

Master of Science in Clinical Investigations

Student Handbook



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

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Welcome to the Master of Science in Clinical Investigations (MSCI) program at the St. Jude Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences! We are excited to spend the next few years with you as you refine your existing skills and gain new knowledge as a clinical researcher. The program is led by four individuals, whom you may contact at any time with questions or concerns.

Associate Deans:

- Pat Flynn, MD – pat.flynn@stjude.org
- Victor Santana, MD – victor.santana@stjude.org

Assistant Dean:

- Sally Utech, PhD – sally.utech@stjude.org

Program Specialist:

- Jimmi Lampley, MS.Ed – jimmi.lampley@stjude.org

While you may reach out to any program staff, if you have general questions about the program, please email MSCI@stjude.org. This inbox is monitored daily, so your question or concern will be addressed most expediently by contacting MSCI. Please ensure that emails from MSCI go to your inbox and not an “other” or junk mail folder, as the program uses this inbox to send announcements and other important information to students.

The following handbook will provide you with the most up-to-date and relevant information about the MSCI program and the St. Jude Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences. We hope this proves to be a useful guide to navigating your time as a student in our program.

1. Time to Degree

The MSCI program is a 2-year (4 semester) program when students enroll full-time. This includes 3 semesters of coursework and one final semester dedicated to completing and defending the thesis. Students take 9 credit hours a semester until the final thesis semester, which only requires enrollment in 6 credit hours. Students must complete at least 33 credit hours to qualify for graduation from the program. Students typically graduate in the Spring semester (June) of their second year in the program.

Students may undertake the program as a part-time student, which usually extends the program to 2.5 years or longer. Students may initially enroll as part-time or may change their status from full-time to part-time during the program, if needed. Any change to a student’s enrollment status should be discussed with the program Deans. During this discussion, an updated course curriculum will be developed for the student.

In consultation with the program Deans, a student may extend the program an extra semester to complete the thesis work, resulting in a Fall semester (December) completion of the program and degree conferral.

2. Hybrid Curriculum Delivery

The MSCI program is considered a “hybrid” program in that curricular content is delivered in both synchronous sessions and via asynchronous, self-paced online modules. The hybrid nature of the curriculum allows working professionals to enroll in the program while giving students opportunities to interact in real time with faculty and other enrolled students.

Synchronous sessions are mostly held virtually, via Webex meetings. Occasionally, synchronous sessions will be scheduled to be in-person. If this is the case, students will be made aware of this well in advance and there will be a virtual attendance option for those who cannot attend in-person. Course syllabi and schedules, Webex meeting links, and asynchronous course content will be available through the Graduate School’s online learning management system.

MSCI program’s Distance Learning Student Identify Verification procedures ensure that instructors can verify the identity of students in virtual classes. These procedures include single sign-on to the online learning management system, asking students to turn on their camera during class, and using the learning management system or online proctoring software to deploy in-class exams. Students must comply with the use of the learning management software and online proctoring software, as well as instructor requests to use camera during classes.

3. Course Schedule

Synchronous portions of MSCI program courses occur on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons during the Fall and Spring academic semesters. Students will be emailed a semester course schedule in advance of each semester with specific times and dates of each course meeting. Individual course dates/times are also available in the online learning management system.

4. Core Curriculum

The core curriculum of the MSCI program comprises 11 courses including 8 required courses, one elective, and 2 classes for thesis reaserch. Students take most of the required coursework the first year, focusing on elective course and thesis work during the second year. The typical full-time student curriculum is:

Year 1	
Fall Semester	Biostatistics for the Health Sciences I, 3 credit hours
	Introduction to Epidemiology, 3 credit hours
	Introduction to Patient-Oriented Research, 3 credit hours
Spring Semester	Biostatistics for the Health Sciences II, 3 credit hours
	Advanced Clinical and Translational Research Methods, 3 credit hours
	Scientific Writing and Communications, 3 credit hours
Year 2	
Fall Semester	Ethical and Legal Issues in Clinical Research, 3 credit hours
	Critical Assessment of Contemporary Clinical Trials, 1 credit hour
	Elective, 3 credit hours
	Thesis Research Project, scalable
Spring Semester	Thesis Research Project, scalable

The first year provides students with the Foundations of Clinical Investigation. The coursework during this year establishes an understanding of the process of clinical investigation.

During the second year, students transition into acquiring in-depth knowledge related to their career pathways and research agendas. Students choose an elective course specifically focused on an aspect of clinical investigation most relevant to their research goals. The MSCI program offers a selection of elective courses, with the most up-to-date listing available in the [Academic Catalog](#). Students should decide on which elective they would like to take by the end of the Spring semester of their first year (unless the student is on a part-time schedule that times the elective differently). Students also enroll in Thesis Research Project hours, which provides dedicated time to develop the thesis project.

The St. Jude Graduate School does outline policies and procedures for students who wish to pursue transfer credit or experiential credit for MSCI core courses. Requests for transfer credit or experiential credit should follow the procedures outlined in the St. Jude Graduate School's policy. Requests for transfer credit or experiential credit will be considered by MSCI program leadership, relevant course directors, and the MSCI program's Curriculum Committee. Approval of such requests are not guaranteed.

5. Independent Study

The St. Jude Graduate School offers an Independent Study course option for students who wish to work closely with a faculty member on a specialized area of interest. An Independent Study course cannot replace one of the core courses listed above, but can be taken in addition to the core curriculum. A CI student may only enroll in one independent study course during their time as a student in the program. Students must have program Associate Dean and faculty member approval to enroll in an independent study course. Assigned credit hours for the course will be determined by the faculty member.

6. Thesis

The most comprehensive and up-to-date information regarding the MSCI Thesis is in the program Thesis Handbook, which is available to all students via the "CI Student Resources Shared Folder" on OneDrive. The MSCI Thesis Handbook contains a description of the thesis project options, the program thesis committee policy, an outline of thesis milestones and a suggested timeline, guidelines for the thesis defense, a copy of the standard thesis evaluation rubric, relevant ethical considerations, and copies of templates for required frontmatter and appendices to your thesis document. In addition, the MSCI program leadership provides a Thesis Advisor Handbook and a required informational session to all declared thesis advisors.

Students must declare the membership of their Thesis Committee by May 1st of their first year in the program. Details on committee membership requirements can be found in the MSCI Thesis Handbook. Students will use the Thesis Committee Agreement Form (in the CI Student Resources Shared Folder) to submit their full committee membership.

Students must submit a Thesis Proposal Form (in the CI Student Resources Shared Folder) by August 1st of their second year in the program. This form is an overview of the thesis project's topic and significance, the proposed data collection and analysis plan, and if IRB approval is needed. It should be signed by the student and the Thesis Advisor.

During Year 2, students are required to document at least 4 meetings with the full thesis committee. This documentation is required for students to be eligible to schedule a thesis defense. Documentation should be in the form of a signed Thesis Committee Meeting Form, which is available in the “CI Student Shared Resources Folder.”

Thesis Research Project courses will be graded on a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory scale. The grade will be determined by feedback from the student’s thesis advisor, as well as a programmatic audit of thesis milestone completion.

The Graduate School’s official [Academic Calendar](#) contains the deadlines for which students must schedule a thesis defense and submit all required revisions to qualify for that semester’s degree conferral. The St. Jude Graduate School confers degrees twice a year: in June, at the conclusion of the Spring semester; and in December, at the conclusion of the Fall semester. There is one annual commencement ceremony, in June of each year, which recognizes degree conferrals during the entire preceding academic year.

7. Graduate School Faculty

The faculty of the St. Jude Graduate School is comprised of qualified individuals who have completed the Graduate School’s faculty appointment process. Many of the Graduate School faculty are also faculty and researchers in St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital; however, there is not complete overlap between Graduate School and Hospital faculty.

All MSCI courses are taught by St. Jude Graduate School Faculty. Students must have Graduate School faculty members as the 3 core members of their Thesis Committee. Independent Study courses must also be led by an appointed Graduate School Faculty Member.

Students can find information on current St. Jude Graduate School Faculty on the [Graduate School website](#). If a student would like someone who is not currently a member of the Graduate School faculty to serve on a thesis committee or lead an Independent Study course, that individual can initiate the Graduate School Faculty Appointment process and obtain Graduate School Faculty status. Please contact MSCI program leadership with inquiries about faculty appointments.

8. Extracurricular Opportunities

The St. Jude Graduate School and the MSCI program provide optional, extracurricular opportunities for CI students. While participation in these activities is encouraged to maximize your experience as a graduate student, they are not mandatory and do not impact a student’s grades or overall academic standing. Information regarding these events will be communicated directly to students from the St. Jude Graduate School or a related central office (e.g., Student Affairs) or the

MSCI program. Activities include research symposia, professional development workshops, social and cohort-building events, and thesis writing labs.

9. Online Learning Management System (LMS)

To facilitate online and distance learning, the St. Jude Graduate School uses an online learning management system called Canvas. Canvas is integral to delivering the MSCI program's hybrid curriculum. The system is managed by the Graduate School's Instructional Design team.

Canvas is single sign-on with your St. Jude online credentials. Once you have been fully onboarded to the Graduate School, you can go to [Canvas](#) on any computer or mobile device to access the system. Canvas also offers a mobile app for download. At the beginning of each semester, you may receive email notifications from the St. Jude Graduate School of being added to the courses you will be taking that semester. You should log into Canvas to accept those course invitations as soon as possible.

All non-elective courses, and some elective courses at the instructor's discretion, will be delivered via Canvas. Course syllabi, schedules, instructor information, links to synchronous virtual class meetings, and access to asynchronous modules are available via Canvas. Some courses also deploy assignments and exams through Canvas. Grades on assignments and exams, and final course grades, are available for students to view via each course's Gradebook.

Canvas features a Calendar module, which will show course meetings, and assignment and exam due dates, for all enrolled courses in one place. Webex links for virtual meetings can also be accessed via the Calendar. Students can export the contents of their Canvas calendar to their St. Jude Outlook calendar using the instructions provided by the CI program. Any questions about or issues with Canvas can be shared with the MSCI program staff or the Graduate School's Instructional Design team.

10. Attendance

It is required that students maintain regular attendance of synchronous course meetings. Most synchronous sessions are interactive in nature. Many courses are delivered through a short course model, making synchronous sessions even more important to achieving the course's learning objectives. However, we do recognize that most of our students are full-time working professionals who may have obligations that interfere with course attendance. In these situations, students should contact the course instructor in advance of the absence, or as soon as possible thereafter, to discuss the absence and any work needed to make up missed content. Synchronous sessions are recorded, so the student should also watch the recording of the live class. If a student has a pattern of repeated absences, the instructor is required to inform MSCI program staff of this. At this

point, the program Deans will schedule a meeting with the student to discuss the issue. Repeated absences can affect the final course grade, which may negatively impact a student's academic standing.

11. Satisfactory Academic Progress

In order to remain in good academic standing with the MSCI program and the St. Jude Graduate School, students must be assessed as making Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) each semester. The requirements for SAP are:

- Maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher
- Receive a grade higher than F for all graded courses
- Receive a Satisfactory grade for Thesis courses
- Maintain regular synchronous course attendance in all enrolled courses

12. Student Advising

The MSCI program Deans formally advise all enrolled students by scheduling advising meetings each year. First year students have an advising meeting scheduled after the conclusion of the first semester of coursework, usually in January. A first year advising checklist is used to guide the conversation. Second year students have an advising meeting scheduled during the middle of the Fall semester of Year 2. A second year advising checklist is used to guide the conversation. In addition to these formally scheduled individual advising meetings, the MSCI program Deans are available for additional advising as needed or requested by the student.

Once a student has selected a Thesis Advisor, that faculty member should advise the student on elective course selection and the research process related to the thesis. Students may also engage the MSCI program Deans on this type of advising.

13. Incomplete Grades and Leave of Absence (LOA)

A situation may arise where a student needs to request an Incomplete grade for a course or request a temporary leave of absence from the program. [The Incomplete Grade and Leave of Absence policies](#) are determined by the St. Jude Graduate School. It is highly recommended that CI students contemplating either option consult with the MSCI program Deans during the decision-making process. Any required forms can be requested from CI program staff or the St. Jude Graduate School Registrar.

- Incomplete Grade for an enrolled course
An Incomplete grade (I) can be assigned when extenuating circumstances prevent a student from completing coursework during the semester. Before an Incomplete is assigned, the student and the course instructor must create a plan and a timeline for when and how the student will complete the remaining coursework. The deadline for completing a course assigned an Incomplete grade is no later than the end of the semester following the

semester in which the incomplete course was taken. If the student meets the instructor's requirements for completing the course, the instructor will assign a grade to replace the Incomplete, and the grade will be updated in the student's record. If the work is not completed by the deadline, the student will receive a grade of F for the course. Once the student, instructor, and program Deans discuss the Incomplete grade option and formulate a plan for completion, CI program staff will facilitate completing the "Incomplete Grade Documentation Form," which must be submitted to the Graduate School Registrar to formalize the Incomplete grade.

- Leave of Absence

CI students can request a Leave of Absence, which is a temporary interruption of studies. Requests for a LOA are reviewed and approved by the Graduate School on a case-by-case basis. A LOA cannot exceed one year. LOA requests must be discussed with the program Associate Deans and, if necessary, the student's thesis advisor. The Leave of Absence Request Form and any supporting documentation must be completed and submitted to the Office of Student Affairs for consideration. If granted, the student is considered to be on a leave of absence but still enrolled in the St. Jude Graduate School. If a student does not return to active student status at the end of the approved leave, the student must withdraw from the program and the St. Jude Graduate School. A student who is in good academic standing at the time of withdrawal may re-apply in the future to the MSCJ program. As noted in section 19, Graduate School student status and SJCRH employee status are separate. A student who takes SJCRH employee leave does not have to take Graduate School leave. Leave granted in one institution does not guarantee leave will be granted by the other.

14. Accommodations

The St. Jude Graduate School's [Accommodations policy](#) provides equal access to a quality higher education experience for a diverse student population. Students can notify the Graduate School's ADA Coordinator of the need for an accommodation related to a disability or disabling condition by completing the American Disabilities Act Student Accommodation Form. Students may be asked to submit documentation from a qualified professional verifying the nature of the disability before receiving an accommodation. If an accommodation is approved, the student will receive a Student Eligibility Letter and an Accommodation Notification Letter, which can be provided to instructors verifying the approved accommodation. Instructors will then find proper means to meet the accommodation.

15. Student Complaints

The St. Jude Graduate School's [Student Complaints Policy](#) outlines the procedure for current and former students to submit complaints or grievances related to the St. Jude Graduate School or their academic program. A complaint or grievance is a

mechanism for a student to express dissatisfaction that is the result of a situation that adversely affects a member of the student body. Students who would like to report a complaint should follow the process outlined in this policy.

16. Auditing St. Jude Graduate School courses

Students currently enrolled in the St. Jude Graduate School may audit courses outside of their program's core curriculum for "transcript notation." This means that the student will not be formally enrolled in the course, and will not receive a grade, but will receive notation on the official transcript of a successful audit of the course. Students who wish to audit a course for transcript notation must first contact their program Deans and the proposed course instructor to discuss the audit request. Instructors have discretion to deny any auditor requests. If the course instructor approves, the student will complete the Audit with Transcript Notation form, including the details of the instructor's required level of student participation in the course to receive a transcript notation. The signed form should be submitted to MSCI program leadership, who will work with the Graduate School Registrar to verify the audit request and ensure auditor access to the course. Auditing forms can be requested from MSCI program staff.

17. Student Benefits

Students are eligible to receive several benefits as enrolled students in the MSCI programs.

- Students may request a laptop computer from the St. Jude Graduate School for use during their time as a student enrolled in a Graduate School program. The student can choose between a Mac or a PC. Students must return the Graduate School issued laptop upon graduation.
- Students may request additional tech equipment, such as wireless keyboard and mouse, headphones, additional chargers, USB or Lightning ports, or other reasonable requests to facilitate coursework and research.
- All students receive a standard software package, including Microsoft Office software, EndNote, R and R Studio, and Adobe Acrobat Pro. Students may request additional software subscriptions as necessary for research purposes by contacting MSCI Program administration or Graduate School IS Support.
- The MSCI program provides all required and recommended textbooks for program courses to students.
- Enrolled students may request Educational Support Funds for expenses related to the MSCI program that are not covered by the above-referenced benefits. Examples include the purchase of additional books or journal subscriptions, costs associated with conference attendance, enrollment in research workshops. Students should make these requests directly to the Assistant Dean via email, with a description of the request, justification for the need, and a budget for how much funding is being requested. Approval is at the discretion of MSCI program leadership and not guaranteed.

18. Graduation

To be eligible for graduation, all students must comply with the [St. Jude Graduate School and MSCI Program Degree Requirements Policy](#). Per this policy:

To be awarded a master's degree in Clinical Investigations, a student must:

- Complete all courses and maintain an overall GPA of 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) or better;
- Participate and satisfactorily complete all assignments and examinations;
- Participate in mandatory workshops and seminars;
- Select a thesis advisor, topic, and committee by the program's stated deadline;
- Attend scheduled meetings with the Thesis Committee;
- Draft a written thesis and conduct an oral defense of the thesis and make all necessary revisions to the thesis ideally by the end of the fourth semester.

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 termination from the program.

To initiate the graduation process, the St. Jude Graduate School Registrar's office will send an Intent to Graduate Form to all students who are on course to graduate/receive their degree at the beginning of their proposed last semester. Students must fill out the form to begin the degree conferral and graduation process.

The MSCI program will approve a student for graduation if they are in good academic standing, have completed all required core coursework or have it in progress, have a thesis defense scheduled by the Graduate School's deadline for degree conferral, and pass the defense with revisions that can be completed by the Graduate School's deadline for completing revisions and submitting the final thesis document.

The Graduate School confers degree two times each year; once in December for a Fall conferral and once in June for a Spring conferral. A commencement ceremony is held once a year in June. That ceremony encompasses all degree conferrals for the previous academic year.

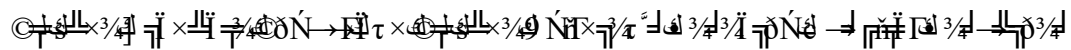
Once a student has been approved by the program and the Graduate School for graduation, students will receive the MSCI Offboarding Checklist, which outlines the required administrative steps necessary to leave the Graduate School. Students should work with the appropriate program and Graduate School staff to complete

the steps on the checklist. Once all graduation and offboarding tasks are completed, the student is eligible to receive their diploma.

19. Current St. Jude Employees

Many students in the MSCI program are also current St. Jude employees. Please keep in mind that a student's status as a Graduate Student is not related to their employment status. Current employees will use their St. Jude identities in the Graduate School (ID number, username and password, ID badge and parking permit), but student status is separate from employee status.

This means that if an employee takes a leave of absence from their job, they do not have to (and will not be automatically granted) a similar leave from the St. Jude Graduate School. If a student leaves their St. Jude employment while a student, their status as a student is not terminated at that time. If a student who is employed at St. Jude leaves their employment during their time as a student, the student should contact the MSCI program staff so that the student does not lose access to Graduate School systems.



The St. Jude Graduate School and the Hospital provide resources that support CI students during their time in the program.

20. St. Jude Graduate School Policies

MSCI Students are required to abide by all relevant St. Jude Graduate School policies, in addition to CI program level policies and procedures. Graduate School policies can be found both in the [Academic Catalog](#) and on the [Policy](#) website.

21. Space

St. Jude Graduate School and MSCI program administrative offices are in the Graduate School suite, located in the Marlo Thomas Center. Program co-Associate Deans have offices in their respective academic departments. A classroom, IA1208, is inside of the Graduate School suite.

An Activities Center open to all Graduate Students is located in the Plaza Level of the DTRC, DP038. The door code is 4153.

22. Library Resources

The St. Jude Graduate School partners with the [St. Jude Biomedical Library](#) to provide library resources to students. All enrolled students have access to the Biomedical Library's full complement of services.

23. Ombuds

The [Ombuds Resource 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.

24. Information Services (IS) Support

The St. Jude Graduate School has a dedicated IS staff member who provides support for hardware and software needs, communication services, infrastructure requests, and general application support. Students needing IS assistance may contact the Help Desk and indicate they have a Graduate School-related need, put in a Service Now Ticket and indicate in the comments this is a Graduate School-related request, or contact the Graduate School's IS liaison directly at Dell.Clemons@stjude.org.