



Carver College
of Medicine

Master of Clinical Anatomy Graduate Student Handbook



2026–2027

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I. Introduction & General Regulations

This document provides information about the Master of Clinical Anatomy (MCA) program in the Anatomy and Cell Biology Department (ACB), Carver College of Medicine (CCOM), University of Iowa. It specifies requirements and policies related to graduate study in this program.

A. Graduate Training in Clinical Anatomy

The Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology offers a Master of Clinical Anatomy. The MCA program is a 16-month program and includes courses in Fall of Year 1 (Y1FA), Spring of Year 1 (Y1SP), Summer of Year 1 (Y1SM), and Fall of Year 2 (Y2FA).

B. Admission

The application procedures are those required by the University of Iowa. Applications are made directly to the MCA program through the Office of Admissions and by following the application procedures to submit all required materials. Inquiries about the program can be made by contacting the MCA Program Coordinator Julie Collins (Julie-Collins@uiowa.edu).

Applicants are evaluated based upon:

- Undergraduate academic performance (strong science background preferred),
- Strength of personal statement,
- Three letters of recommendation,
- Interest in the anatomical sciences and additional experiences,
- Optional: MCAT, DAT, or GRE scores (where applicable), and
- TOEFL scores (where applicable)

Students selected for an interview will be contacted by email to arrange a virtual visit via Zoom to meet with MCA faculty. Applicants recommended by the MCA faculty (based on positive assessment of application materials and interview) will be forwarded to the Office of Admissions with an offer for matriculation.

C. Programmatic and Departmental Administrative Staff

Julie Collins (Julie-Collins@uiowa.edu, 319-335-7197) is the MCA Program Coordinator. If students need assistance with course registration, tuition questions, room scheduling, or any aspect of the MCA Program, contact Julie. Julie works from home full-time and can be reached by email, phone, or scheduling a Zoom meeting.

Denise Jurca (Denise-Jurca@uiowa.edu, 319-335-7756) and Madison O'Leary (Madison-Oleary@uiowa.edu) are in-person departmental staff members and have offices in BSB 1-100. They can assist with immediate needs when necessary. They also manage departmental resources and can support students with questions about travel (e.g., travel arrangements for academic conferences), applying for research scholarships or grants, and other departmental endeavors.

II. Program of Study

A. MCA Curriculum

The MCA degree is awarded upon satisfactory completion of 1) 32 hours of coursework and 2) successful completion of the comprehensive exam.

1. Required Courses (25 s.h.)

Students must complete the following required courses, totaling 25 credit hours:

Y1FA:

ACB:5203:0001	Human Gross Anatomy for Graduate Students	5 s.h.
ACB:5210:0001	General Histology Online	4 s.h.
ACB:7001:0001	Teaching and Learning in the Anatomical Sciences	2 s.h.
ACB:7002:0001	Seminar in Anatomical Sciences (Fall)	1 s.h.

Y1SP:

ACB:6252:0001	Functional Neuroanatomy	4 s.h.
ACB:7020:0001	Human Embryology Online	2 s.h.
ACB:7500:0001	Case-Based Learning I	2 s.h.
ACB:7002:0001	Seminar in Anatomical Sciences (Spring)	1 s.h.

Y2FA:

ACB:7600:0001	Case-Based Learning II	2 s.h.
ACB:7010:0001	Anatomy Through Imaging	2 s.h.
ACB:7800:0001	Integrating Clinical Anatomical Sciences	0 s.h.

2. Elective Courses (7+ s.h.)

Students must select additional graduate-level course work to complete the remaining semester hours required. Elective courses should be considered for Y1SM and Y2FA semesters. Students may choose to take an elective during Year 1 with Program and Course Director approval. Students must complete a minimum of 7 elective hours to fulfill the degree requirements:

ACB:7400:0001	Practicum in College Teaching (Maximum of 4 s.h. contributing to degree)	2–4 s.h.
ACB:7701:0001	Advanced Neuroimaging*	1 s.h.
ACB:7702:0001	Advanced Osteology*	1 s.h.
ACB:7703:0001	Art & Anatomy*	1 s.h.
ACB:7704:0001	Surface Anatomy*	1 s.h.
ACB:7000:0IND	Clinical Anatomy Graduate Research (Maximum of 5 s.h. contributing to degree)	1–5 s.h.
ACB:7401:0001	Advanced Human Anatomy [†]	4 s.h.
ACB:7402:0001	Teaching Elective in Regional Anatomy	2 s.h.

Other courses with Program Directors' approval 1–3 s.h.
(Maximum of 3 s.h. contributing to degree)

* = Offered only in Fall semesters, [†] = Offered only in Spring semesters with Course Director Approval

B. Comprehensive Exam

In Y2FA, students will complete the Comprehensive Exam as part of ACB:7800 Integrating Clinical Anatomical Sciences. Successful completion of the Comprehensive Exam and the associated course are required to fulfill graduation requirements of the program.

1. Integrated Exams

Three preparatory exams are integrated into CBL I (ACB:7500) in Y1SP. An Integrated Exam will occur following each case based on the content discussed in class related to the case topic. Integrated exams will be in-lab, hands-on practical exams that mimic individual stations in the comprehensive exam. As such, all topics covered in the anatomical sciences up to that point in the curriculum can be tested on the exam.

2. ACB:7800 Integrating Clinical Anatomical Sciences

In Y2FA, students will enroll in ACB:7800. This course is a 0 s.h. course and is graded on a Satisfactory ("S") and Unsatisfactory ("U") scale. This course contains two additional Integrated Exams that coincide with CBL II (ACB:7600), just as in CBL I, and culminates in a Comprehensive Exam that tests knowledge of the anatomical sciences from the breadth of the MCA curriculum. If a student receives a "U" in the course, the course can be repeated ONE time only during the following spring semester.

C. Graduate Research Opportunities

Students choosing to take the ACB:7000 Clinical Anatomy Graduate Research course must identify a lab to join. The principal investigator (PI) of the lab can be in the ACB department (e.g., with MCA program faculty or with Cell & Developmental Biology program faculty) or any other faculty member or clinician at the University of Iowa who agrees to take on the student.

Each semester hour approximates 3 hours/week involved in the project (inclusive of in-person laboratory time, outside reading, preparation, etc.) and is based on a 15-week semester (see <https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/credit-hour-definition>). So, for a 2 s.h. research project, students should be in the lab or involved in project work for 90 hours in the spring or fall semester (2 s.h. x 3 h. x 15 weeks = 90 total hours). In the summer semester where courses are abbreviated, the expectation of completed time is the same (90 hours over the course of the semester). Use the [MCA Research Calculator](#) to determine the time you should spend on your project each week in a given semester.

Students can choose to join a research lab either for pay or for credit. For research done for pay, students are not permitted to register for any research credit hours and will self-arrange all lab activities with the PI. For students wishing to fulfill elective hours with ACB:7000, students must identify a PI and complete the [Project Information Form](#) to finalize registration (submit to julie-collins@uiowa.edu).

D. Dropping Courses

No student is permitted to drop courses before or after the deadline established by the Carver College of Medicine unless that student has received the permission of the Program Directors to drop the class. Students who receive permission to drop a course after the deadline shall receive a grade of "W" unless the entire registration is canceled.

E. Responsibilities

The student is responsible for becoming informed about collegiate and university deadlines and degree requirements.

F. Working During the MCA Program

While it is permissible to maintain outside employment while completing the MCA program, no special accommodation can be made to provide flexibility around a work schedule. We **strongly encourage** students who are considering finding or keeping a job to ensure they have the capacity to also dedicate adequate time to this rigorous graduate program.

III. Advisory, Attendance, and Review System

A. Advising

MCA students are **required** to meet with the Program Director(s) at least once every semester. The purpose of these meetings is to help students plan for program progression, reflect on successes and challenges, prepare for application to professional school, and to answer student questions/concerns.

In addition to these individual meetings with the Program Director(s), students are encouraged to reach out to any MCA faculty throughout the program.

B. Attendance

Attendance expectations for the MCA program follow those set by the Carver College of Medicine.

At its core, student responsibility to attend and complete scheduled instruction is a vital element of professional behavior. Students are expected to attend all scheduled instruction.

Students will be excused from classes in these situations:

- Personal health appointments - student or immediate family
- Acute illness/injury
- Family emergency
- Death in the immediate family

Other situations will inevitably arise in which a student will need to be, or desire to be, absent from scheduled instruction. These situations encompass two broad categories: unanticipated or anticipated absences (see below). By definition, anticipated absences are identified in advance. Successful resolution involves planning in advance and, whenever possible, scheduling around MCA programmatic commitments rather than asking a course director to provide special arrangements in instruction to accommodate the student's request. When this is not possible, the course director has the authority to act on the student's request.

Neither scheduled nor excused absences obviate the student from completing the required course educational activities.

1. Unanticipated Absence

Students must complete an [Absence Request](#) for illness or other unanticipated issues. The program may require details regarding the absence, but not medical documentation.

2. Anticipated Absence

Students must complete an [Absence Request](#) in advance when an issue arises that will necessitate an absence from courses. Any unexcused absence from a course or from an examination may result, at the discretion of the course director, in a failing grade.

Examples of requests and likely responses examples of requests that should be granted:

- Personal health appointments - student or immediate family
- Death in the immediate family
- Acute illness/injury

Examples of requests that are reasonable, but which may or may not be granted depending on the duration of the request and educational activities:

- Presentation at a regional or national meeting
- Attendance at a wedding as a member of the wedding party.

Most of these events are known well in advance and students are encouraged to notify the MCA program as early as possible. Requests by students to move an examination to accommodate wedding events are discouraged but the final decision rests with the course director.

Examples of requests that are generally unreasonable and are likely to be denied:

- Work related issues
- Car repair
- Pet related issues

3. Absence from Exams

Unforeseen emergencies or family obligations may arise that conflict with scheduled examinations, and course directors are encouraged to be reasonable in balancing the legitimate needs of students, of the course, and of the program.

University regulations require that students be allowed to make-up examinations which have been missed due to illness, mandatory religious obligations, or other unavoidable circumstances or University activities.

C. Programmatic Evaluation

Failure to maintain the minimum required cumulative grade point average for graduate work (3.0) will result in the student being placed on academic probation by the MCA program. Further, if, in the judgment of the MCA faculty, a student's work toward degree objectives is unsatisfactory, programmatic probation may be advised.

Scholastic performance in all MCA courses is generally recorded using a letter grading scale (A, B, C, F). Use of plus (+) and minus (-) grades within that scale are determined by the Course Director of each course. A grade of "C" or its course equivalent is required to pass a course. Integrating Clinical Anatomical Sciences is offered only with Satisfactory ("S") and Unsatisfactory ("U") options. A Satisfactory ("S") is required to pass the course.

Human Gross Anatomy for Graduate Students will also offer Satisfactory ("S") and Unsatisfactory ("U") options at the Course Director's discretion. A Satisfactory ("S") is required to pass the course. If a student receives an Unsatisfactory (U) and remediates the course, they will receive a letter grade for the remediation (i.e., during remediation of the course, there is no option for the S/U grading scale). A grade of "Incomplete" (I) will be recorded when the student has not completed some component of the course and the reason for non-completion is acceptable to the Course Director (e.g., absence from a class or examination due to illness or a serious personal emergency). The Course Director will determine the plan, including a schedule, for the student to complete their work. The maximum time allowed for finishing the "Incomplete" is to the end of the following semester. At this time the "Incomplete" (I) will become a failing grade (F) on the transcript. A grade of Incomplete should not be used as a temporary "placeholder" grade when the student's performance in the course has been unsatisfactory.

Promotion from one semester to the next is contingent upon the satisfactory completion of courses in each preceding semester.

- If a student receives an "Incomplete" (I) or failing grade ("U" or "F") in a course, the student will be placed on probation. In the case of a failing grade, if remediation is not successful (scoring a minimum of 70%) the student will be dismissed from the program. If a student receives a failing grade in any two courses ("U" or "F"), the student will be dismissed from the program.
- If a student withdraws ("W") from a core anatomical sciences course (Anatomy, Histology, Embryology, or Neuroanatomy) the Program Directors will work with the student to develop an alternative progression plan. Withdrawal from a core anatomical sciences course may also result in the student being placed on academic probation. Students will be provided with a written plan of study for the remainder of the program.

D. Maximum Duration

The MCA program is designed to be completed in one-and-a-half (1.5) academic years, as defined in section I.A. of this document. It is the expectation that a student completes the MCA curriculum in no more than two (2) academic years (twenty-four [24] months) from the date of matriculation, which is the first day of semester one. This means students are permitted an additional Y2SP and Y2SM semester to complete all requirements. Failure to meet this timeline will result in dismissal from the MCA program.

1. Exceptions to the two-year maximum duration:

The MCA program notes that extenuating circumstances may cause a student to exceed the 2-year maximum duration and defines the following criteria and process for consideration of exceptions to this policy.

- a. Approved leave of absence (see Section III.D.1)
- b. Criteria to seek an exception without a leave of absence:
 - The student must be in good academic standing which includes a review of academic performance (i.e., not on probation), professionalism, and timely progression throughout the program.
 - The student must submit a written request for an exception to the two-year maximum to the Program Directors.
- c. Process:

- The Program Directors will review the written request for the exception to determine if it meets the criteria. The student may be asked to meet with the Program Directors to discuss the exception request. If criteria are not met, the student will be informed in writing.
- Students are permitted to appeal maximum duration decisions once. This must be submitted in written form to the Vice Chair for Education for the Department for Anatomy and Cell Biology.
 - The student may not challenge dismissal based on academic performance, including the rejection of an exception where significant academic deficiencies have contributed to program extension.

E. Leave of Absence, Withdrawal, and Reinstatement

1. Leave of Absence

Individual students may benefit from being granted a leave of absence (LOA) from the program for specified periods. A request for LOA may be due to medical or personal issues that must be addressed before continuing in the program. Students desiring an LOA must submit a written request to the Program Co-directors. Leave may be granted or denied at the discretion of the Program Co-directors. Academic standing (e.g., if a student is on probation or is in failing status in one or more courses) will be taken into consideration with all requests. Request for LOA must be arranged in advance of the student's absence and is generally limited to one year. Students should consider the tuition assessment deadlines when determining the LOA start date.

The timing of an LOA may affect progression in the program, including start time and duration of the leave. For example, leave requested beginning in the middle of a semester may result in the student needing to complete the missed semester before moving on to the following semesters. Decisions on progression will be made by the Program Co-directors in consultation with the student.

2. Program Withdrawal

A student may withdraw from the MCA program upon approval of a written request submitted to the Program Co-Directors. If a student withdraws for any reason, academic deadlines for a refund of tuition and fees are set by the Registrar's Office at the University of Iowa. These can be found at <https://registrar.uiowa.edu/academic-calendar>. Withdrawal information can be found at <https://registrar.uiowa.edu/withdrawal-information>.

3. Reinstatement

Application for reinstatement by any student who has withdrawn voluntarily or who has been required to withdraw from the program must be received in writing by the Program Co-directors at least six months before the requested date of readmission.

F. Academic Accommodations for Graduate Students

Students may request academic accommodations (for their classes and/or as part of the graduate program) and should apply through Student Disability Services (319-335-1462; sds-info@uiowa.edu). The steps for applying for an academic accommodation can be found at <https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/students/apply/>. Students are not required to share any specific health or private information with their advisor or department.

IV. Financial Resources

A. University Financial Aid

The Office of Student Financial Aid determines eligibility for financial assistance. Information on eligibility, forms, types of aid, and more can be found at <https://financialaid.uiowa.edu/>.

The Center for Inclusive Academic Excellence supports historically marginalized, first-generation students and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds to thrive and succeed at the University of Iowa. The office is in 2750 University Capitol Centre, (319) 335-3555, <https://diversity.uiowa.edu/division/CIAE>.

There are multiple offices for the Veteran and Military Community. Information can be found at <https://veterans.uiowa.edu/>.

B. Departmental Funding Support

The Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology provides funding opportunities for teaching and/or research endeavors to MCA students. Paid laboratory/lecture teaching opportunities (not including tutoring) are only available to students that have completed a minimum of 2 s.h. of the Teaching Practicum (ACB:7400).

1. Research Support

If an MCA student is doing research/development work (any mentored, scholarly work including bench research, educational research, and development of educational tools and/or resources) in the ACB department, the student may be compensated hourly by the ACB department.

Paid research support must be completed separately from ACB:7000. If a student takes research credit hours, they can be paid for additional research time beyond the registered credit hours, but the time dedicated to earned credit versus paid time must remain separate (i.e., a student cannot be simultaneously paid for credit hours they serve in a lab).

Paid research work during the program is supported only up to the university's part-time hourly maximum (20 hours/week, or 40 hours/week during the Thanksgiving, winter, and spring breaks, and summer; see <https://hr.uiowa.edu/careers/student-employment/info-students/hours-week-limitations> for complete university hours per week limitations).

Contact Denise Jurca (Denise-Jurca@uiowa.edu, 319-335-7756) to begin workflow and determine pay scale. This funding option is only available for work completed with faculty in the ACB department.

2. Tutoring

MCA students can apply to support one or more of the MCA courses as a tutor (courses included and students accepted as tutors at MCA directors' discretion). Tutoring is defined as support for one-on-one or group tutoring for a course outside of scheduled course hours. Tutoring is NOT laboratory teaching or lecture teaching. Neither is tutoring associated with the Practicum in College Teaching (ACB:7400) or any other required or elective credit-based MCA course. These are credit-bearing experiences for which the student cannot be remunerated. Tutors must have received a B grade or higher in the course(s) (or equivalent courses) in which they are tutoring. Tutoring work cannot extend beyond four (4) hours per week, inclusive of all courses tutored for. Students are compensated for face-to-face time with students, NOT for preparation time.

Contact Denise Jurca (Denise-Jurca@uiowa.edu, 319-335-7756) to begin workflow and determine pay scale.

3. Anatomy Teaching Support

A formal teaching role is defined as teaching in the anatomy lab or in classroom teaching for some or all of a semester. Trainees in this role are given more responsibility than those in the Practicum in College Teaching or other teaching elective MCA courses and are expected to commit to a specific teaching schedule for the semester. Trainees are selected as formal teaching support at the discretion of the MCA directors. In order to be selected for a paid teaching position, 2 s.h. of ACB:7400 must be completed.

Contact Vice Chair for Education Darren Hoffmann (Darren-Hoffmann@uiowa.edu, 319-335-7704) to begin workflow and determine pay scale.