

Graduate Student Handbook and Research Manual

Penn State Forensic Science Program



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Purpose

To provide students enrolled in the Professional Science Master's Program an opportunity to complete an independent research project. The research findings will be communicated in a written paper of publishable quality and will be presented orally in a public forum. Assessment will come from the student's Principal Investigator (PI) and the committee members (CMs) involved in a student's project. All due dates are listed in the Graduate Student Research Deadlines section below.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Forensic Science Program at Penn State is to provide a unique, holistic educational experience with opportunities for specialization through an intense, highly practical approach to forensic science education to benefit the global forensic science community and the criminal justice system. The program will provide an open, welcoming, creative, and adaptable learning environment for its students, staff, and faculty.

Ethics

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, unauthorized prior possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. A student charged with academic dishonesty will be given oral or written notice by the instructor.

If students believe they have been falsely accused, they should seek an explanation through informal discussions with the instructor, department head, dean, or campus executive officer. If the instructor believes that the infraction is sufficiently serious to warrant the referral of the case to the Office of Conduct Standards or, if the instructor will award a final grade of F in the course because of the infraction, the student and faculty member will be afforded formal due process.

Code of Mutual Respect and Cooperation For Faculty, Staff and Students in The Eberly College of Science

The Eberly College of Science is a community dedicated to personal and academic excellence. The Code of Mutual Respect and Cooperation was developed to embody the values that we hope our faculty, staff, and students possess, consistent with the aspirational goals expressed in the Penn State Principles. The University is strongly committed to freedom of expression, and consequently, the Code does not constitute University or College policy and is not intended to interfere in any way with an individual's academic or personal freedoms. We hope, however, that individuals will voluntarily endorse the 12 principles set forth in the Code, thereby helping us make The Eberly College of Science a place where every individual feels respected and valued, as well as challenged and rewarded.

The Eberly College of Science Code of Mutual Respect and Cooperation can be found at <https://science.psu.edu/climate-and-diversity/code-mutual-respect-and-cooperation>

Learning Objectives

1. Students will develop an understanding of the scientific principles of crime scene investigation and reconstruction, including evidence collection and preservation.
2. Students will receive intensive hands-on training in forensic laboratory methodologies with respect to the analysis of evidence.

3. Students will develop written communication skills for presentation of their findings in accordance with established professional guidelines.
4. Students will develop oral communication skills for discussing the scientific method in a laboratory setting and effectively testifying in a court of law.
5. Students will understand the importance of accreditation and certification in the forensic science community.
6. Students will develop an understanding of the importance of the interaction between law enforcement, scientists and the legal profession.
7. Students will develop an understanding of the importance of professionalism and ethical behavior in the forensic science community.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

MPS in Forensic Science

The MPS in Forensic Science at Penn State University is a two-year program. Students are not required to write a thesis, but they are required to perform publishable quality research. In consultation with their research adviser, students can choose to create their own project or join a project already in progress. Funding for research and research-related activities is provided. Students are required to write a paper and complete a presentation that gets approved by their research committee in order to graduate.

Academic Standards

Students are expected to maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA to remain in the program. Those who fall short may be given a probation semester to catch up; however, those who fail to increase their GPA to the required 3.0 may be dismissed from the program.

Academic Integrity in Graduate Education

Graduate Students will not engage in or tolerate academic integrity violations. Acts of dishonesty violate the fundamental ethical principles of the University community and compromise the worth of work completed by others.

1. An academic integrity violation is an intentional, unintentional, or attempted violation of course or non-course assessment policies to gain an academic advantage or to advantage or disadvantage another student academically.

2. The FRNSC Program will adhere to Graduate Education Policy GCAC-805 Academic Integrity <https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-800/gcac-805-academic-integrity> for all such matters.

Unless explicitly permitted by an instructor supervising the work, the following actions are prohibited in any academic context (including both courses and academic assessments that are not associated with credit-bearing courses such as qualifying exams, comprehensive exams, dissertations, other milestone assessments, SARI training or other non-course-based work). The following descriptions illustrate the range of academic misconduct; there may be academic misconduct that falls outside these categories.

1. Unauthorized collaboration and/or accessing or using unauthorized or prohibited materials, information, tools, technologies or study aids. Also includes allowing another person to submit work or participate in academic requirements on one's behalf or assisting another to engage in any form of academic misconduct (e.g., facilitating academic misconduct).
 - a. The limits of use of generative artificial intelligence on examinations and other formative or summative assessments must be defined by the course instructor or those responsible for the assessment.
2. Plagiarism, including using another person's words, results, processes, or ideas in whole or in part without giving appropriate attribution, citation, or credit.
3. Tampering with another student's work.
4. Providing false information in an academic assignment, exercise, publication, or another requirement, including making up data, sources, efforts, events, or results, and recording, reporting, or using them as authentic. Also includes altering or adjusting graded work to receive a favorable regrade.
5. Using the same academic work, in part or entirely, for credit more than once, unless specifically authorized by the instructor receiving the reused work.
6. Retaining, recording and/or disseminating instructional content when prohibited, including course exams, or other intellectual property, without the express written permission of the instructor(s) or intellectual property owner, or as permitted by their Campus Disability Coordinator.

Academic integrity violations can vary in severity as outlined in this policy. Please refer to the Graduate Sanctioning Guidelines <https://gradschool.psu.edu/faculty-staff/policies/academic-integrity-sanctioning-guidelines> for an explanation of “minor,” “moderate,” and “major” academic integrity violations and the associated consequences.

Academic Plans

Students can choose either degree emphasis of Molecular Biology or Chemistry. With the exception of two elective courses, the degree pathways are set for students. Scheduling is done by the Forensic Academic Coordinator for the first three semesters, and then jointly by the coordinator and student in

the fourth semester; students are tasked with completing any pre-requisite overrides needed to enter an elective course. The culminating experience for all students is the research project and accompanying paper and presentation outlined in this document's research requirements sections.

Molecular Biology Academic Plan

Semester 1	Total Credits 11
FRNSC 410 – Scientific Approach to CSI	2
FRNSC 413 – Criminalistics: Biology	3
FRNSC 415W – Laboratory in CSI	2
FRNSC 420 – Advanced Molecular Biology for Forensic Scientists	3
FRNSC 894 - Research	1

Semester 2	Total Credits 10
FRNSC 400 – Courtroom Proceedings and Testimony	1
FRNSC 411 – Criminalistics: Trace and Impression Evidence	3
FRNSC 421W – Forensic Molecular Biology	4
FRNSC 841 – Seminar	1
FRNSC 894 - Research	1

Semester 3	Total Credits 10
FRNSC 532 – Drug Chemistry and Toxicology	3
FRNSC 821 – Forensic Molecular Biology II	4
FRNSC 861 – Ethics in Forensic Science	1
FRNSC 894 - Research	2

Semester 4	Total Credits 11
FRNSC 801 - The Profession of Forensic Science	3
FRNSC 894 – Research	2
Elective	3
Elective	3

Chemistry Academic Plan

Semester 1	Total Credits 11
FRNSC 410 – Scientific Approach to CSI	2
FRNSC 411 – Criminalistics: Trace and Impression Evidence	3
FRNSC 415W – Laboratory in CSI	2
FRNSC 425 – Chromatography and Spectroscopy in Forensic Science	3
FRNSC 894 - Research	1

Semester 2	Total Credits 10
FRNSC 400 – Courtroom Proceedings and Testimony	1
FRNSC 413 – Criminalistics: Biology	3
FRNSC 427W – Forensic Chemistry	4
FRNSC 841 – Seminar	1
FRNSC 894 - Research	1

Semester 3	Total Credits 10
FRNSC 532 – Drug Chemistry and Toxicology	3
FRNSC 831 – Forensic Chemistry II	4
FRNSC 861 – Ethics in Forensic Science	1
FRNSC 894 - Research	2

Semester 4	Total Credits 11
FRNSC 801 - The Profession of Forensic Science	3
FRNSC 894 – Research	2
Elective	3
Elective	3

GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS

Training

In semester 1, all students must complete mandatory bloodborne pathogens (BBP) training, Lab Safety Training, and Autoclave training. Training will be documented and filed with the Forensic Science Program Academic Program Coordinator, including any updates completed throughout the time the student is working in a Penn State lab. Additional training may be required by the University, College, Department, Program or PI.

FRNSC 894

In semester 1, students will be enrolled for one credit of FRNSC 894 (a lecture-based course on research methods). The objectives of this class include establishing expectations for graduate student research, establishing an understanding and use of the scientific method, conducting background research through the Penn State library and other online resources, conveying the proper methods of citing and referencing the literature, providing guidance for the creation of a research proposal, establishing an understanding of the ethical issues in research, and conveying methods of addressing IRB protocols when dealing with human subjects. During this course, students will formally select a PI, form a research committee, and develop a research proposal. Students are encouraged to start their research during this semester. Assessment of student performance in FRNSC 894 will be completed by the instructor of record with input from their chosen PI.

Students will continue to enroll in FRNSC 894 for research credits throughout their time in the program, but with their PI as the instructor of record (one credit in semester 2 and two credits each in semesters 3 & 4).

Guidelines and Expectations

Plans of research and workloads may vary depending on the type of research activity involved. Students joining a long-term, externally funded program may spend fewer hours in plan development but more hours working in the laboratory than those in stand-alone projects. Students entering existing research programs may be asked to begin laboratory work during semester 1.

Students are required to maintain regular contact with their PI regarding their research. The frequency of contact can vary, depending on the type of research program and the schedules of PI and student. Some PIs conduct formal research meetings once or twice per week. Other PIs meet informally or as needed. At a minimum, students are recommended to make contact with their PI at least once every two weeks to discuss their progress. Missed deadlines or poor performance in research will be reflected in the student's FRNSC 894 grade. Concerns from the PI and/or CMs regarding student performance must be relayed to the student as soon as possible. Students who feel their research is not being supported should contact the Forensic Science Program Director.

The schedule listed in the Graduate Student Research Deadlines section lists deadlines for completion of major milestones. Students are strongly advised to complete their work in advance of this schedule, and

any of these milestones may be completed prior to the program deadline without penalty. PIs are permitted to require their students to complete these milestones earlier than the program deadlines provided that such expectations are reasonable and students are notified of any such expectations before they select their PI. All submission deadlines end at close of business (generally 16:30) for the program office.

At a minimum, students are expected to dedicate the following number of hours per week to research activities (including planning, lab work, data analysis, writing and other related activities):

At least 5 – 8 hours per week during semesters 1 and 2

Possibility of summer research

At least 10 – 16 hours per week during semesters 3 and 4

Within these limits, the Graduate School and the Program allow for differences in expectations between faculty in different labs. Therefore, it is possible and acceptable that one PI may expect a greater number of hours per week than another PI. As long as the expectations fall within the above guidelines, any such variation is permissible. PI expectations should be transparent and should be discussed prior to a student selecting a PI. Ask a potential PI if they have a mentoring agreement. If they do not, the student can ask the program director to see a template of one and use it as a guideline for initial discussion(s) with a potential PI to see if the PI's work style, expectations of the student, and intended mentoring approach is compatible with the student's wants and needs.

Unanticipated research outcomes may make it necessary for students to work additional hours to complete their research and presentation. If this occurs, students need to meet with their PI and the Program Director to determine a corrective plan of action for reasonable completion of their research plan.

Laboratory work that has potential safety hazards will not be conducted by students during periods when the University is not in session (i.e., between semesters), without the PI present, or without prior approval from the Forensic Science Program Director if the PI will not be present. Students may enter the laboratory as necessary to monitor and maintain ongoing experiments where such activities do not expose the student to potential safety hazards.

PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS:

Semester 1

During their first semester, students will be required to:

1. Attend and participate in Forensic Science Program graduate student orientation during orientation week.
2. Meet with faculty members to discuss areas of research.

3. Submit a list of two potential PIs, ranked by first and second choice to the Forensic Science Program Academic Program Coordinator. Every effort will be made to assign students their first choice of PI. While official assignment of a PI occurs during this time, students can begin communicating with a prospective PI as early as the summer before the start of the first semester.

Students are strongly encouraged to make their interests known to prospective PIs and may reach tentative agreement on assignments with them. However, assignments are not official until program notification of PI assignment.

4. Continue to work with the PI throughout the remainder of the semester to complete the semester requirements.
5. Submit a Research Committee form, identifying the members of their research committee to the Forensic Science Program Academic Program Coordinator. The committee shall be comprised, at a minimum, of the PI and two members. The two members may be faculty from Penn State (including Forensic Science Program faculty) or scientists/professionals from outside the university who have relevant knowledge and experience. At least one of the committee members must be from outside of the program. The student can work with a “co-PI”, but the principal PI must be full-time faculty in the Forensic Science Program. When possible or practical, all committee members should participate in project design. A copy of the research guidelines should be provided by the student to all committee members so they are aware of their roles and responsibilities. The research committee selection form is due by end of finals in semester 1 or the FRNSC 894 grade will be deferred (DF). Information about deferred grades can be found here: <https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-400/gcac-401-grading-system/>
6. Submit a draft of the research proposal to the committee members. This will require submitting draft proposals to the PI well in advance of the due date (see schedule in subsequent pages). Students are strongly encouraged to work with the PI to establish a schedule for this process. The research proposal should reflect reasonable expectations and indicate that updates on research progress will be monitored throughout the duration of the project. The research proposal draft is due to committee members by end of finals semester 1 or the FRNSC 894 grade will be deferred (DF). Students may be asked to show proof (email) that the proposal was sent.

Semester 2

During their second semester, students will be required to:

1. Submit the Proposal Approval form to the Forensic Science Program Academic Program Coordinator once all committee members have approved the proposal. Proposal Approval forms should ideally be submitted no later than week 12 of the semester; if forms are not submitted by the end of finals week, a DF grade will be given until the form is received and no FRNSC 894 research funds will be released. No research funds may be spent until the final research proposal form is signed by all committee members and submitted to the program office.

2. Be enrolled in one credit of FRNSC 894 (Research). The student's PI will be the instructor of record for this course. An assessment of student performance will be conducted by the PI, and when possible, with feedback from the CMs.
3. Communicate research progress to all CMs, in writing and at least once per semester. This should include requests made by the student for feedback and/or assistance from CMs. Fulfilling this requirement will be monitored by the PI.
4. Provide a presentation of their research to graduate program applicants during recruitment weekend in February.
5. Begin to purchase materials and develop a schedule to execute their plan of research.
6. Attend a graduate student research administrative meeting with the program staff. This meeting will discuss upcoming deadlines, as well as purchasing, billing, and travel requirements.

Summer Session

1. Research may continue during the summer session (Mid-May to Early August) between the first and second years. Parameters for summer research must be discussed with and approved by both your PI and the program director.
2. Graduate Orientation Week: Students will provide a tour of forensic facilities and participate in the Research Roundtable during the incoming student orientation. The orientation takes place Wednesday – Friday the week before Fall semester begins. Vacations should ideally be planned to allow for rising second years to attend.

Semester 3

During their third semester, students will be required to:

1. Enroll in 2 credits of FRNSC 894. An assessment of student performance will be conducted by the PI with feedback from the CMs.
2. Communicate progress with their committee members and ask for feedback/assistance at least once during the semester.
3. Attend a graduate student research administrative meeting with the program staff. This meeting will discuss upcoming deadlines, as well as purchasing, billing, and travel requirements.

Semester 4

During their fourth semester, students will be required to:

1. Enroll in 2 credits of FRNSC 894. An assessment of student performance will be conducted by the PI, with feedback from the committee members.
2. Submit a final draft of the research paper to the committee.

The format of the research paper should follow the guidelines of a relevant journal such as the Journal of Forensic Sciences

(<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/15564029/homepage/forauthors.html>) or Forensic Science International: Genetics (<https://www.elsevier.com/journals/forensic-science-international-genetics/1872-4973/guide-for-authors>). Consult with the PI throughout the semester to complete this requirement.

3. Submit the final research paper to the PI and other committee members.
4. Must ensure that a Research Paper Approval form has been approved by their PI and all committee members and submitted to the Forensic Science Program Academic Program Coordinator. This approval form must be completed and filed with the Program prior to the due date unless an extension has been approved by the PI and Program Director. If edits are required by a CM, the student is responsible to follow up and ensure that issues are addressed to obtain approval by the deadline. The research paper approval form must be submitted by end of week 15 of the semester or the student will not receive approval to graduate. A student may submit the paper for publication in a peer-reviewed scientific journal with the approval of the PI.
5. Present the research findings orally in a public forum attended by fellow graduate students, undergraduate students, faculty, and staff. The PI and CMs must have attended the presentation and/or viewed a recording of the presentation. At least two CMs (including the PI) should attend the oral presentation. Following the public presentation, a question-and-answer session will occur. Students are also encouraged to communicate their research at a professional conference.
6. Must ensure that the Research Presentation Approval form has been approved by their PI and all committee members and submitted to the Forensic Science Program Academic Program Coordinator. The research presentation approval form must be submitted by end of week 15 of the semester or the student will not receive approval to graduate.
7. Communicate progress with their committee members and ask for feedback/assistance at least once during the semester.
8. Attend a graduate student research administrative meeting with the program staff. This meeting will discuss upcoming deadlines, as well as purchasing, billing, and travel requirements.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS OF GRADUATE PROGRAM

Program Support for Graduate Students

To the best of the Forensic Science Program's ability, graduate students will be provided with the following support:

1. A suitable space in which to perform the research.
2. Equipment, supplies, and reagents necessary to complete the research successfully.
3. Funding support to conduct research.
4. A portion of the funds needed for students to travel to at least one professional conference to communicate their research findings in the form of a poster or platform/oral presentation.

PI Support for Graduate Students

To the best of their ability PIs will support graduate students by:

1. Being available to meet at least once every two weeks to discuss research progress. The format of the meeting (e.g., in-person, Zoom, email) will be determined by the PI, but will include feedback and address questions beyond the scope of a status report.
2. Responding to questions, requests, or approvals within 48 hours. Students who do not receive a response should reach out again after 48 hours before contacting the Program Office.
3. Monitoring purchases and providing assistance with maintaining budgets.
4. Providing feedback on research progress beyond the FRNSC 894 grade and explaining areas for improvement as a researcher, at least once per semester.

Important University Policies for Graduate Students can be found at:

<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-student-life/important-policies-for-graduate-students/>

FILING A COMPLAINT OR RAISING PROGRAM CONCERNS

Complaints and concerns from our students are taken very seriously. If you have a complaint or concern directly relating to the instruction provided by the Forensic Science Program, you are encouraged to express that concern at any time to any member of the faculty and staff.

If you do not wish to raise the complaint with the faculty or staff directly involved, you are encouraged to report it to the program Director via email or in person. Your issue will be documented, and the Director will attempt to resolve the complaint to the best of their ability. If it is a faculty or staff complaint, the Director will address the issue with that individual staff or faculty member to find a

resolution. Curricular or academic complaints will be handled as makes the most sense, be it during PIM, program meeting, committee meeting, etc. You will be informed when your complaint has been addressed – ie. the staff or faculty member in question was spoken to, the issue was added to a meeting agenda and discussed, etc..

For non-urgent issues or general feedback, you can leave comments on your SRTes or the Exit Survey taken during your final semester.

If you have a complaint that you wish to raise beyond the confines of the program, you have the right to file a complaint or concern with the University. You can go to <https://gradschool.psu.edu/current-students/> and click the link for Avenues to Address Graduate Student Concerns, <https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-student-life/avenues-to-address-graduate-student-concerns/>. You can also register a general complaint or concern with Student Affairs, <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/support-safety-conduct/victim-survivor-support-advocacy/reporting-options>, as well as call the Penn State Hotline (number on the page) to immediately report misconduct concerns. You will find also links for several resources on campus if the complaint is more specific in nature, perhaps having to do with race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.

There is a link and phone number provided for the Office of Research Protections for research misconduct concerns.

Eberly College also has at least one ombudsman available within each department to assist students with conflict resolution and to help provide in-person support and resources. You can find the names of the current ombudsmen by searching the Eberly College website. Any of the listed people are fine to approach; you do not have to approach only those from BMB.

If you have a complaint that you wish to raise beyond the confines of the university, you have the right to file a complaint or concern with FEPAC. FEPAC considers all written, signed complaints it receives against accredited programs. Within fifteen (15) calendar days of receipt of such a complaint, FEPAC will send a letter to the complainant acknowledging receipt of the complaint and explaining the procedures for processing the complaint. Also, within fifteen (15) calendar days of receipt of the complaint, FEPAC will forward a copy of the complaint to the program and requests that the program submit a written response to FEPAC within thirty (30) calendar days of the program's receipt of the complaint.

When FEPAC receives the program's response, it will conduct its own investigation of the complaint to determine if the program has violated any of FEPAC's Standards or policies. FEPAC will make every effort to complete its investigation as expeditiously as possible, and normally the investigation will be completed within thirty (30) calendar days. However, in certain circumstances more time may be necessary.

When FEPAC has completed its investigation, it will notify both the program and the complainant in writing of the results. If FEPAC determines that the program is not in compliance with its Standards or Policies, FEPAC will take appropriate action, which may include requesting a follow-up report from the program documenting that corrective action has been taken, probation, or taking steps to withdraw the program's accreditation. If FEPAC receives a complaint regarding an accredited program that the Commission deems unrelated to FEPAC Standards, or Policies and Procedures, the complaint is forwarded to the program director or

appropriate institutional administrator. All formal complaints must be administered according to the Program's formal complaint process in compliance with FEPAC Standard 3.8.

If FEPAC receives an anonymous complaint about a program, or an oral complaint that the complainant refuses to put into writing, FEPAC will take whatever action it deems appropriate in light of the seriousness of the complaint

GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH DEADLINES

Note: All submission deadlines end at close of business for the Forensic Science Program Office (generally 16:30). Students are strongly advised to complete their work in advance of this schedule.

Semester 1

Orientation Week:

Attend and participate in Forensic Science Program graduate student orientation.
Case Notes Documentation and Evidence Handling Training
Bloodborne Pathogen, Lab Safety and Autoclave Safety Training.
Any additional training required by the University, College, Department, Program or PI

Full Semester:

Enroll in FRNSC 894 for 1 credit (First semester: lecture-based course with a single faculty member)
Work at least 5-8 hours per week on 894 seminar and research combined.
Work with your PI to establish a research committee, develop a research proposal with input from the committee members, and possibly start doing experiments in the lab

End of 3rd Week:

Meet with faculty members to discuss research interests and opportunities.

End of 4th Week:

Submit names of two potential PIs (ranked) to the Forensic Science Program Academic Program Coordinator.

End of 5th Week:

Program assigns PI to the graduate student

End of 10th Week:

Submit names of research committee members via committee selection form to the Forensic Science Program Academic Program Coordinator. Failure to submit this form by the end of the semester will result in a DF grade in FRNSC 894.

Last Day of Finals:

Submit draft of research proposal to the committee members, requesting a response no later than Jan 31. Failure to send the proposal by the end of the semester will result in a DF grade in FRNSC 894. Students may be asked to show proof (email) that the proposal was sent.

Semester 2

Full Semester:

- Enroll in FRNSC 894 for 1 credit (research credit with your PI)
- Work at least 5-8 hours per week on research.
- Communicate progress to all committee members at least once per semester.
- Begin to purchase materials and develop a schedule to execute the plan of research.

End of 1st Week:

- Attend graduate student research administrative meeting with program staff

January 31:

- Initial responses from committee members are due.

Recruitment Weekend (Typically mid-February):

- Oral presentation of research goals and progress to graduate program applicants.

End of Week 12:

- Final proposal is completed and committee members have approved. Submit the Research Proposal Approval form to the Forensic Science Program Academic Program Coordinator after signed by all committee members. Failure to submit the form by the end of the semester will result in a DF grade in FRNSC 894. Furthermore, no research funds will be released and no research purchases can be made until the research proposal approval form is signed by all committee members and submitted to the program office.

End of Finals:

- Meet with PI to assess and document progress.

Summer

Summer Session (Mid-May to Early August. The regular PSU 13-week summer session dates):

- If summer research is being conducted it will need to be completed during the timeframe of the summer session stated by Penn State for that academic year.

Orientation Week (Last week of summer break)

- Facilities tour and Research Roundtable with incoming graduate students (2nd years).

Semester 3

Full Semester:

- Enroll in FRNSC 894 for 2 credits (research credits with your PI).
- Work at least 10-16 hours per week on research.
- Communicate progress to all committee members at least once per semester.

End of 1st Week:

- Attend graduate student research administrative meeting with program staff.

Semester 4

Full Semester:

Enroll in FRNSC 894 for 2 credits (research credits with your PI)
Work at least 10-16 hours per week on research
Communicate progress to all committee members at least once per semester

End of 1st Week:

Attend graduate student research administrative meeting with program staff

End of 6th Week:

Submit a draft of the research paper to the PI

End of 7th Week:

Contact the Forensic Science Program Academic Program Coordinator to schedule research presentation date/time

End of 10th Week:

Submit a revised draft of the research paper to the committee members

End of 12th Week:

Committee members will respond to research paper draft

End of Second Week in April:

Present the research findings orally in a public forum attended by the PI, committee members, fellow graduate students, undergraduate students, faculty and staff.

End of 14th Week:

Submit a final draft of the research paper to the committee members.

End of 15th Week:

Submit Research Presentation Approval form (signed by PI and all committee members) to the Forensic Science Program Academic Program Coordinator.

Submit Research Paper Approval form (signed by PI and all committee members) and a copy of the final research paper to the Forensic Science Program Academic Program Coordinator.

Failure to submit both completed forms will result in a DF grade in FRNSC 894 and the student will not be approved to graduate at the end of the spring semester. This may delay graduation until the summer or fall.

TRAVEL AND EXPENDITURE POLICIES

Travel Policies

Students are encouraged to present at and attend conferences and meetings for professional development and educational purposes. The program has some money available to help students pay for expenses related to conferences, such as airfare or mileage reimbursement, hotel, registration fees, and per diem that covers the cost of meals. Budget allowing, the

program tries to provide up to \$1000 of qualified expenses for a student who is presenting at a conference or up to \$500 for student is attending but not presenting. Note that this amount is not guaranteed; it is simply the historic standard the program has tried to maintain. The amounts may differ from year to year based on budget availability and other factors.

Requesting Travel Funds

Before making any travel expenditures, students must contact the program Administrative Assistant, Tara Wales. Penn State has specific protocols for how certain travel arrangements need to be made, and failure to adhere to those protocols could result in a student not being reimbursed for expenses already paid, or not getting certain elements of their travel expenditures paid in advance by the program.

At least 60 days before the first day of the anticipated travel, students must contact the program Administrative Assistant, Tara Wales, and inform her of their intent to travel for a conference. At that time, Tara will provide a travel checklist and go over the university approved procedures for booking airfare, hotel reservations, how to figure out per diem, and any other costs that might be associated with student travel. Once the student has determined the approximate cost of the anticipated travel, they need to share their expected budget with Tara, who will then take it to the Program Director for approval. The Program Director has final say on the amount of funds they are willing to offer a student to aid with their travel expenses. Note that this amount may only cover some of the proposed travel expenditure; in some cases, no money may be available for student travel. Once an amount has been approved by the Director, Tara will contact the student with the amount. If the student would like help booking the travel, especially any portions being covered by the program, Tara can assist with that – possibly even paying for some expenditures with a program p-card.

Paying for Travel and/or Getting Reimbursed

Some (or all) expenses may need to be paid by the student before or during travel. If you spend any money on travel associated with the university, you must obtain itemized receipts for reimbursement. These receipts should be submitted to Tara within a week upon completion of travel. Failure to obtain and submit itemized receipts in a timely manner may lead to the Finance Office refusing to reimburse the requested expenses.

University policy does not allow for any travel costs to be reimbursed until after the travel has taken place. If a student purchases airline tickets and books a hotel room on their personal credit card months in advance of the conference, they will not be reimbursed for those costs until after they return home from traveling. From the point of providing receipts and paperwork to Tara, it can take up to six months for reimbursements to go through the Finance Office, especially if receipts are not in order. Students should take this into account if booking travel arrangements with their personal funds.

PSU Travel Policies

Before making arrangements for your travel, please take a moment to review the university guidelines at these links <https://policy.psu.edu/policies/tr01> and <https://policy.psu.edu/policies/tr02>.

Travel Checklist

This is an example of the travel checklist students will obtain from the Administrative Assistant, Tara Wales, upon their initial visit. Students should not start the travel process without reaching out to Tara first.

Travel Checklist

✉ 5W Form

- ☐ Mention Per Diem
- ☐ Include the name of the budget to be used if known
- ☐ Conference Program with Dates
- ☐ Additional documentation may be required if you do not book with Anthony Travel, or you do not fly out of SCE

✉ Receipts - RECEIPTS MUST SHOW PROOF OF PURCHASE

- ☐ Airline Receipts
- ☐ Hotel Receipts
- ☐ Conference Registration
- ☐ Rental Car Receipt
- ☐ Poster Printing

✉ Additional

- ☐ Flight Comparison (If you did not fly out of SCE or book with Anthony Travel)
- ☐ List additional funding sources from PI if applicable
- ☐ If you are splitting costs with others and transfer money (Venmo, Zelle, etc.) you must show that information
- ☐ International Travel ONLY - Register through Global Safety Network (GSN) before you travel <https://gsn.psu.edu/>

Expense Approval/Request Form

Date Form Completed:	
Person Completing Form:	
Budget Name:	

Was Purchasing Card Used: Yes No

If Yes, Name of PCard Holder: _____

Who is Getting Reimbursed:
What Was Purchased:
When Purchase/Travel Occurred:
Where Event Occurred/Destination:
Why Needed or Purchased (Business Purpose):
Amount:
Additional Information:

Eberly College of Science Graduate Handbook Addendum

This addendum serves as a reference tool for graduate students, faculty, and staff within the Eberly College of Science. It consolidates the core Penn State Graduate Council policies that all graduate program handbooks are required to include or reference, as outlined in [GCAC-202](#). Each graduate program should use this addendum to supplement its own handbook of degree-specific procedures, timelines, and advising structures to ensure clarity and alignment for students, graduate faculty, and staff.

Students are governed by the handbook in effect at the time of their matriculation.

Programs must retain previous editions until all students from that cohort have graduated or left the program.

Eberly College of Science Resources for Graduate Students

Student Organizations

- [Graduate Women in Science \(GWIS\)](#)
- [National Organization for the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers \(NOBCCChE\)](#)
- [Out in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics \(oSTEM\)](#)
- [Physics and Astronomy for Women+](#)
- [Multicultural Engineering Graduate Association](#)
- [Society of Asian Scientists and Engineers](#)
- [Towards a More Inclusive Science \(TaMIS\)](#)

Financial aid

- [Eberly College of Science - Student Emergency Fund Request](#)
- [Student Care & Advocacy](#)

Fox Graduate School and University Resources

General Support

- [Graduate Student Resource Library](#)
- [University Libraries](#)
- [Office of the Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Fox Graduate School](#)

Academic Resources

- [Fox Graduate School Academic Resources](#)
- [Thesis and Dissertation Requirements](#)
- [Graduate Writing Center](#)
- [Graduate School Ombudsperson](#)
- [Student Concerns and Grievance Procedures](#)

Career and Professional Development

- [Graduate Exhibition](#)
- [Three Minute Thesis Competition](#)

Funding and Financial Support

- [Financial Aid Including Office of Student Aid](#)
- Research and Conference Travel Funding Opportunities
 - [International Travel Grants](#)

Health and Well-being

- [Student Health Insurance \(SHIP\)](#)
- [Graduate Student Parental Leave](#)
- [Mental Health Support](#)
- [Child Care Resources](#)
- [Students in Crisis](#)

Support for Special Populations

- [Adult Learner Programs](#)
- [Student Disability Resources](#)
- International Student
 - [Penn State Global ISSA](#)
 - [English for Professional Purposes Intercultural Center \(EPPIC\)](#) – *support for language skills*
- [Military Student Support](#)

Clubs and Organizations

- [Graduate and Professional Student Association \(GPSA\)](#)
- [Discover Graduate Student Organizations](#)

Graduation Deadlines

- [Academic Dates and Deadlines](#)

Fox Graduate School and University Standards

- [Satisfactory Scholarship – GCAC-404](#)
- [Scholarship and Research Integrity \(SARI\)](#)

Doctoral Degree Milestones

- [Qualifying Examination – Research Doctorate – GCAC-604](#)
- [English Competence – Research Doctorate – GCAC-605](#)
- [Comprehensive Examination – Research Doctorate – GCAC-606](#)
- [Final Oral Examination – Research Doctorate – GCAC-608](#)
- [Dissertation Requirements – GCAC-607](#)
- [Time Limits – Research Doctorate – GCAC-610](#)

Master's Degree Milestones

- [Culminating Experience – Research Master's – GCAC-642](#)
- [Culminating Experience – Professional Master's – GCAC-742](#)
- [Time Limits – Research Master's – GCAC-632](#)
- [Time Limits – Professional Master's – GCAC-732](#)

Professional Doctorate Milestones

- [Qualifying Examination – Professional Doctorate – GCAC-704](#)
- [English Competence – Professional Doctorate – GCAC-705](#)
- [Culminating Experience – Professional Doctorate – GCAC-707](#)
- [Time Limits – Professional Doctorate – GCAC-708](#)

Degree Program Structures

- [Dual-Title Graduate Degree Programs – GCAC-208](#)
- [Integrated Undergraduate-Graduate \(IUG\) Programs – GCAC-210](#)
- [Joint Degree Programs – GCAC-211](#)