

MD/PhD Programs

The typical program of study includes the first two years of the medical school basic sciences curriculum, followed by three or more years of graduate school and thesis research, and then the final two years in clinical clerkships. M.D./Ph.D. program length varies between schools, but the current average time to graduation from start to finish in MSTPs is 7-8 years.

M.D./Ph.D. admissions

The fraction of M.D./Ph.D. applicants is typically very small relative to those not pursuing a combined degree. At most schools, M.D./Ph.D. applicants go through the normal AMCAS medical application process and designate their desire to pursue an M.D./Ph.D. Applicants must then complete a secondary M.D./Ph.D. application, which includes essays about their research experience and their desire to pursue a research career, and should include letter(s) from those who can assess the applicant's potential for a career in research. Interview arrangements vary between programs, with some providing airfare, hotel accommodations, meals, and planned activities. M.D./Ph.D. applicants typically have more interviews at each school than those pursuing the standard M.D. pathway. Most are still in person, even though MD admissions interviews at many schools are now virtual. Many unique factors come into play when making a decision on which M.D./Ph.D. program to attend. There is considerable variation among programs in many aspects of the application process.

MSTP Programs

Medical Scientist Training Programs (MSTP) are M.D./Ph.D. programs offered by a number of United States medical schools with funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), to promote training of more physician scientists for biomedical research, particularly "translational" or "bench to bedside" research. Admission to MSTPs is highly competitive, with only about 600 positions available nationwide each year (compared to >23,000 MD-only and another >8,000 DO positions). Candidates must have outstanding academic records (average Science GPA 3.78) and MCAT scores (average 516); research experience is very helpful. MSTP awards cover tuition expenses, give travel and supply allowances, and provide an annual stipend (ranging from ~\$33,000 to over \$47,000). There are currently 58 individual MSTPs at 53 participating institutions.

Non-MSTP MD/PhD and DO/PhD programs

More than 60 allopathic (MD) and osteopathic (DO) schools without NIH MSTP grants maintain their own MD/PhD or DO/PhD programs, sometimes offering full or partial student financial support funded by the schools themselves. Additionally, several medical schools allow for the PhD portion of an MD/PhD to be completed at an allied institution. The most famous of these is the Harvard-MIT program; in our region, the University of Colorado Medical School in Denver and CU Boulder have such a program (in addition to MD/PhDs that can be completed entirely at the medical school in Denver). Further information is available at the Association of American Medical Colleges [here](#) and at [AAMC MD-PhD Dual Degree Training](#). The [NIH](#) also awards individual stipends to students at schools without MSTP programs.

UW MD/PhD Program (MSTP)

The Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP) at the University of Washington is designed for highly qualified candidates who wish to obtain both M.D. and Ph.D. degrees and to pursue careers in basic medical research. Selection for this program is national in scope and is not restricted to residents of Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho. Applicants must be US citizens or currently hold permanent resident status.

About 8-13 MSTP trainees are accepted per year from ~600 applicants. Potential trainees are interviewed by a single MSTP committee for acceptance to both the School of Medicine and to the Graduate School for the Ph.D. degree. Each trainee is permitted a wide choice of research specializations from among numerous disciplines and interdisciplinary areas of biomedical research. The typical program is 7-8 years in duration and emphasizes continuity of both clinical and basic science exposure. Stipend levels change frequently. In 2024-2025, all students receive \$47,004 annual stipend; in addition, tuition waivers and health insurance are paid for.

Among the participating departments are Biochemistry, Bioengineering, Biological Structure, Biomedical Informatics and Medical Education, Biostatistics, Chemistry, Epidemiology, Genome Sciences, Global Health, Immunology, Microbiology, Molecular and Cellular Biology, Neuroscience, Pathology, Pharmacology, Physics, Physiology and Biophysics, and the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center.

Medical Scientist Training Program Application

The Medical Scientist Training Program application is available to all qualified U.S. applicants. After the UW School of Medicine receives the AMCAS application, applicants must submit an MSTP preliminary application by visiting the MSTP website: <https://mstp.washington.edu/mstp-admissions/how-to-apply/>. AMCAS applications must be submitted by the October 1st deadline. Applicants must list their interest in the UW MD/PhD program. All UW MSTP applications must be complete (including supplemental materials) by Dec. 15, 2025. Contact the MSTP office mstp@uw.edu with questions.

UW MSTP Schedule and Curriculum Overview:

- Academic year 1 (starts mid-July): Medical school year 1 with an additional course on Translational Research
 - Summer after year 1: Lab rotation(s)
 - Academic year 2, Fall: Medical school year 2 coursework
 - January-March of year 2: study for and take USMLE Step 1, then begin PhD studies
 - Years 3 to 6: PhD research. PhD may be awarded at the end of this period
 - Years 7 and 8: Medical school clerkships. MD is awarded at the end of this period.
- Typical time in the program is 8 years