PhD Program Overview
Our department consists of 20 faculty, 40 doctoral students, 20 postdoctoral fellows (or visiting scholars), 40 MHS students and 10 ScM students. This relatively small size offers abundant opportunities for student-faculty interactions through lab research meetings, journal clubs, our annual departmental retreat and other informal gatherings. Students receive a generous stipend, medical and dental insurance, and a full tuition scholarship. Although students are not required to teach, opportunities for teaching assistant positions are available.

Research Rotations
First-year students spend about half of their time conducting laboratory research. Every student rotates through four different laboratories during the first year, spending eight weeks in each laboratory. Students receive as much assistance with their research projects as necessary, particularly during the early rotations. The rotations, which are designed to encourage development of independence as a practicing scientist, immediately expose students to the realities of doing laboratory research. They also allow each student to become directly involved in the research activities of four different laboratories, thus facilitating an informed selection of a thesis advisor and research project.

At the end of each rotation, students present a short oral report on their work to their fellow first-year students and the faculty. They also receive a formal, written evaluation of their performance after each rotation. At the end of the fourth rotation, students choose their thesis mentor.

Oral Exams
The department administers one comprehensive examination at the end of the first year and one oral examination practice session at the end of the second year before the student is permitted to take the Preliminary Oral Examination. Candidates for the PhD degree at the Johns Hopkins University must pass this university-administered exam. The examination is conducted by five faculty members drawn from appropriate departments throughout the University. The purpose of this exam is to test the breadth of the student’s ability to carry out research for the doctoral degree. The preliminary oral examination is taken before January of the second academic year.

Thesis Research
State-of-the-art facilities for biochemical and molecular biological research in many newly constructed laboratories are available within the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. In addition, we interact closely with faculty from many of the basic science and clinical departments of the school of medicine. Because graduate training is the department’s foremost priority, we are committed to ensuring that our students receive the highest quality research-
training available anywhere. Each student’s thesis advisory committee meets annually and provides helpful advice and constructive criticism designed to enhance and accelerate success towards completion of the program.