Graduate Programs

The Department of Nutritional Sciences offers graduate study leading to a Master of Science degree in nutritional sciences and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in nutritional sciences. Graduate study in NSCI emphasizes the conduct and application of research to the field of human nutrition. Graduate students work with an advisor and advisory committee to develop flexible, yet rigorous programs of study and research that meet the degree requirements and each student’s professional goals within an area of specialization in the field.

The Master of Science Degree

The MS degree program is designed to develop research skills, stimulate independent thought and critical thinking, and provide up-to-date knowledge in a variety of areas of human nutrition. Admission to the MS graduate program is selective and is based on a variety of factors including the student’s grade-point average (overall and science GPA), Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores, letters of recommendation and goal statement. The prerequisite for the MS program is a BS in nutritional sciences. Students with a BS degree in a subject area other than nutrition are required to have a minimum of 30 credit hours of undergraduate/graduate coursework related to nutritional sciences, including at least one course in biochemistry, one course in physiology and one upper-level nutrition course prior to full admission. Applicants who do not meet these requirements may be considered for conditional acceptance and required to take prerequisite courses and/or demonstrate academic ability.

Students in the MS program-nutrition option can choose one of two tracks: thesis or non-thesis. The MS degree with thesis requires a minimum of 30 credit hours, including six credit hours for thesis research (NSCI 5000 Master’s Thesis). Thesis research is conducted within the advisor’s area of interest and is approved by an advisory committee. The non-thesis MS degree requires a minimum of 34 credit hours with three credit hours of NSCI 5843 Non-thesis Graduate Capstone, including a comprehensive examination, a written research paper, and an oral presentation. The student’s plan of study and research is determined in consultation with his/her advisor and advisory committee.

An online Master of Science degree in nutritional sciences with an option in dietetics is also offered to Registered Dietitians (RD) or individuals who are RD eligible. OSU offers this degree program as a member of the Great Plains Interactive Distance Education Alliance (Great Plains IDEA) which provides the opportunity for Registered Dietitians to study with faculty from eight universities in the Alliance via Internet-based courses. The MS in Dietetics requires completion of 36 credit hours, including nine core credits, six OSU Nutritional Sciences Core credits, 18 elective credits and NSCI 5843 Non-thesis Graduate Capstone. A faculty advisor and the graduate committee from the Nutritional Sciences department must approve a student’s program of study. More detailed information can be found at: gpidea.okstate.edu (http://gpidea.okstate.edu).

The Doctor of Philosophy Degree

The PhD degree is awarded in nutritional sciences. Two programs are available: a 60-hour program for MS graduates and a 90-hour program for BS graduates. The focus of the program is to prepare individuals for careers in a variety of areas including higher education, industry, healthcare and governmental programs. Admission to the program is competitive and applicants are expected to provide evidence of exceptional academic ability and preparation, a statement of goals and letters of recommendation. Grade-point average in previous undergraduate, professional school and graduate coursework and Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores are considered in the evaluation of the applicant. If a thesis was not required as a component of the applicant’s MS program, a thesis or equivalent must be completed in addition to the requirements for the doctoral degree. Prerequisite coursework for full admittance to the PhD program includes at least one graduate or undergraduate course in biochemistry and physiology, six credit hours at the graduate level in nutrition and three credit hours of statistics. Students with MS degrees in a subject area other than nutrition will also be required to have a minimum of 30 credit hours of undergraduate/graduate coursework related to nutritional sciences, including the prerequisite courses listed above. Applicants who do not meet these requirements may be considered for conditional acceptance and required to take additional prerequisite courses.

The PhD program includes a strong emphasis on research in areas ranging from basic molecular and cellular sciences to clinical and community applications. Students also gain experience in resource generation, knowledge sharing and community engagement. Each program of study is designed by the student under direction of his/her faculty advisor and advisory committee to develop the student’s competence in an area of specialization and research methodologies. Doctoral training includes 15-30 hours of dissertation research, a qualifying examination covering core nutrition knowledge, a comprehensive examination focused on the area of specialization and participation in research throughout the program.

More detailed information on graduate study in the Department of Nutritional Sciences can be obtained by writing the graduate coordinator, or accessing the website at humansciences.okstate.edu/nsci (http://humansciences.okstate.edu/nsci/).