal), I (Incomplete), or O (No Grade Reported).

Only letter grades A+ through C as well as Pass and Satisfactory marks will count toward the degree requirements. Please see the 2024-2025 St. Jude Graduate School Academic Catalog for the entire SAP Policy.

Degree Completion Requirements

- Complete all courses, minimum of 40 credit hours, and maintain an overall GPA of 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) or better;
- Participate in non-credit bearing workshops and seminars;
- Select a practicum advisor and laboratory to begin practicum research by the end of the second semester (note: this is a key required milestone);
- Conduct original research in their assigned laboratory;
- Analyze and compile the research conducted in their assigned laboratory;
- Finalize the practicum committee during the early part of the third semester;
- Schedule two required meetings and up to one optional meeting with the practicum committee;
- Publish a well-documented computational resource that other biomedical data scientists can use to expand their research. A student will not be permitted to schedule a practicum defense until they have demonstrated that this requirement

has been fulfilled (in rare circumstances unpublished but submitted resources may be reviewed and approved by the practicum committee and the Dean to fulfill this requirement);

- Obtain approval of revised and final practicum document from practicum committee;
- Complete an approved practicum that reports the results and significance of the original research;
- Before the end of the second year, conduct an oral defense of the practicum.

Advising

The Assistant Dean will host regular individual advising sessions with students throughout their first year in the program. These sessions are meant to check in with students on their transition to St. Jude and Memphis, coursework, selection of rotation labs, the laboratory rotations, and the process of selecting a practicum laboratory. These sessions also ensure that any potential academic or research environment problems are identified and addressed early. Students are encouraged to schedule additional meetings with their assigned faculty mentor and Associate Dean as needed.

Yearly individual advising sessions will continue throughout the student's tenure in the graduate program and include discussions regarding student experiences, progress towards degree completion, questions and concerns, and more. Additional advising can be added as needed.

The Associate and Assistant Dean will hold group milestone meetings open to the student body for relaying information about progress requirements and to address questions. These include Transitioning into YR2 – 2nd year expectations and timeline, Thesis Defense Overview, and Guidelines, and Processes for Completing Your Degree.

Financial Support and Benefits

Stipend

For the 2025-2026 academic year, YR1 MS ABDS students receive a monthly cash fellowship stipend of \$2500 and YR2 students \$2900 (pre tax). All students are on an academic scholarship and do not pay tuition.

A stipend and tuition are guaranteed for two years for all students who remain in good standing with the program. Refer to the 'Guidelines for 6th Year and Beyond' section for information on financial support and benefits beyond five years.

Beginning August 1, 2025, student stipends will be paid on the 1st of every month for the month in which the stipend is received (August 1 = full monthly stipend for August). If the 1st of the month occurs on a Saturday or Sunday, then the stipend will be processed on the Friday prior. Also beginning August 1, partial months will be pro-rated daily and will be utilized for occasions such as program entrance/exit and an approved leave of absence.

Research and Educational Support

Research and educational financial support are provided to all SJGS MS ABDS students in good standing throughout their two years of graduate training. This support is meant to help students support their own research, professional development activities, and further their education in consultation with their practicum advisor. Support type and amount vary throughout the course of graduate studies as outlined below:

	Y EAR 1	YEAR 2
Cash Fellowship	\$2,500/month pre-tax	\$2,900 (pre-tax)
Professional Development		\$2,500

Students are each provided with their own individual **professional development budget** for professional development costs. Each student is responsible for managing their own yearly.

Taxes

The annual student stipend is considered reportable income, and federal taxes will be withheld based on your selected tax elections. For tax questions, please email FSSTax@stjude.org.

Insurance

All MS ABDS students may enroll in insurance, with all medical, dental, and vision premiums covered by the St. Jude Graduate School for student, spouse, and dependents.

Health insurance is BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Choice PPO through St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital. Dental and vision insurance are provided through the St. Jude Graduate School.

Program Procedures

Timeline and Process for MS Completion and Offboarding

Event	Task or Time	Fall Conferral: December 2025	Spring Conferral: June 2026
Receive permission to write	Semi-annual student progress meeting prior to thesis defense	N/A	
Submit Intent to Graduate form	Semester in which you plan to defend	September 15, 2025	February 9, 2026
Schedule defense	Minimum of 4 weeks before defense (may require earlier planning)	N/A	May 1, 2026
Distribute Thesis to Thesis Committee	Minimum of 2 weeks prior to defense	N/A	April 15, 2026
Practicum Thesis defense deadline		December 5, 2025	May 22, 2026
Submit Practicum Defense form	Within 24 hrs of defense	N/A	May 22, 2026
Written revisions if needed	Maximum of 3 weeks post defense	N/A	May 22, 2026
PDF of final Practicum Approval form submitted to Canvas	Maximum of 3 weeks post defense	December 2025	May 22, 2026
Grad School Off-boarding initiation	Maximum of 3 weeks post defense	N/A	May 25, 2026
Grad School Off-boarding completion	Maximum of 4 weeks post defense	N/A	June 1, 2026

At such a time as a student has completed all the required program milestones and feels they have created a body of work to write and defend as a thesis they should initiate the process by discussion with their advisor and receiving “permission to write” from their practicum committee, outlining an appropriate timeline for thesis completion. Permission to write should be formally documented in Section III of the Semi-Annual Student Progress Report and submitted to msabds@stjude.org and registrar@stjude.org once all signatures are complete.

To schedule their defense, students should work with their practicum advisor and committee to identify a date. Schedule this date as far as possible in advance to accommodate busy faculty schedules. Once a date and time have been selected, you may reserve a room via Outlook calendar invite, including a Webex link for any virtual

attendees. The Graduate School strongly recommends in-person attendance for all committee members except in extraordinary circumstances.

Students should also provide formal notification of their Practicum Defense date to msabds@stjude.org. The MSABDS program specialist will contact the student to request the practicum title, confirm the faculty advisor name and credentials, provide information for visitors on campus, and assist with the IS AV request if necessary. Guests, including friends and family, are welcome on the St. Jude campus for the Practicum Defense.

Physical and/or digital copies of the practicum should be sent to the practicum committee at least two weeks prior to defense. Students must cc Associate Dean and msabds@stjude.org.

The **Practicum Defense Form** (see Appendix 5.1) must be completed and submitted to within 24 hours of completing the practicum defense. The original form should be provided to the Registrar and scanned copies should be sent to both the Registrar and msabds@stjude.org.

Any written revisions needed to the practicum must be completed within a maximum of three weeks after the defense (or before the end of semester deadline) and final approval provided by the practicum committee, documented in the **Practicum Approval Form (see Appendix 5.2)**. Note that the Practicum Approval Form should only be signed after the revised document is approved by the thesis committee. The final PDF of the Practicum along with the **Practicum Approval Form** should be uploaded to Canvas. The original **Practicum Approval Form** should be provided to the registrar and scanned copies should be sent to both the registrar and msabds@stjude.org.

Students must complete the Graduate School Offboarding process within four weeks following successful defense. All tasks on the MS ABDS Offboarding Checklist (see Appendix 6) must be reviewed and the document signed by the Assistant Dean.

Graduate School Policies

Course Attendance and Participation

Students are required to attend all lectures in each course, which are provided either in- person or online. A student who cannot attend a lecture for any reason must notify the Course Leader, Instructor, and the Assistant Dean as soon as possible.

In unusual and exceptional circumstances, students may request an excused absence in advance. Excused absences (such as for illness, bereavement, doctor's or medical appointments, dental appointments, provision of urgent family care, pre-arranged work responsibilities, and jury duty) can be requested from the Course Leader, Instructor, and the Assistant Dean of the respective program. Students should be prepared to provide documentation for their absence.

Adequate student participation during courses includes but is not limited to the following:

- Being fully prepared for class, such as completing pre-class reading assignments
- Being an active participant during lectures
- Answering and asking questions to further the discussion

Please see the 2024-2025 SJGS Course Catalog or website for the entire Attendance Policy ([80.20.003 Attendance](#)).

Disability Accommodations

The Graduate School has an obligation under the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) to provide reasonable accommodations for students, who self-identify with having disabilities. The Graduate School offers qualified students with disabilities the opportunity for success through equal access and the means to participate in curricular and extracurricular activities. We provide individually tailored, comprehensive disability support services and programs in accordance with Federal and State disability law. We strive to create an inclusive, safe, and respectful environment for all students, and promote awareness and equity for all in our campus community.

A Graduate School Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Committee will be formed on a case by-case basis, to evaluate the provided disability documentation and determine eligibility for accommodations and implement reasonable accommodations for enrolled students.

Please see the 2024-2025 SJGS Course Catalog or website for the entire Accommodations Policy and procedure for requesting accommodations ([80.90.003 Accommodation Policy](#)).

Absences/Vacation Leave

All St. Jude Graduate School breaks and St. Jude Children's Research Hospital holidays are listed below. Students are required to attend every course lecture unless they have a valid excuse, such as illness, family emergency, etc. Students may be asked to provide documentation for their absence. After joining a practicum lab, it is the responsibility of the student to discuss all absences including vacations, professional development travel, illness, or other absences directly with their practicum advisor.

Student Professionalism

St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (“Graduate School”) has developed guidelines designed to establish standards of professionalism and professional behavior for students at the Graduate School. The Graduate School expects students to conduct themselves in accordance with good professional and ethical standards at all times. The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear understanding of expectations regarding professional conduct for students in all educational and non-educational settings. The entire Student Professionalism policy can be found within the 2024-2025 St. Jude Graduate School Academic Catalog and on the website under [80.40.004 Student Professionalism](#).

Research Misconduct

The purpose of this policy is to protect scientific research integrity at St. Jude and to comply with federal regulatory requirements under 42 C.F.R. Part 93 regarding reporting and investigating allegations of Research Misconduct. The entire Research Misconduct policy can be found within the 2024-2025 St. Jude Graduate School Academic Catalog and on the website under [80.20.006 Research Misconduct](#).

Student Complaints

The purpose of this policy is to define the student complaints process and describe the process for students to report complaints at the St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (“Graduate School”). This policy applies to all graduate students who are enrolled, have previously been enrolled, and/or who have completed a degree program of the Graduate School, regardless of mode of instruction and physical location of the student. The entire Student Complaints policy can be found within the 2024-2025 St. Jude Graduate School Academic Catalog and on the website under [80.40.003 Student Complaints](#).

Sexual Harassment

In the spirit of the U.S. Department of Education’s implementing regulations for Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (“Title IX”) (see 34 C.F.R. § 106 et seq.), the St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (Graduate School) prohibits Sexual Harassment that occurs within its education programs and activities. Title IX and its implementing regulations also prohibit retaliation for asserting claims of discrimination based on sex.

In their educational programs and activities, the Graduate School, St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, Children’s GMP, and St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital Home Care, LLC. (collectively, St. Jude) are committed to providing a learning and working that promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect in an environment free of discrimination on the basis of sex. St. Jude has developed this policy to guide processes for complaints, Investigation, and resolution of Sexual Harassment in its educational programs and activities.

This policy prohibits Sexual Harassment as defined below and related retaliation occurring in a St. Jude educational program or activity. Such offenses constitute violations of this policy, are unacceptable, and will not be tolerated.

This policy prohibits such misconduct by students, trainees, alumni, faculty, employees, applicants for employment, sponsored organizations, outside programs, and all other persons, including third-Party visitors (collectively, “St. Jude”) against anyone participating, or attempting to participate, in St. Jude’s educational programs or activities. This policy prohibits this misconduct when the complainant and respondent are members of the same sex and when they are members of the opposite sex. It applies regardless of national origin, immigration status, or citizenship status. St. Jude’s prohibition on Sexual Harassment and related retaliation extends to all aspects of its educational programs and activities, including but not limited to admissions, employment, academics, and student services.

The entire Sexual Harassment policy can be found within the 2024-2025 St. Jude Graduate School Academic Catalog and on the website under [80.90.009 Sexual Harassment](#).

Reporting Procedures

The St. Jude Graduate School Reporting Procedures for violations of the Student Professionalism Policy, Graduate Faculty Professionalism Policy, Sexual Misconduct, Research Misconduct, or other Student Complaints are located within the 2024-2025 Academic Catalog and on the website under Policies and Procedures.

[80.20.006 Research Misconduct](#)

[80.40.003 Student Complaints](#)

[80.40.004 Student Professionalism](#)

[80.90.009 Sexual Harassment](#)

Students may also utilize the Ombuds Resource Program. The Ombuds Team for St. Jude is an independent, third-party informal resource that empowers individuals and organizations to navigate and overcome disputes, conflicts and other obstacles that hinder personal and professional growth. Ombuds help organizations by providing feedback to senior leadership about systemic issues and trends within the organization without disclosing the identities of or any confidential communications.

Grade Appeals

Any student can formally request a final course grade appeal. The process and procedure can be found within the 2025-2026 St. Jude Graduate School Academic Catalog and on the website under [80.20.013 Grade Appeals](#).

Leave of Absence

The St. Jude Graduate School Leave of Absence policy can be located within the 2024- 2025 Academic Catalog. A leave of absence (LOA) is an approved temporary interruption of studies. Requests for LOA will be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis by the Graduate School. LOA categories include Medical Leave, Parental Leave, Personal Leave, Bereavement Leave, Extended Leave, and Military Leave.

Withdrawal

The St. Jude Graduate School Withdrawal policy can be located within the 2024-2025 Academic Catalog. A student may voluntarily withdraw from the Graduate School at any time. If a student is not certain about withdrawing from the entire program or even a semester, alternatives are available with the Dean's approval. A student in the Graduate School who wishes to withdraw from the program for any reason should first meet with their research advisor to discuss the withdrawal request, and then meet with the Dean to finalize the written and signed withdrawal notice.

Grades and Grading (and other policies)

For more information about retaking a course and other policies, please visit [this page](#). If a student does not pass a course, they will need to speak with their practicum advisor about their practicum research schedule as they work on retaking the course.

Student Resources

First-Year Resources

Study Carrels

To help provide a dedicated workspace for our first-year students prior to joining a lab, students are assigned their own study carrel, located within Inspiration4 ARC MP100. The study carrels are located directly across the hall from the St. Jude Graduate School classroom (MP163) for the convenience of our students. Entry to the study carrels is via badge scan access and only current first-year students and SJGS staff have access to the space.

Within each carrel, students can find a desktop monitor, keyboard, mouse, charging ports, study lights, drawers and other storage. Students are encouraged to utilize the carrels to complete their coursework and are expected to maintain a neat, tidy, and professional workspace. The study carrel space also has course textbooks, a lounge area, a printer, a mini refrigerator, and other resources.

Upon the conclusion of Laboratory Rotation III and subsequently the first year of the program, students must clear their individual study carrels. This includes removing all personal belongings, discarding any trash, leaving desk keys within the carrel, etc by July 1st.

Housing

Students in their first year of enrollment have the option of living in St. Jude subsidized housing at a rate of \$28/night, payable monthly via emailed invoice. For 2025-26, the two housing complexes are 1) Harbor Town located on Mud Island or 2) Parcels at the Concourse located within the Crosstown Concourse in Midtown. Units are fully furnished, and all utilities are included. Pets are not permitted. The end date for the housing agreement is June 2026. If you need any reasonable accommodations covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), please inform the Guest Housing Coordinator. Students living in St. Jude housing must abide by all policies listed within the Housing Agreement signed prior to move-in. For any issues regarding housing, students may contact the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital Guest Housing Coordinator, Shelly Vaughn.

Program Communication

The MS ABDS Program utilizes several methods to communicate announcements, events, and additional information.

First Friday Coffee & Conversation is a monthly opportunity for the entire MS ABDS student body to interact with the staff of the MS ABDS Program. These meetings allow an opportunity for students to discuss concerns and raise questions directly with leadership. These information sessions will be recorded via WebEx and will be sent out to any students unable to attend, along with the meeting slides, after the session has concluded.

Monthly program emails are sent out from MSABDS@stjude.org with important information for students. These emails will consist of announcements, reminders, upcoming events, professional development opportunities, and more. Students are strongly encouraged to read through these emails in their entirety to have the most up-to-date SJGS and MS ABDS program information.

Additionally, The St. Jude Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences will host bi-annual Town Halls for announcements and discussion with the entire student body.

St. Jude Graduate School Classroom

The St. Jude Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences has a dedicated classroom space located on the plaza level of the Inspiration4 ARC in room MP163. These rooms can seat up to 40 individuals, has a projector, and Webex capabilities. All first-year

courses will be held in MP163. While the classroom is intended for SJGS use first and foremost, it may be reserved by departments outside of SJGS.

Student Activity Center

All graduate students on the St. Jude campus, including from St. Jude Graduate School, the Academic Programs Office, and other institutions, have access to the Student Activity Center located in the plaza level of the Danny Thomas Research Center in room DP038. Entry to the Student Activity Center is via code access; the code to enter is 4153. The Student Activity Center was designed to be a dedicated space for students to relax and socialize. Amenities include a refrigerator and microwave, two televisions, the Diversity Library, videogaming systems, a combination billiards/ping pong table, whiteboard tables, bulletin boards, and more. Students are expected to treat the Activity Center with respect, which includes keeping it clean and neat, as well as informing SJGradSchool@stjude.org of any issues or repairs needed. Staff may enter the Activity Center as needed.

Graduate Student Association (GSA)

The Graduate Student Association is a student-led group that represents and acts on behalf of St. Jude Graduate students to improve the satisfaction and scholarship of our students throughout the duration of their programs. The GSA serves graduate students by participating in student government, appointing students to standing committees, and developing internal programs to assist graduate students with research, professional development and outreach.

The purpose of the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences Graduate Student Association (St. Jude GSA) is to; provide a structure to vocalize student needs, contribute to maintaining a strong graduate school community, and create opportunities to support deeper graduate school training.

The goals of the St. Jude GSA are:

1. To facilitate communication between the graduate school students and graduate school staff, faculty, and the greater St. Jude community.
2. To foster a strong graduate school community through scientific, professional development and social events.
3. To support our core value of diversity and inclusion by promoting respect and the inherent value of all students, faculty and staff within the graduate school community through honest conversations and student advocacy.
4. To give back to the communities that support the graduate school, especially St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and the City of Memphis.

St. Jude Campus Resources

St. Jude Graduate School students have access to many of the support resources available on the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital campus. Some of these are limited to students who have opted into the BCBST insurance. More information regarding the resources below can be found on the St. Jude Hub Intranet site.

- Office of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion
- Employee Resource Groups
- Living Well Health & Wellness Center and Pharmacy
- Living Well Fitness Center
- Community Fitness Discounts
- Mental and Emotional Health Services
- Resourcesforliving.com
- Resilience Center
- Ombuds Resource Program
- Academic Programs Office
- Shared Resource Management System: Core Facilities
- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Tennessee (BCBST)-supported Teladoc Health
- Financial Services
- Legal Services
- Campus Car Detailing
- Bike Share Program
- Massage-on-the-Go on St. Jude Main Campus

Ombuds Resource Program

This program is available to enrolled St. Jude Graduate students. The Ombuds Team for St. Jude is an independent, third-party informal resource that empowers individuals and organizations to navigate and overcome disputes, conflicts and other obstacles that hinder personal and professional growth. Ombuds help organizations by providing feedback to senior leadership about systemic issues and trends within the organization without disclosing the identities of or any confidential communications. An ombuds can help with conflict resolution, compliance concerns, and providing confidential guidance on taking action to address issues or concerns.

Ombuds help individuals who:

- Experience a conflict with a co-worker, peer or supervisor or faculty member/professor.
- Have compliance, ethical, legal or policy concerns about the workplace or academic environment.

- Need a safe place to go for information and confidential guidance before taking action to address their concerns.

The Ombuds team does not conduct investigations, make management decisions or policy, advocate or take sides, keep records of confidential communications, or serve as a substitute for more formal reporting channels. More information regarding the Ombuds Resource Program may be found [here](#).

St. Jude Graduate School Disclaimer:

St. Jude Graduate School reserves the right to change without notice any statement in this publication concerning, but not limited to, rules, policies, tuition, fees, curricula, and courses.

Appendix Documents

1. MS ABDS Program Milestone Checklist
2. LABORATORY ROTATION INFORMATION
 - 2.1. Laboratory Fit Considerations
 - 2.2. Laboratory Rotation Agreement
 - 2.3. Laboratory Rotation Reflection
 - 2.4. Laboratory Rotation Evaluation Form
3. PRACTICUM LAB FORMS
 - 3.1. Mentorship Agreement Form
 - 3.2. Practicum Co-Advisor Agreement
 - 3.3. Practicum Committee Selection Form
4. COMMITTEE MEETING INFORMATION
 - 4.1. General Practicum Committee Meeting Guidelines
 - 4.2. BMS PhD Annual Student Progress Report Form
5. PRACTICUM DEFENSE FORMS
 - 5.1. Practicum Defense Form
 - 5.2. Practicum Approval Form
6. MS-ABDS Offboarding Checklist
7. MS-ABDS Financial Use Guide