

MERCER UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Master of Science in Preclinical Sciences Program Manual

2024 - 2025



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Please refer to the Mercer University Student Handbook and the Mercer University School of Medicine (MUSM) Student Handbook for the Honor Code, standards of conduct, institutional policies, and resources for students. Master of Science in Preclinical Sciences (MSPCS) students must acknowledge their understanding of the contents of these handbooks as well as the MSPCS Program Manual prior to beginning classes at Mercer. The electronic versions of the documents are available on the following webpages.

Mercer University Student Handbook and MUSM Student Handbook
<https://provost.mercer.edu/handbooks/studenthandbook.cfm>

MSPCS Program Manual
<http://medicine.mercer.edu/student-services/handbook/>

Students are responsible for adhering to all current Mercer University COVID-19 protocols posted at: <https://www.mercer.edu/coronavirus/>

MUSM Administration and Community Directory

Dean's Office

Jean Sumner, M.D., Dean
Edwin Grimsley, M.D., Sr. Associate Dean, Macon Campus
Tiffany N. Borel, Administrative Assistant to the Dean.....478-301-4022

Academic Affairs

Stephanie Beavers, M.D., Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.....478-301-5861
Casie Bridges, Instructional Technologist.....478-301-5863
Misty Cline, Academic Success Counselor.....478-301-4108

Admissions

Richard McCann, Ph.D., Associate Dean of Admissions.....478-301-4066
Bridget McDowell, Coordinator of Admissions.....478-301-5424
Tracy Lancaster, Coordinator of Admissions.....478-301-5423

Financial Planning

Susan Lumsden, Director of Financial Planning.....478-301-2539
Carole L. Porch, Administrative Coordinator.....478-301-2512

Registrar

Priscilla Hicks, Registrar.....478-301-4053
Denise A Fraser, Assistant Registrar478-301-5137

Student Affairs

Candi James, M.D., Associate Dean of Student Affairs.....478-301-2531
Sandra Bourdon, Student Affairs Specialist.....478-301-2652

Mercer University Offices & Services

MUSM Library478-301-4056
Bear Card Office478-301-2929
Bookstore.....478-301-2945
Counseling & Psychological Services478-301-2862
Information Technology Help Desk478-301-7000
Office of International Programs.....478-301-2573
Student Health478-301-2696

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

On-campus Emergency Number478-301-2911
Mercer Police (MERPO).....478-301-2970
MUSM Crisis Support Line (24 hours).....888-291-5802
Community Crisis Line (24 hours)478-745-9292
Macon Police478-751-7500
Mercer Medicine (24 hours)478-301-4111
Atrium/Navicent Health, Information.....478-633-1000

Mercer University Online Directory <http://apps.mercer.edu/directory/>

Master of Science Program directory

Department of Biomedical Sciences Administration

Christy Bridges, Ph.D.
Interim Chair and Professor of Histology
Office: East 48
Phone: 478-301-2086
Email: bridges_cc@mercer.edu

Master of Science Program Administration and Faculty

James Drummond, Ph.D.
Director, Master of Science in Preclinical Sciences Program
Associate Professor of Microbiology
Course Director, BMS 623 & 611 & 622
Office: West 86
Phone: 478-301-4044
Email: drummond_j@mercer.edu

Pamela Noble
Administrative Coordinator – MS Programs
Office: East 49
Phone: 478-301-4047
Email: noble_pg@mercer.edu

TBD
Associate Professor of Physiology
Course Director, BMS 620
Office: TBD
Phone: TBD
Email: TBD

Brad Lian Ph.D.
Associate Professor/Interim Chair Community Medicine
Course Director, BMS 624
Office: 2031
Phone: 478-301-4097
Email: lian_be@mercer.edu

Angabin Matin, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Biochemistry
Course Director, BMS 612
Office: East 51
Phone: 478-301-5128
Email: matin_a@mercer.edu

Manish Mishra, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Biochemistry
Course Director, BMS 610
Office: East 55
Phone: 478-301-2513
Email: mishra_m@mercer.edu

Iuliia Zhuravlova, M.D./Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Anatomy & Embryology
Course Director, BMS 621
Office: East 59
Phone: 478-301-4001
Email: zhuravlova_i@mercer.edu

Program Description

The Master of Science in Preclinical Sciences (MSPCS) Program is a 32-week curriculum composed of 31 credit hours of biomedical sciences that are foundational to the practice of clinical medicine and the development of biomedical research. The MSPCS prepares its graduates for careers in science teaching, academic laboratory research, publishing or policy-making and for the pursuit of advanced research degrees in biomedical sciences or professional degrees in healthcare and clinical medicine. The MSPCS competencies for its graduates are their ability to demonstrate an understanding of fundamental scientific knowledge that is the basis for medicine and research and to display critical thinking skills in the application of that knowledge. These outcomes will be achieved through studies in seven courses covering topics in anatomy, biochemistry, molecular and cellular biology, embryology, genetics, histology, immunology, microbiology, physiology, and virology. The Program culminates for each student with a 'capstone' experience that exercises the student's critical thinking about and communication of biomedical sciences, which are skills necessary in advanced graduate-level studies and in scientific research, writing, or education careers.

Admissions Information

The current admissions requirements and instructions are available at:

<http://medicine.mercer.edu/admissions/preclinical/admissions>

- The MSPCS Program admits for fall enrollment annually.
- A non-refundable fee is due when the application is submitted
- All required materials must be received for an application file to be considered complete and eligible for review. Each applicant will be notified by email when the application file is complete. Only complete application files will be reviewed.
- The MSPCS Admissions Committee will evaluate each applicant holistically based on their academic record, test scores, personal qualities and personal goals. During the application review, applicants may be contacted for a phone interview, or asked to provide additional information.
- Complete applications are reviewed on a rolling basis. The rolling review process may continue until the application cycle ends. Applicants will be notified of admissions decisions by email.
- Accepted applicants are required to submit a \$50 non-refundable deposit to Mercer University School of Medicine to hold their spot in the program. The fee will be applied to tuition upon enrollment. If an applicant submits a deposit and decides not to enroll in the fall, the deposit will be forfeited. All deposits must be submitted according to the deadline stated in the applicant's acceptance email.

Academic Information

Registration

All students are required to register for courses by the deadline provided in the Graduate Program calendar or in official notices issued by the Office of the Registrar at the School of Medicine. Official Program enrollment, which includes the completion of a satisfactory arrangement for financial payments, is required for course registration and class attendance. Each enrolling student must complete course registration through their MyMercer account. The fall enrollment deposit will be applied to the student's fall semester tuition. Registration financially commits a student to MSPCS Program courses and the corresponding Program fees. A registered student who is unable to attend classes must notify the Registrar of the School of Medicine in writing prior to the first day of class. If a student decides not to attend the Program, the deposit paid by the student to secure fall enrollment is forfeited. A student who registers after the official registration period is required to pay a \$25.00 late fee.

Course Numbering System

The numbering system for graduate courses in the MSPCS Program is the prefix BMS followed by three digits at the 600 level. For example: BMS 610.

Enrollment

Full-time enrollment in the Program is fifteen (15) semester hours of BMS courses in the fall and sixteen (16) semester hours of BMS courses in the spring. No part-time enrollment will be considered. Matriculating students are expected to enroll for the full-time academic load. Full-

time enrollment is required for Financial Aid (see *Satisfactory Academic Progress for Financial Aid* on pg. 14). The BMS courses listed below are available only to MS degree-seeking students matriculating in the MSPCS and MS in Biomedical Sciences Programs.

Mercer University Honor Code and Graduate Honor System

Students are to uphold the Mercer University Honor Code and will be held accountable for violations of the Honor Code in accordance with the policies and procedures of the Graduate Honor System. The Honor Code and Graduate Honor System can be found in the [MUSM Student Handbook](#). Honor Code violations (as defined in the MUSM Student Handbook) may result in immediate dismissal from the MSPCS Program.

Curriculum

Total Semester Hours.....31 credit hours

Required Courses.....31 credit hours

Fall Semester (15 credit hours)

- BMS 610 Biochemistry and Molecular Genetics
- BMS 612 Molecular Cell Biology
- BMS 622 Microbial Pathogenesis

Spring Semester (16 credit hours)

- BMS 611 Human Immunity
- BMS 620 Human Physiology
- BMS 621 Human Development

Required elective (select one of the following):

- BMS 623 Preclinical Sciences Capstone
- BMS 624 Biomedical Sciences in Rural Health Research

Course Descriptions

BMS 610: Biochemistry and Molecular Genetics (5 credit hours)

The goal for the instruction in biochemistry and molecular genetics is for students to understand the chemical and biomolecular composition of the human body, the importance of buffering and solute concentrations in physiological function, the metabolic processes that provide energy to sustain tissue viability, the structure and dynamics of genetic material, the regulation of gene expression, and the principles of genetic inheritance. This learning goal will be achieved by students through problem-solving in the classroom, discussion of medical case scenarios, and analysis of the biochemistry and genetics research literature.

BMS 611: Human Immunity (5 credit hours)

The goal for the instruction in the human immune system is for students to understand the development and organization of the human immune system, the genetic and molecular mechanisms of immunity, the role of inflammation in immunity, the initiation and detection of

immune responses, and the use of vaccines to support human immunity. This learning goal will be achieved by students through problem-solving in the classroom, discussion of medical case scenarios, and analysis of the immunology research literature.

BMS 612: Molecular Cell Biology (5 credit hours)

The goal for the instruction in molecular cellular biology is for students to understand the fundamental structure of human cells, the function of intracellular organelles, the dynamics of organelles in different cell types, the cellular interactions within tissues to support tissue function, and the biomolecular interactions required for cellular function. This learning goal will be achieved by students through a combination of interactive lectures, problem-solving in the classroom, discussion of medical case scenarios, and analysis of the molecular biology and cell biology research literature.

BMS 620: Human Physiology (5 credit hours)

The goal for the instruction in human physiology is for students to develop an understanding of the function of the human body, building upon their prior knowledge of human biology, physics, chemistry and mathematics. This course deals with body fluid compartments and body systems organization and function, with special emphasis on the nervous, cardiovascular, respiratory, and urinary systems. Students will examine the concepts of homeostasis and regulatory mechanisms as they are applied in the various body functions. The learning goal will be achieved through a combination of interactive lectures, group discussions, problem-solving exercises, and medical case-based activities. (prerequisites – BMS 610, 622 and 612)

BMS 621: Human Development (5 credit hours)

The goal for the instruction in human development is for students to understand the process of human development, the determinants of embryonic development, the differentiation and organization of cells into functional tissues and organs, the maternal contribution to embryonic and fetal development, the environmental and physiological risks to human development, and the basic functional anatomy of the human body. This learning goal will be achieved by students through classroom discussion, interaction with animated programs depicting developmental processes, histological analysis of human tissues, and observation of human cadavers and plastinated models of human tissues. (prerequisites – BMS 610 and 612)

BMS 622: Microbial Pathogenesis (5 credit hours)

The goal for the instruction in microbial pathogenesis is for students to understand the structural and genetic differences between human cells, bacteria, fungi, parasites and viruses, the variations in structure among members of pathogenic species, the metabolic and genetic properties of microbes that facilitate their adaptation to different environments, the commensal relationship between humans and microbes, the mechanisms of microbial and viral pathogenesis, and the basic laboratory culture conditions and tests for human microbial pathogens. This learning goal will be achieved by students through problem-solving in the classroom and discussion of medical cases and research literature that illustrate clinical application of microbiology principles.

BMS 623: Preclinical Sciences Capstone (1 credit hour)

The goal for the course is for students to apply their scientific knowledge in critical thinking through composition and oral presentation. Students will select a topic in biotechnology or scientific research, review current literature, and author a dissertation that surveys the current knowledge of the topic and expounds on questions that could lead to scientific advancement and medical application of the research. The instructional time will provide students with information on how to format their composition, how to search the scientific literature and databases, how to analyze scientific papers, and how to properly cite resources in their compositions. Independent work is expected. Students in the course will be expected to prepare an oral presentation to be delivered during the latter half of the course. Oral presentations and compositions will be evaluated by a panel of faculty and peers who will utilize a rubric to determine student achievement of the course objectives and the program competencies. (prerequisites – BMS 610, 612 and 622)

BMS 624. Biomedical Sciences in Rural Health Research (1 credit hour)

The goal of the course is for students to participate in community-based research in rural communities and apply biomedical sciences concepts toward understanding the cause of disease or the delivery of effective health care in rural areas. Students will learn methodology for collecting and analyzing research data on rural health conditions and will engage in data analysis. Independent work is expected. Students in the course will be expected to prepare a composition and an oral presentation to be delivered during the latter half of the course. Oral presentations and compositions will be evaluated by a panel of faculty and peers who will utilize a rubric to determine student achievement of the course objective and the program competencies. The instructional time will provide students with information on how to perform rural health research, search scientific literature and rural health databases, properly cite resources, and interpret epidemiological and statistical data. (Prerequisites – instructor permission for enrollment, BMS 610, 612 and 622)

MSPCS PROGRAM STUDENTS CANNOT ATTEND COURSE MEETINGS OR ANY OTHER ACADEMIC SESSIONS CONDUCTED FOR M.D. PROGRAM STUDENTS. MSPCS STUDENTS CANNOT ENTER THE M.D. PROGRAM TUTORIAL ROOM HALLWAY OR ANATOMY LABORATORY EVEN IF THEY ARE INVITED BY A MEDICAL STUDENT.

Course Requirements

Students must purchase access to a version (print or electronic) of the textbook for each course. Additionally, the examination process for all courses in the MSPCS Program requires that students have access to a laptop computer. Students are required to provide their own laptop computer as part of the materials required for each course in the Program.

The computer must meet the specifications needed to run ExamSoft Exemplify software. The latest minimum system requirements may be found through links available on the Mercer ExamSoft login page. Students should refer to these requirements when considering an operating system upgrade or the purchase of a new computer. Students are required to download and install Exemplify and to install upgrades of the Exemplify software, as they are released by ExamSoft, and to contact ExamSoft support for problems with installing or running the software on their computers. Instructions for Exemplify download and installation will be provided through an email from ExamSoft when student Exemplify accounts are created.

Tablets and iPads cannot be used for examinations.

Mercer ExamSoft login page: <https://ei.ExamSoft.com/GKWeb/login/mercermed>

Class Attendance

Although it is recognized that absences will sometimes be necessary, students are expected to attend classes. Course Directors will state specific attendance requirements in the syllabi for their courses. It is the responsibility of students to be cognizant of their own record of absences and to consult the Course Directors and instructors regarding work missed. **The decision to permit students to make up work rests with the Course Director. Absences will negatively impact grades that are based on participation during scheduled in-class activities, such as team-based learning exercises, since this work cannot be performed, as designed, outside of the context of the classroom.** The Course Director has the right to assign a grade of 'F' for any attendance and participation portion of the course grade when a student habitually violates the attendance policy specified in the course syllabus. Students receiving federal financial aid are required to attend class on a regular basis.

Program Communication

Students will receive notifications, instructions, and assignments through their Mercer email accounts and the Canvas learning management system (LMS). Students are responsible for checking their Mercer email daily and immediately reporting problems with access to their Mercer account or to Canvas, unless Mercer Information Technology has previously notified all Mercer users of limited access to these systems. **Students are expected to obtain information and to complete assignments posted on Canvas in a timely manner, as instructed by the Program faculty or staff.** Problems with Canvas or email access should be reported by email to the Mercer IT Helpdesk at helpdesk@mercer.edu. Course directors and instructors will provide specific details regarding communication expectations for their courses in their course syllabi.

MSPCS LINKAGE PROGRAM

As part of Mercer University School of Medicine (MUSM), students accepted to our Master of Science in Preclinical Sciences (MSPCS) program and interested in attending the Doctor of Medicine (MD) program offered by MUSM can take advantage of the MSPCS linkage agreement. The Linkage Agreement allows eligible students enrolled in the MSPCS program to have an MD interview opportunity. **This does not guarantee acceptance into the MD program.**

Requirements

MSPCS students interested in the Linkage Program must attend a mandatory information session. Details will be emailed during the Fall semester of your MSPCS program. Interested MSPCS students must meet all general [MUSM Eligibility Criteria](#) for admission to the MD program, including [residency requirements](#). Please note, this is the minimum requirement to establish legal residency to be eligible to apply. Established residency alone does not demonstrate a commitment to the School's mission to meet the primary care and health care needs of rural and underserved areas of Georgia. Successful applicants will generally have significant roots (e.g., residential, family, personal, professional) in Georgia.

In order to be offered an interview with MUSM’s admissions committee, MSPCS students must complete their first semester with a GPA of 3.5 or higher. The interview will be for matriculation to MUSM’s MD program for the following fall semester.

If accepted into the MD program after the first semester of the MSPCS program, the MSPCS student must successfully complete and graduate from the MSPCS program in order to matriculate into the MD program.

Application Process

The MSPCS student should apply to the MD program through the application process outlined on the [MUSM admissions webpage](#). When applying, MSPCS students must apply through the “Regular Pool” admissions process. *Any Early Decision applicants would not have grades from the MSPCS program before the Early Decision deadlines.* The MSPCS student must complete all components/requirements of the MD application within the [Regular Pool application deadlines](#)

Program Course Examination Policies

The Program Director will communicate all policies regarding examination procedures and will notify students about updates to exam policies through their Mercer email accounts. Students are expected to adhere to these policies for all examinations administered in the program. Course Directors may alter testing room protocol as needed.

Grading System

Grades within a course will be assigned on a 100-point scale and the final grade will be converted to a letter grade. The final course letter grades will then be converted to a 4-point scale for determining the overall GPA for the Program.

Grading Scales		
<u>Letter</u>	<u>100-point</u>	<u>4-point</u>
A	90-100	4.0
B+	86-89	3.5
B	80-85	3.0
C+	76-79	2.5
C	70-75	2.0
F	below 70	0.0

Degree-seeking students enrolled in graduate courses will receive letter grades for all graduate work. The grading of “Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory” are not options for graduate students.

The following grading marks may be used when students do not complete courses within the curriculum, do not perform all required activities in courses, or elect to withdraw from courses. A grade of AU is not applicable for the MSPCS Program, because students cannot audit courses.

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Interpretation</u>
ABX	Excused absence from exam
AU	Audit
IC	Incomplete

IP	In Progress
W	Withdrawal
Z	Grade not reported

A grade of IP is awarded only in a graduate practicum or in research project courses, which may extend beyond the end of a semester. A student is expected to finish "in progress" work based on the timetable established by the professor issuing the IP grade, and, at the latest, by the course withdrawal deadline of the semester after the IP was earned. If the student does not complete the required work within the time specified, the grade automatically converts to an F.

The grade of ABX denotes that a student was absent from an examination because of illness or another valid and compelling reason deemed satisfactory by the professor. A makeup exam must be completed by the course withdrawal deadline of the semester after the ABX was earned. If the student does not complete the required work within the time specified, the grade automatically converts to an F.

The grade of IC Indicates that a relatively small part of the semester's course work remains incomplete, because of a student's sickness or reasons satisfactory to the professor. The work must be completed by a course director appointed time, but no later than the course withdrawal deadline of the semester after the IC was earned. If the student does not complete the required work within the time specified, the grade automatically converts to an F.

The grade of W (withdrawal) indicates that a student officially withdrew from a course on or before the last day for course withdrawals as designated in the current. Withdrawals are not used when computing grade point averages.

Withdrawal Procedure

An official withdrawal occurs only if a student completes the withdrawal process on or before the withdrawal deadline date for the semester (*Academic Year Calendar at end of document*). A student cannot be registered for a partial course load in the MSPCS Program. A withdrawal is for all semester courses. To complete official withdrawal, a student must meet with the MSPCS Program Director to discuss the withdrawal, and then he/she/they must complete the Online Withdrawal Form through their MyMercer account. If the student elects to discontinue class attendance and does not complete the withdrawal process by the deadline, a grade of F will be recorded for each course and the student will be ineligible for re-enrollment in the MSPCS Program. A student **cannot** attend classes after their official withdrawal.

Program and Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback to the School of Medicine regarding their experience in the MSPCS Program and its courses. In evaluating the Program, students will provide feedback on Program administration, organization, and goals. In evaluating courses, students will evaluate Course Directors and instructors, textbooks, and class assignments and activities. Anonymous feedback will be gathered from students in the form of surveys administered at the end of each semester. Students are expected to be professional and constructive when providing comments. Student responses to surveys are essential in improving and maintaining the quality of MSPCS education.

Letters of Recommendation

Students may seek 'verifications of enrollment', 'Academic Progress Reports', and Letters of Recommendation to support their applications to professional schools and other graduate programs. Letters to verify MSPCS enrollment may be obtained from the MSPCS Program Director after the first day of classes for the fall semester. After the fall withdrawal deadline, the MSPCS Program Director may agree to provide an 'Academic Progress Report' to support students who have at least a 'B' average in each course at that time. These reports will be submitted through an 'individual letter' request from the professional program application submission system.

Letters of Recommendation are only written for students who have completed the coursework for the MSPCS Program. Letters should be requested from individual faculty **BEFORE** the date of the graduation ceremony. Faculty may request meetings with students after graduation, but initial contact with faculty must occur before graduation. Students must provide the letter writer with the appropriate information for submitting the letters through letter collection services, such as Interfolio, or application systems, such as AMCAS, AACOMAS, CAS, and AADSAS. Letter updates for subsequent admissions cycles may be provided at the discretion of the letter writer. The MSPCS Program does not offer a Committee Letter.

The Program Director or faculty may be asked to serve as a reference for job applications or shadowing opportunities.

Academic standards and Advising

The Program Director will assign a faculty member to serve as an academic advisor to each enrolled student. Students will meet their academic advisor during the first week of fall classes. The academic advisor will have access to the student's academic records and will provide academic and career guidance to the student throughout the Program. The advisor may consult with course directors and the Program Director to discuss issues affecting a student's academic performance and to offer recommendations to the student about study skills. Students also may seek study skills and strategies advisement from the Academic Success Counselor. The academic status of the student is based on the academic performance standards as outlined below. Academic advisors and the Academic Success Counselors keep the academic information of the student and any personal information shared by the student in confidence. An academic advisor may recommend additional personal and academic support for students (refer to the Mercer University and MUSM Student Handbooks for support resources). If a student's academic advisor feels that the student is under duress, the academic advisor will consult the Program Director, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, and/or Mercer Counseling and Psychological Services for guidance in the best interest of the student. Any faculty member will directly contact the Mercer Campus Police, if a student appears to pose an immediate threat to himself/herself/themselves or the University community.

Academic Performance Standards

A student seeking the MS degree should complete all Program requirements within the two-semester academic calendar of the Program as a full-time student. The maximum amount of time between initial enrollment in the Program and completion of degree requirements is four consecutive fall and spring semesters. **Students should meet with the Program Director and make timely decisions about enrollment if circumstances outside of the academic program are affecting their academic performance.** **Students who fail to meet the**

academic standards for the fall semester, for the MS degree, or for repeating courses (see below) will not be approved for additional time in the MSPCS Program.

The academic status of the student is determined by academic performance in terms of course grades and cumulative grade point average (GPA). A student is in good academic standing within a course as long as their examination scores remain at a letter grade of “C” or above. **When a student receives an examination grade of below “C” in a course, he/she/they must meet with the course director to discuss their academic progress and a plan to improve their performance in the course.** Course directors report all student exam scores to the Program Director. Notifications of changes in academic status will be issued to students by email from the Program Director. Final course grades below “C” do not count toward the Master of Science in Preclinical Sciences degree and will result in dismissal from the MSPCS Program.

In addition to the course grade requirement, a student must also achieve a fall semester GPA of 2.5 or above to remain enrolled in the MSPCS Program. A student failing to achieve a GPA of at least 2.5 for the fall semester will be dismissed and will not be eligible to take additional classes in the Program. A student who is dismissed from the Program for academic reasons will not be considered for re-admission to the Program as an applicant.

Summary of Academic Standards

Academic Caution	Below “C” in one exam	Fall GPA 2.81 - 3.0
Academic Warning	Two or more “C” in one or more subject exams	Fall GPA 2.5 - 2.8
Academic Exclusion	Any course grade below “C” OR →	Fall GPA < 2.5
No Graduation		Final GPA < 3.0
Graduation		Final GPA > 3.0
Repeat of courses (Max. of 2)	GPA > 3.0 in Fall or Spring AND →	Final GPA >2.76 and <3.0

Academic Caution

A student will be notified by email that they have been placed on ‘academic caution’ following their first examination grade below “C” in a course. Within one week of the email notification, the student must schedule a meeting with the course director to discuss their performance in the course. The student remains under ‘academic caution’ until he/she/they completes all semester courses with a final grade of “C” or above.

A student with a fall semester GPA of 2.81 – 3.0 is considered to be in jeopardy of not meeting the GPA requirement for the MS degree, because he/she/they must achieve a much higher GPA in the 16-credit-hour spring semester. A student with a fall semester GPA of 2.81 – 3.0 will be notified that he/she has been placed under ‘academic caution’ and must meet with the Program Director during the first week of the spring semester. The student will remain under ‘academic caution’ until the completion of the Program unless subsequent poor academic performance results in ‘academic warning’.

Academic Warning

A student will be notified by email that they have been placed on ‘academic warning’ following their second examination grade of below “C” during a semester. The two

deficient exam grades may be in the same course or in different courses. Within one week of the email notification, the student must schedule meetings with the course director and the Program Director. The student remains under 'academic warning' until they complete all semester courses with a final grade of "C" or above.

A student with a fall semester GPA of 2.50 – 2.8 is considered to be in jeopardy of not meeting the GPA requirement for the MS degree, because he/she/they must achieve a much higher GPA in the 16-credit-hour spring semester. A student with a fall semester GPA of 2.50 – 2.8 will be notified that he/she has been placed under 'academic warning' and must meet with the Program Director during the first week of the spring semester. The student will remain under 'academic warning' until completion of the Program coursework. **A student under 'academic caution' for a fall semester GPA of 2.81 – 3.0 will be placed on 'academic warning' following their first examination grade below "C" in a spring semester course.**

Academic Exclusion

A student is under 'academic exclusion' when he or she fails to meet the minimum academic requirements for the degree. **A student who receives a final course grade below "C" or a fall GPA below 2.5 becomes academically ineligible to achieve the Master of Science in Preclinical Sciences degree due to failure to meet the minimum academic requirements for the degree.** The student will be notified by email that he/she/they has been placed on 'academic exclusion' and has been dismissed from the Program. **The student cannot re-enroll in the Program or continue to attend classes in the Program.**

A student who fails to achieve the final minimum GPA of 3.0 after the completion of all MSPCS courses is ineligible for the MS degree and cannot participate in commencement exercises.

Policy for Repeating Courses

Students who do not achieve a 3.0 final GPA but have a final cumulative GPA of 2.76 or above may file a request to repeat a maximum of two courses for the purpose of improving their cumulative GPA to 3.0 for degree eligibility (see the paragraph below for instructions). An MSPCS student is eligible to repeat courses only if he/she/they has a final cumulative GPA of 2.76 or above, has completed the two-semester program as a full-time student, AND has a GPA of 3.0 or above in one of the two semesters. The MS degree is conferred at the end of the semester in which a cumulative 3.0 GPA is achieved (either December or May). A graduate cannot enroll in additional MSPCS courses after receiving the MS degree. The grade achieved when a course is repeated will replace the previous grade in the cumulative GPA calculation, but both grades received for the course will appear on the student's Mercer transcript.

Students who meet the criteria described above, and wish to repeat courses must email a request to repeat courses to the MSPCS Program Director within 14 days after the May commencement date for the academic year of their enrollment. The email must specify the courses and must include a study plan for achieving improved grades in these courses. The Program Director may request a meeting with the student to discuss the plan before approving the request.

Satisfactory Academic Progress for Financial Aid

Students must maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress in order to receive financial aid. The MUSM Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy is available on the [Financial Aid](#) website.

Degree Application & Audit for May Graduation / Commencement

In March of the spring semester, MSPCS students **must submit an Application for Graduation** to the MUSM Registrar for verification of academic standing and eligibility for participation in commencement. The degree auditing process is initiated from these applications and is a joint responsibility of the Office of the Registrar in the School of Medicine and the program administration to ensure that students are on track for successful completion of the degree program.

Final GPA Check & Recommendation for May Graduation

The Office of the Registrar in the School of Medicine will check final grade point averages and spring semester final course grades to verify graduation eligibility for MSPCS students according to the degree requirements as defined below. Those meeting the degree requirements will be cleared for graduation. The Registrar's Office or the Program Director will notify students, who failed to meet the requirements that they cannot participate in commencement.

Degree Requirements

The MS degree requirements are the completion of all required course work with a minimum, cumulative GPA of 3.0 and with all final course grades of "C" or above. Both academic performance requirements must be met for successful completion of the degree program and awarding of the MS degree.

Clearance for graduation must be granted by the Office of the Registrar.

Participation in Hooding/Commencement Ceremonies

Only students who have completed all Program degree requirements in good academic standing by the end of spring semester will be eligible to participate in hooding or commencement ceremonies.

Diplomas

Diplomas are not distributed during commencement. Diplomas are ordered by the Office of the Registrar in the School of Medicine after all MSPCS degree requirements are met. Diplomas are mailed to the address provided on the Application for Graduation. Graduates should contact the Office of the Registrar with questions about their diploma.

SPECIAL ACADEMIC CIRCUMSTANCES

Student Appeals Process: Grievance Procedures

Students with appeals or grievances should follow the procedures for Academic or Nonacademic Grievances, as described in the respective sections of the Mercer and MUSM Student Handbooks. The Chair of the Department of Biomedical Sciences serves as the next step above the Program Director for MSPCS Academic Grievance and Appeals proceedings.

Testing Accommodations Policy (ACCESS and Accommodations)

Testing accommodations (additional time for exams and/or isolated testing rooms) are available for students according to the *ACCESS and Accommodations* section of the MUSM Student Handbook. Students seeking testing accommodations may initiate the process by approaching the Associate Dean for Student Affairs. The course instructors and Program Director will not grant testing accommodations for students outside of the procedure described in the MUSM Student Handbook.

STUDENT SERVICE AND STUDENT WELLNESS

MSPCS students will serve as representatives on the MUSM Student Council, the Diversity and Inclusion Committee, and the Wellness Program Committee. These opportunities will be discussed at fall orientation. The nominations and elections for these positions will occur during the first week of fall semester classes.

Academic Calendar 2024 - 2025

Mercer University School of Medicine

Master of Science in Preclinical Sciences Program Class of 2025

Fall Semester 2024

August 16	Graduate Student Orientation & Registration
August 19	First day of the semester
August 26	Last day to drop/add/late registration
September 2	Labor Day (no classes)
October 23*	Last day to withdraw/resign
November 21-22	Thanksgiving Holiday (no classes)
December 2-6	Finals week
December 6	Last day of the semester

Spring Semester 2025

January 3	Registration
January 6	First day of the semester
January 15	Martin Luther King Holiday
January 13	Last day to drop/add/late registration
January 31	Application for Spring Graduation Due
March 12*	Last day to withdraw/resign
April 18	Good Friday (no classes)
April 21 - 25	Finals week
April 25	Last day of the semester
May 3	Medical School Commencement Ceremony (tentative)

*After these dates, tuition is non-refundable. Prior to these dates, tuition is refunded on a prorated basis.