

## **Degrees offered in the DRB Graduate Program**

The DRB Graduate Program is committed to training students to become biomedical scientists capable of designing, conducting, and supporting independent research programs. While coursework is required, the most important component of the program is the research conducted by the student. Two paths leading to a degree exist in the program, the Master of Science (M.S.) path and the Doctorate of Philosophy (Ph.D.) path. There are two sets of criteria for graduate degrees, the minimal requirements are defined by the Graduate School and an additional set of criteria that are imposed by the DRB Program.

### **M.S. Degree**

The M.S. degree requires the student to conduct a research project that directly answers a hypothesis, culminating in a written Master's Thesis that is defended just before graduation, and then formally submitted to the University of Hawaii. In the University of Hawaii system, this degree is termed M.S. Plan A, and results in the title of the thesis being printed on the official school transcript.

### **Ph.D. Degree**

The Ph.D. degree is based almost completely on the student's own research, culminating in a written Dissertation which is defended, then formally submitted to the University of Hawaii. It is expected that the research will result in one or more published manuscripts with the student as first author. Doctoral students must earn the right to conduct doctorate-leading research, and are therefore originally accepted into the program as M.S. students. During the first two years of graduate study, students are required to fulfill several criteria before advancing to formal dissertation research. Fulfilling these requirements also results in the students being awarded an M.S. degree (recognized in the UH system as Master's Plan B degree and by the DRB program as "Dissertation-leading Master's Plan B"). The requirements for advancement to doctoral research candidacy in the DRB Graduate Program are:

1. The student must identify a mentor and begin their doctoral work. The mentor must write a letter to the DRB Graduate Program Directors indicating that the student is capable of performing doctoral level research, and that the mentor is willing to support the student.
2. The student must pass the qualifying exam at the end of the first year and perform satisfactorily in all coursework.
3. The student must write an informal literature review on the subject of his/her research that is approved by the mentor. This review could later become the introduction to the final dissertation.

This strategy allows the student to use all the research work performed during the first two years towards the dissertation, and to obtain a graduate degree during the course of the dissertation work. After completion of the first two years, the student focuses on the research that will lead to his/her dissertation. The requirements for the dissertation are relatively standard, and can be found on the Graduate School website.

## Terminal Plan B Master's Degree

The Plan B Master's degree is NOT considered a terminal degree in the DRB Graduate Program. It is restricted for the use of doctoral students to mark their transition to formal, doctorate-leading research. Under rare circumstances of extreme hardship, however, a Master's Degree student may apply to the DRB Graduate Committee for an exemption of the restriction on being awarded a terminal Plan B M.S. degree. In this case, the student must prepare a written application to the committee, then meet with the committee to determine whether the exemption is warranted. If the exemption is not allowed, the student will have the opportunity to either withdraw from the program with no degree, or to continue with the original Plan A M.S. If the exemption is warranted, the student must write a 30 page literature review which will then be defended in front of a committee of at least three DRB faculty members. All three members must approve the thesis before the degree will be granted.

Students are strongly encouraged to discuss requesting an exemption to substitute a Terminal Plan B for the traditional Plan A Master's degree with their mentors and with one of the two Co-Directors of the DRB Graduate Program before taking this step.