Master of Science in Prosthetics and Orthotics

Program & Procedural Manual



University of Pittsburgh

School of Health & Rehabilitation Sciences

Department of Rehabilitation Science & Technology

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Supplement to the SHRS graduate handbook

https://www.shrs.pitt.edu/current-students/student-handbooks

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Dear MSPO Graduate Student,

On behalf of the faculty of the Master of Science in Prosthetics and Orthotics Program, I welcome you to the University of Pittsburgh. Thank you for choosing the University of Pittsburgh for your graduate education. The faculty and staff are here to help you become excellent clinicians and professionals, and to meet the rigorous standards of professional education set by the National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education.

This MSPO Program represents the beginning of a lifetime of learning about the art and science of orthotics and prosthetics. You will graduate from this program with the skills needed for orthotic and prosthetic practice and with the skills needed to be life-long learners as well. We encourage self-directed and collaborative learning; clinical application and reflective practice; and a commitment to evidence-based practice.

Each student has been assigned an advisor who is responsible to counsel you regarding academic issues and professional development. Students will meet with advisors on a regular basis; however, please feel free to also meet with me if you have any questions about your education or any of our policies. We all look forward to the next few years as you begin your professional career in the expanding field of orthotics and prosthetics.

Sincerely,

Helen Cochrane
Director, MSPO Program

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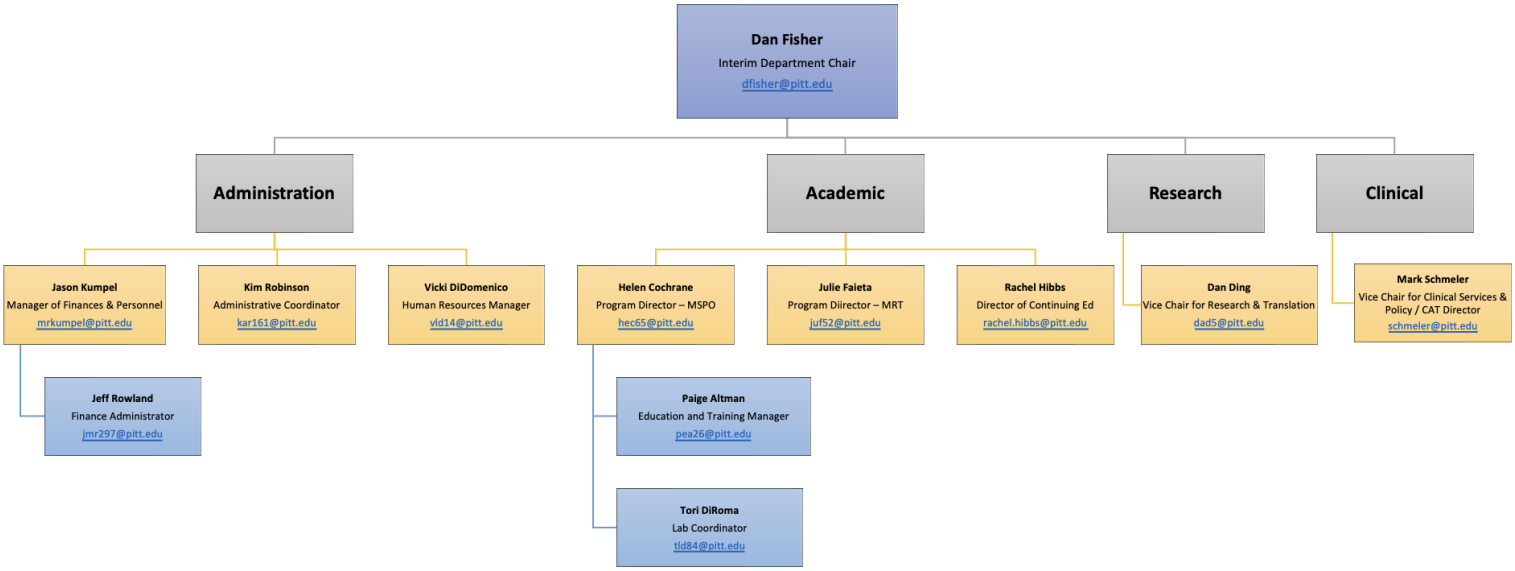
Administrative Structure

Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology (RST)



Introduction

The School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences (SHRS) is one of 16 schools at the University of Pittsburgh. SHRS, is composed of seven departments which includes the Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology (RST). RST is composed of seven programs each offering a graduate degree and includes the Prosthetics and Orthotics program. The Prosthetics and Orthotics program offers a post-baccalaureate, entry-level graduate degree that culminates in a Master of Science in Prosthetics and Orthotics (MSPO). The MSPO degree curriculum is 20 months in duration involving a total of 65 credits over five (5) terms and includes a summer session. The first term of the program helps develop students' foundation knowledge and skills to effectively and safely perform clinical patient handling and interaction procedures and technical fabrication methods that will be implemented throughout the remaining four (4) terms of the MSPO program. After the 1st semester students are expected to demonstrate this foundational knowledge and skills in all subsequent semesters.

This guide provides a framework within which faculty members and students can function together harmoniously. This document supplements the SHRS Graduate Handbook providing additional information specific to the MSPO Program.

Members of any community must have rules and regulations that ensure that the rights and responsibilities of all are explicit and protected. The policies are not intended to be unduly restrictive. These policies represent an instrument to ensure that the operation of the program remains consistent with its obligations and its posture as a professional program. All policies herein are in effect for the current academic year. Changes may occur in the following academic year and if so, you will be provided the updated document.

By enrolling as a student in the MSPO program, the faculty has recognized your potential to become a competent and contributing member of the profession of Prosthetics and Orthotics. We also recognize that you have and will continue to develop integrity and a commitment to your personal values in your private, academic, and professional life.

We, the faculty, and administration are committed to encouraging and helping you further develop as an individual and as a professional. Integrity, respect, openness to new situations and people, intellectual curiosity, responsibility for one's actions, and a commitment to ethical practice characterize professional behavior. These components represent our expectations of you as a MSPO student.

You, as the student, should be met with the same integrity, respect and openness by the faculty and administration. Each of us has rights and responsibilities to ourselves, to each other, to our profession and to our common goals. We will all succeed to the extent that we respect these reciprocal rights and responsibilities.

Technical Standards

All candidates must meet health and technical standards for admission to and participation in the Prosthetics and Orthotics educational program at the University of Pittsburgh. The MSPO degree denotes that the holder's educational program has prepared the individual for entry into clinical practice and the next step in the continuum of training – namely residency. Thus, graduates must have the knowledge, abilities, and essential physical skills to function in a wide variety of clinical situations while providing a broad spectrum of patient care.

A candidate for the MSPO degree program must have abilities and skills in five (5) essential areas: observation; communication; motor function; intellectual capacities related to conceptual, integrative, and quantitative abilities; and professionalism. Technical support can compensate for some limitations in certain areas, but a candidate must perform in a competent, safe, prudent, and reasonably independent manner.

Observation. The candidate must exhibit the ability to observe demonstrations of clinical and technical procedures and experiments in the foundational sciences including, but not limited to, anatomical structures and muscular, nervous, and integumentary tissue in normal and pathologic states. A candidate must exhibit the ability to observe a patient/client accurately at a distance and in close proximity. A candidate must exhibit the ability to visualize measurement instruments including, but not limited to, a goniometer, a tape measure, gauges, and scales during evaluation and fabrication processes. Observation requires the functional use of vision, hearing, and bodily sensations.

Communication. A candidate must exhibit the ability to speak, hear, and observe patients/clients* to solicit information (i.e. strategically ask patient/client questions to solicit a reply); to describe changes in mood, activity and posture; and to perceive nonverbal communications. The candidate must exhibit the ability to communicate effectively and sensitively with patients/clients/care givers. The candidate must exhibit the ability to communicate effectively in teaching patients or their family members or both patients/clients and family members. Communication includes reading and writing in addition to speech. The candidate must exhibit the ability to communicate effectively and efficiently in oral and written form with all members of the health care team.

**Note: Some health care communities use the term "patient" whereas other health care communities use the term "client" in identifying the person that is under the care of a Prosthetist-Orthotist.*

Motor Function. A candidate must have sufficient motor function to obtain information from patients by palpation, mobilization, force application, auscultation (listening to heart, lungs, etc.), and other diagnostic and intervention maneuvers as appropriate. A candidate must exhibit the motor function to assist with intervention and functional activities. A candidate must exhibit the ability to carry out motor movements reasonably required to measure, design, modify and fabricate prostheses and orthoses; provide safe, general care, and to provide emergency intervention to patients. Safe, general care includes the ability to measure and fit patients properly and to move with speed to render assistance in case of a fall. Examples of emergency intervention reasonably required include cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), advanced external defibrillation (AED) and basic first aid (i.e., application of pressure to stop bleeding., cleaning and bandaging wounds). Such actions require coordination of both gross and fine motor movements, equilibrium and functional use of the senses of touch and vision.

Intellectual, Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Abilities. These abilities include measurement, calculation, reasoning, analysis, and synthesis. Problem solving (which leads to competent clinical decision making), the critical skill required of Prosthetists and Orthotists, includes all of these intellectual abilities. Candidates must also exhibit the ability to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and to understand spatial relationships of structures.

Professionalism. Candidates must exhibit the professional skillset needed for full use of their intellectual abilities, the use of good judgment, the prompt completion of all responsibilities related to the assessment and management of patients, and the development of mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients. Candidates must exhibit the ability to make sound ethical and legally correct decisions. Candidates must

exhibit the ability to tolerate physically taxing workloads and to function effectively under stress. Candidates must exhibit the ability to adapt to changing environments, display flexibility, and to learn to function in the face of uncertainties inherent in the management of multiple clinical problems of patients. Compassion, integrity, concerns for others, interpersonal skills, interest and motivation describe the candidates' personal qualities that the program will assess during the admission and educational process.

Curricular Goals and Objectives

The curricular goals of the MSPO program are to graduate a residency-eligible Prosthetist- Orthotist professional who has 1) the cognitive ability, psychomotor skills, and affective behavior needed to provide competent Prosthetic and Orthotic services to a diverse populace, 2) the capacity to continue to learn throughout his/her career, and 3) is interested in and capable of making a significant contribution to the profession.

Objectives of the MSPO Curriculum are to provide the student with:

1. a strong theoretical background in the basic and applied sciences related to the provision of prosthetic and orthotic services,
2. technical and analytical skills needed to recommend, measure, fabricate, fit, evaluate, and modify prostheses and orthoses,
3. psychosocial skills and awareness needed to provide clinical service to a diverse patient population,
4. supervised clinical experiences in the provision of prosthetic and orthotic services,
5. the skills needed to analyze research literature and to practice evidence-based care,
6. knowledge and awareness of the role of the prosthetist/orthotist in healthcare delivery,
7. knowledge and awareness of professional obligations, including expansion of knowledge, adherence to professional ethics, and service to the community.

Mission Statements of SHRS and the MSPO Program

The mission of the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences is to advance health and rehabilitation through teaching, research and professional service; the mission of the Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology is to improve the health and rehabilitation outcomes of individuals with disability through education, research and service by the integration of consumer experience, engineering, counseling, medicine and clinical services.

The mission of the Master of Science in Prosthetics and Orthotics (MSPO) program is to advance the profession of Prosthetics and Orthotics by shaping the leaders of tomorrow through evidence-based and interdisciplinary clinical education, research and service. The mission of the MSPO program is consistent with the missions of RST and SHRS.

University of Pittsburgh MSPO Plan of Study

Each course in the curriculum is offered only once during the academic year, therefore, any departure from completing a course in its planned sequence (for example: failure, for any reason, to satisfactorily complete a required course; or an unresolved "Incomplete" grade) will result in a one-year delay in completing the course, the remaining program requirements, and the year of graduation.

Fall Term, Year 1
Prerequisites; Physics with lab, 4 credits, Biology with lab, 4 credits, Chemistry with lab, 4 credits, Psychology (Abnormal or Human Growth & Development), 3 credits, Mathematics (Algebra or higher), 3 credits, Human anatomy, 3 credits, Human physiology, 3 credits, Statistics, 3 credits

PO 2101 Functional Anatomy and Kinesiology – 3 credits
PO 2102 Pathology in Orthotics and Prosthetics – 2 credits
PO 2103 Introductions to Materials, Equipment, and Fabrication – 2 credits
PO 2104 Rehabilitation Biomechanics for the Health Care Professions - 3 credits
PO 2105 Professional Issues in Prosthetics and Orthotics – 1 credit
PO 2106 Patient Management in Orthotics and Prosthetics – 1 credit
RT 2105 Introduction to Evidence-Based Practice and Research Methodologies – 3 credits

Spring Term, Year 1
Prerequisites; Fall Term, Year 1
PO 2201 Orthotics 1 – 5 credits
PO 2202 Prosthetics 1 – 5 credits
PO 2203 Capstone for Prosthetics and Orthotics – 1 credit
PO 2204 Introductions to Evidence-Based Practice in Orthotics and Prosthetics – 1 credit
RT 2208 Ethical Issues in Healthcare – 3 credits

Summer Term, Year 1
Prerequisites; Spring Term, Year 1
PO 2301 Orthotics 2 – 3 credits
PO 2302 Prosthetics 2 – 3 credits
PO 2303 Spinal Orthotics – 3 credits

Fall Term, Year 2
Prerequisites; Summer Term, Year 1
PO 2401 Orthotics 3 – 3 credits
PO 2402 Prosthetics 3 – 3 credits
PO 2403 Issues in the Health System – 2 credits
RT 2101 Fundamentals of Rehabilitations and Assistive Technology Applications – 3 credits
RT 2103 Individual and Social Experiences of Disability – 3 credits

Spring Term, Year 2
Prerequisites; Fall Term, Year 2
PO 2501 Clinical Internship – 8 credits
PO 2502 Scholarly Paper – 2 credits
PO 2503 Practice Management in Prosthetics and Orthotics – 2 credits
Comprehensive Exam
PO 2504 Professional Issues 2 – 2 credits

Program Total = 67 credits

Course Descriptions can be found in the University Course Catalog

Grading Policy

All SHRS graduate programs adhere to the University's grading system and grading policies for graduate students, as dictated in the Graduate Student Handbook.

All required and prerequisite coursework must be taken for a grade, when letter grade option is available, unless approved by the Department Chair/Program Director.

Students must receive a grade of C or better in all courses required by their program curriculum. Students who receive a grade below a C in a required course must repeat that course and attain a grade of C or better to graduate.

Courses with lab components require both didactic and lab portions to be independently passed.

A student who fails a practical project in any course is responsible to remediate the knowledge and skills for that project, before proceeding to the next project.

Students will not be permitted to register for a course until they attain a grade of C or better in its prerequisites.

Failure to receive an acceptable grade after the second opportunity to complete a required course may result in the student being dismissed from the program and SHRS.

Incomplete grades: an instructor may assign a grade of Incomplete (I) when a student has unfinished coursework but has otherwise been making satisfactory, active progress. As of fall 2026, the University Registrar requires that a lapse grade (reflecting the grade earned on work completed to that point) be submitted alongside every Incomplete. SHRS is finalizing department-level submission procedures for this change; check the University policy on Incomplete Grades and this handbook for updated MSPO-specific guidance once it is released.

Academic Standing

Graduate students must have a 3.00 cumulative GPA to be eligible to graduate.

Graduate students who have completed at least 9 credits and whose cumulative GPA falls below a 3.00 will be placed on academic probation and will receive written notification of this status. At this point, it is the student's responsibility to meet with his or her advisor.

Academic standing for graduate and professional students is also governed by University-wide Provost policy, updated for the 2026–2027 academic year. Students should review the current University policy on Academic Standing in addition to the program-specific standard above, as the University-level terms and timelines take precedence in the event of any conflict.

Credit Overlap Guidelines

Students interested in pursuing multiple credentials within SHRS or between SHRS and another Pitt school should be aware that the University limits how many credits may be counted toward more than one credential at the same time. Refer to the University policy on Credit Overlap (Credential Overlap) and discuss any concurrent-credential plans with your advisor before registering.

Comprehensive Examination

After the core Orthotic and Prosthetic areas of the curriculum have been completed in the fourth (4th) term of the Program, a comprehensive examination will be administered during a designated time in the second Fall term. This will be a comprehensive written, technical, and clinical skills examination to assess student understanding of the didactic, technical, and clinical components of the curriculum. To a certain degree, this exam will be designed to simulate the ABC certification exams (i.e., board exams which are taken upon

completion of residency training). Feedback on performance of the comprehensive written, technical and clinical examinations will be given to the students to help guide them in preparing for their residencies and certification examinations.

Students must score a 75% or better on each exam section and be expected to meet minimum competencies established by the faculty to pass the examination. If students fail one or more parts of this examination, they will be required to do remedial work during the final term of the Program and demonstrate competency in the area(s) of test deficiency before the MSPO degree would be granted to them.

Students who do not successfully pass the comprehensive exam must do remedial work and successfully complete the work in order to proceed to final clinical internship.

MSPO Capstone Project

Per NCOPE standards as a graduation requirement, students will conduct a capstone project in which each will perform research and write a paper of publishable quality addressing a clinical question or topic in prosthetics and orthotics. Students will work individually to determine a project focus, conduct a literature review to support that focus and perform research. The project work will span the entire curriculum; with the final results written as a paper of publishable quality and orally presented in the final term. Students will be required to complete and present the project with a passing grade in order to graduate.

The student will work with the Capstone course Instructor and their academic advisor to formulate a hypothesis and aims. The advisor will work with the student throughout the project and be an author on the student's paper, poster and any other publishable materials or patents. The student may select additional faculty/staff to assist with the project and the faculty/staff will receive the same accolades for their input and given credit for their work.

Course Objectives

Students will work individually to specify a clinical question in prosthetics and orthotics or related field supported by the literature

- Students will develop and execute a research protocol to answer the clinical question.
- Students will write a paper of publishable quality, using guidelines for submission to an O&P related journal.
- Students will present their work in a conference-style platform and/or poster format.

Terms 1&2

Term 1, students will learn the requirements of the project, be exposed to resources and tools to utilize in their projects and begin to explore a research topic.

Term 2, students will take one credit hour of PO 2203 and meet with faculty to finalize a research question and protocol.

Each student will work to determine a clinical question or topic.

Students will start by exploring the literature in the broad topic area to determine the types of articles available and current knowledge.

The students will then narrow their topic area. The result will be a specific question relevant to clinical practice in prosthetics and orthotics or a related field.

Each student will begin with a literature review and consultation with relevant faculty to define his or her research question and define research methods to answer that question.

The outcome of Term 2 will be a capstone project proposal, including:

1. a literature review,
2. the research question,
3. a literature matrix of at least 10 relevant references, and
4. a proposed methodology to answer the research question.

The faculty instructor and one additional reader will review these outcomes to determine a pass/fail grade.

Students will be matched with a faculty mentor(s) during the term. This faculty mentor(s) will advise the student during all phases of the capstone project. Each student should meet regularly with his or her faculty mentor(s).

Terms 3 & 4

During these terms there will be no credits or regularly scheduled class time, however, project work must continue to meet graduation requirements in Term 5.

Students will continue to meet regularly with their faculty mentor(s), review the literature and perform their proposed methods to answer their research question.

Students will identify and perform laboratory testing, clinical research or case studies using patient models, surveys or interviews to fill gaps in knowledge identified in the literature. Approval by the University IRB may be needed for human subject testing and should be pursued no later than Term 3 (summer). Data collection should be completed by the end of Term 4, prior to externship.

The outcome of Term 3 will be a draft paper outline, and Term 4 will be a first rough draft. The main body of the paper should be in the range of 2,000-3,000 words (introduction through conclusions). The faculty mentor(s) will review these outcomes and provide feedback.

Term 5

During Term 5, two credit hours of PO 2502 will be taken. Students will be away at clinical externships, so no formal class time is scheduled. Student should continue to correspond and meet with their faculty mentor(s) on a regular basis.

Students will write the results of their project in the form of a final paper and poster. A second draft will be due by midterm and the final draft will be due one month prior to graduation.

All papers should be written in the style of a journal paper being submitted for publication. The default format will be the submission requirements for the Journal of Prosthetics and Orthotics. However, another journal format will be acceptable if approved by the faculty mentor.

Each paper should clearly describe the clinical question, a review of the literature supporting this question, the methodology used to answer this question, results of research or case studies, discussion and the conclusions with regard to the clinical question.

At the end of Term 5 in the week prior to graduation, each student will orally present their results to the students and faculty of the MSPO program in a poster presentation format.

The outcomes of Term 5 will be the completed paper, poster and oral presentation. The faculty mentor and one additional faculty member will review the paper and determine a pass/fail grade.

A conditional pass will have requirements associated with it to achieve a passing grade, which must be completed prior to graduation. MSPO faculty as a whole will review the outcomes to make the final determination.

Resources

Students will have courses related to research and evidence-based practice in Terms 1-3. The first term course, “Introduction to Research Methods”, will develop general research and literature review skills. This will assist students in being able to identify and analyze research literature. The student will also have the opportunity to start a literature review in a mini-systematic review for this class that may lead to a capstone topic. During the second term, the “Introduction to Evidence Based Practice” course will further develop the student’s skills in analyzing the research literature and other available evidence to guide clinical practice. The “Research Seminar”, offered during the third term, will emphasize reading and analyzing research related to clinical practice and discussing evidence-based approaches to treatment. Students will be able to use research methods learned from these courses to assist in the completion of the capstone project.

Resources needed to conduct the project are available. Identifying and acquiring resources will be handled individually as the student defines their project focus, develops methodology and defines the needs. This will occur throughout Term 2 and likely beyond. Please talk with the research director or other faculty members about availability of resources for your project as you identify them. The list below of general project resources may anticipate some of your needs:

The machine shop (fabrication and test machines) is available to you. There are many demands on the shop, so you will need to have reasonable demands on their time, and work with the research director and shop personnel to arrange. The more lead time they have, the better chance you will have what you need, when you need it.

Subject reimbursement expenses are available. Depending on demands on the subjects, we would like the reimbursement to be between $20-25 per hour. This does not include anonymous survey participants, as there is no mechanism to pay such participants.

Supplies are available to your project. Please see what is already available through the program and department, and as needed ask the research director for help or what is unavailable and needs to be acquired.

CAREN system - is an expensive and complex piece of equipment. You are able to work with faculty who have funded projects and project staff trained on its use. The current projects are wheelchair related research. If you would like to work with an investigator to get exposure and experience with the system, please let the director or research know in advance.

Non-Thesis and Theis Options and Procedures

In place of the expected Capstone Project, the student may choose to complete a 6-credit master's thesis. The student will work with his/her academic advisor to identify as early as possible an appropriate mentor for the research project. Students choosing to complete a formal thesis will need to take a total of 6 credits of HRS 2925 (thesis research) or a combination of HRS 2924 (thesis proposal) and HRS 2925 totaling 6 credits in place of the 3 credits of Capstone Project. The completion of a thesis adds three additional credits to the Plan of Study, but these 3 credits can be spread over several terms so that there is no increase in tuition to the student.

Non-Thesis Option

The Master of Science in Prosthetics and Orthotics program expects all students to complete the non-thesis option as an alternative to completing a thesis. The non-thesis option is program-specific and reflects the culminating assignment to demonstrate the student's mastery of their area of study. Some programs require the student to complete the non-thesis option while others may give the student the opportunity to choose between completing a thesis or the non-thesis option. Students should refer to their home program/department for specific information on the non-thesis option.

Scholarly Paper

As part of the non-thesis option for a Master of Science degree, the Prosthetics an Orthotics program requires a scholarly paper. A scholarly paper is of publishable quality in a focused area.
Examples of scholarly papers include but are not limited to: small-scale interventional studies, survey studies, systematic reviews of the literature on a particular topic, development of health care policies, or development of evidence-based treatment procedures.

Identification of the mentor and second reviewer for the scholarly paper. A student who plans on writing a scholarly paper will work with the program faculty to identify an appropriate topic, and to identify a mentor and a second reviewer for the paper. The mentor may be a full-time, adjunct or clinical faculty member at the

University of Pittsburgh or another individual with expertise on the topic if approved by program faculty. Either the mentor or the second reviewer must have an SHRS faculty appointment.

Format. Departments may have established formats to which the student must adhere. Guidelines for submission of articles to a professional peer reviewed journal may also be used as a format. The general format for the paper is prescribed via the capstone and scholarly paper courses in the program. Any proposed research in support of the scholarly paper involving human subjects will need to be approved in advance by the University IRB.

The faculty mentor will work with the student to ensure appropriate content, style, and format for the paper are followed. An oral presentation of the final paper is included as part of the requirements.

Grades. The mentor and second reviewer will read the scholarly paper, assign a grade using the honors/satisfactory/unsatisfactory (H/S/U) grading option when the final paper and presentation is approved. The student must receive an “H” or “S” to receive credit for the scholarly paper.

Thesis Option

A thesis is a written report of an investigative study conducted by the student during their graduate program. The completion of a thesis requires that the student has the necessary knowledge and skills to conduct a valid study and that the thesis project is the investigation of a research question appropriate to the student’s focus of study. The thesis is usually a culminating experience for Master of Science programs and is completed under the guidance of a research mentor.
In the MSPO program, the thesis is an option, but not a requirement for completion of their program. Students should refer to their program handbook for specific guidelines and requirements for completing the thesis, the minimum number of thesis credits required, and for required courses.

Selecting a Thesis Committee

Committee members should be selected early in the formulation of the thesis project. The student should contact the proposed committee members, discuss the thesis topic, and obtain their consent to serve on the committee.

Committee Advisor/Chair:
In consultation with an academic advisor, the student will need to select a research mentor to serve as the Thesis Committee Advisor/Chair. The Advisor/Chair must have a faculty appointment within the Department and have expertise and research experience in the area of investigative study. If the Advisor/Chair is an adjunct member of the Department, they would be a co-advisor with a regular Department faculty member.

Committee Members: The committee will consist of University of Pittsburgh faculty members.

In consultation with the Thesis Advisor/Chair, the student selects 2 members:

- At least 1 member must be a SHRS faculty member from within the RST department.
- At least 1 committee member must be a regular (not adjunct) member of the SHRS Graduate Faculty.
- A 3rd committee member may be from within the department, SHRS or the University.
- Additional members from outside the University are allowed (serving as non-voting members) but not required, and these members would be in addition to the 2 University of Pittsburgh faculty members.

Thesis Committee Approval
The student must submit the Thesis Committee Approval Form to the academic advisor and Department Chair for review and approval. The form can be found on SHRS website at this link https://www.shrs.pitt.edu/student-

life/forms. The student must submit this completed form to: the assistant registrar, Lori Kieffer, with copies retained by the Thesis Advisor and the student.

Institutional Review Board (IRB).
In addition to approval from the thesis committee, any investigative study involving human subjects, including those involving the collection of data through questionnaires and medical record review, must also be approved by the scientific review committee/officer within the student's home department/program and then by the University of Pittsburgh Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Students should refer to the University's IRB website at http://www.irb.pitt.edu/ for submission requirements, meeting dates, and timelines. Due to the time required to prepare the IRB proposal and the approval process itself, the process of obtaining IRB approval should be started as early as possible. Students should review the Student Research Guide on the University of Pittsburgh website at http://www.irb.pitt.edu/student-research in order to obtain forms and to prepare research proposals for review by both the department and the University IRB. IRB approval is not needed for theses that do not involve the collection of data from humans (e.g. model building or theory development).

Thesis Draft
The student then submits a draft to the thesis committee chair in accordance with the ETD Format Guidelines Manual (described below). After approval by the committee chair the draft is presented to the thesis committee members.

Oral Defense
The final step in this process is the oral defense. This presentation is intended as a defense of the thesis project to the committee members, faculty, and colleagues. The student will need to follow the Setting up your Defense" to reserve their room and create their announcement. The announcement will be emailed to the entire school and placed on the digital screens in Forbes Tower and on the HYPERLINK https://calendar.pitt.edu/shrs SHRS Events Page.
Following the oral defense, the student will meet privately with the committee to address any outstanding questions or issues that may have arisen after the public presentation. At this time, the committee makes a recommendation regarding the approval of the thesis work. The thesis committee chair may reconvene the committee if necessary. The student is expected to prepare the final version of the thesis which should include any revisions that the committee has suggested and be in accordance with the ETD Format Guidelines in SHRS Graduate handbook3

Clinical Education Requirements for the MSPO Program

During term five (5), students participate in clinical education experiences at ABC certified orthotic and prosthetic facilities. Some opportunities are national, international, and local facilities. These facilities have clinical contracts with the University of Pittsburgh School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences. Students will be required to complete 340 hours during the final spring term. Clinical education during the final term of the Program will likely be conducted outside the Pittsburgh area. Any internship site must be approved by MSPO Program faculty, and a formal contract made with the proposed clinical site and is executable during the student's participation period.

Please carefully read and complete the following Clinical Education Requirements for the MSPO Program. This must be done prior to the start of clinical internships. The student is required to have completed certain requirements, as listed on the clinical education checklist. The MSPO program requires each student to maintain a daily log of their patient interaction. Also, a supervisory evaluation must be signed by the clinical mentor.

The following requirements apply to all SHRS programs that include clinical education experiences. Clinical learning experiences are an integral part of SHRS professional programs. Clinical learning experiences provide

the student with the opportunity to apply his/her knowledge in a supervised environment to develop clinical skills and judgment.

General SHRS Policies

1. Students must follow all policies of the University, SHRS, the department/program, and the assigned clinical site.
2. Each program's Clinical Education Coordinator will assign students to their clinical education sites.
3. All clinical education sites must have a current contract with the University of Pittsburgh.
4. Students will follow the same procedure to register for clinical education courses as for other courses.
5. Students should expect to travel during clinical education and are responsible for arranging/providing their own transportation. Students may be required to travel a distance or to relocate outside the area for his/her clinical education assignments.
6. All expenses for Exxat, required testing, transportation, parking, housing, meals, and cost of clinical education prerequisites associated with clinical education are the student's responsibility.
7. Any student who misses clinical time for any reason must meet with his/her Clinical Education Coordinator to discuss any needed make-up time.

Clinical Requirements

Students participate in one clinical internship throughout this graduate program. PO 2501 - Clinical internship involves a minimum of 340 hours. This gives the student the opportunity to observe and as much as possible, participate in patient care in a clinical setting. In addition to patient care, we would also like the students to become familiar with both the technical and business side of the profession, including requirements for reimbursement for provision of care.

We expect interns may not perform at the level of a new resident during the early stages of the clinical education experience, but we also expect students should increase their competency as they progress in their internship. Students should work with the clinical coordinator early on in their studies to identify a site of interest and devise a plan for this experience.

A summary of these requirements is included below:

EXXAT Approve Clinical Tracking Software

Students will pay a yearly $35 processing fee for accessing Exxat, the clinical tracking software used by RST. This site will be used throughout the length of the program in clinical courses and internship placements. Students will receive an email from Exxat to register once they have matriculated into the MSPO program. Students will be uploading ALL requirements to your Exxat dashboard where they will be approved, reminders of due dates and expirations will be noted. Students are responsible for setting up their Exxat account to manage their clinical education program and they are responsible for completing all clinical requirements prior to the start of their clinical education experience.

*The student is responsible for the costs related to completing clinical requirements.

Documentation Requirements

Physical Examination & Immunization Records	Required prior to placement and may be required annually

Proof of Personal Health Insurance	Required prior to placement and may be required annually
Tuberculin (PPD) Test	Required prior to placement and may be required annually
Agreement to Participate in Clinical Education	Required prior to placement and may be required annually
CPR & First Aid Certification (American Heart Association) http://www.americanheart.org	Valid for 2 years from certification date
Pennsylvania Criminal Record Check https://epatch.state.pa.us/Home.jsp	Required prior to placement and may be required annually
Child Abuse Background Check* https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home	Required prior to placement and may be required annually
FBI Background Check* https://uenroll.identogo.com/	Required prior to placement and may be required annually
Professional Liability Insurance	Required prior to placement and may be required annually
COVID-19/PPE training module https://wla.simmetrics.net/courses/catalogShow/10047	All students will be required to complete an education module related to COVID and don/doff personal protective equipment (PPE).

SHRS Health Form (Physical Examination and Immunization Records)

All incoming students to the University of Pittsburgh (graduate and undergraduate) must notify the Student Health Service (SHS) that they meet the immunization requirements of the University. As part of the immunizations, students are required to produce proof of immunity, which generally involves titers and may require boosters. Titers are often charged out-of-pocket. While we recommend checking rates with your physician and health insurance plan. In order to do this, please go to the SHS website, review the immunization requirements, then download and complete the “Incoming Student Immunization Form”. Click on http://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/shs/

On right hand side, click on “Student Immunization Requirements.”

Review each topic in the sub menu, then click on “Submission of Immunization Records.”

Helpful information:

If you do not have the dates of your immunizations, you can have titers drawn and enter those values.

It is okay to fill out demographic information and then upload a formal record of your immunizations with the electronic form if you prefer instead of filling out the dates.

The form does not have to be signed by a physician.

As noted on the SHS site, you DO NOT have to send a formal record in the mail.

Below are estimated clinical fees external to the program tuition costs and fees:

EXXAT Account *$35 yearly*

Universal 10-Panel Drug screening	*$29*
Blood Test (titers), example Allegheny County Residents	*(may vary based on location)*
Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Varicella	*$15 each = $60*
Hepatitis B	*$25 each = $25*
T dap	*$50*

*Please note that you will need to complete this requirement before classes begin. Once you have submitted this form to the Student Health Services, please notify the Education & Training Manager, that you completed this requirement. All students should complete this action item by the end of August and will be asked to upload documentation into your Exxat dashboard.

Students will NOT be allowed to begin supervised clinical experience until every module and requirement is completed and verified by faculty. Please note, students who are not immunized will not be able to participate in clinical education at certain sites. Additionally, sites students select may require more requirements via the contracts provided by that site. A clinical site can choose to delay or deny a student to complete their internship with them if they do not comply with all the requirements.

SHRS Academic Integrity Code

https://www.shrs.pitt.edu/academic-integrity

The student is responsible for reading the SHRS Academic Integrity Code, which can be found online at the address above. A student has an obligation to exhibit honesty, and to respect the ethical standards of the profession in carrying out his or her academic assignments. Without limiting the application of this principle, a student may be found to have violated this obligation if he or she:

- Refers during an academic evaluation to materials or sources, or employs devices, not authorized by the instructor.
- Provides assistance during an academic evaluation to another person in a manner not authorized by the instructor.
- Receives assistance during an academic evaluation from another person in a manner not authorized by the instructor.
- Engages in unauthorized possession, buying, selling, obtaining, or using of any materials intended as an instrument of academic evaluation in advance of its administration.
- Acts as a substitute for another person in any academic evaluation process.
- Utilizes a substitute in any academic evaluation procedures.
- Practices any form of deceit in an academic evaluation proceeding.
- Depends on the aid of others in a manner expressly prohibited by the instructor, in the research, preparation, creation, writing, performing, or publication of work to be submitted for academic credit or evaluation.
- Provides aid to another person, knowing such aid is expressly prohibited by the instructor, in the research, preparation, creation, writing, performing, or publication of work to be submitted for academic credit or evaluation.
- Presents as one's own, for academic evaluation, the ideas, representations, or words of another person or persons without customary and proper acknowledgment of sources.
- Submits the work of another person in a manner that represents the work to be one's own.
- Knowingly permits one's work to be submitted by another person without the instructor's authorization.
- Attempts to influence or change one's academic evaluation or record for reasons other than achievement or merit.
- Indulges, during a class (or examination) session in which one is a student, in conduct that is so disruptive as to infringe upon the rights of the instructor or fellow students.
- Fails to cooperate, if called upon, in the investigation or disposition of any allegation of dishonesty pertaining to another student, or any other breach of a student's obligation to exhibit honesty.

Academic Integrity Policy for Quizzes, Exams, and Certification Preparation

Purpose

To uphold the academic and professional standards of the University of Pittsburgh MSPO program, allow faculty to assess the level of understanding of the student and prepare students for high-stakes credentialing exams (e.g., ABC certification), and to allow students to demonstrate their understanding and ability to communicate content. This policy outlines expectations for conduct during all assessments.

Scope

This policy applies to all graded assessments, including quizzes, in-class and take-home exams, and simulated board-style tests. It supplements, and does not replace, the SHRS Academic Integrity Code and the MSPO Student Code of Conduct.

Policy Statement

Students are expected to act with honesty and integrity in all academic activities. During assessments, the following actions are strictly prohibited:

- Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools:

Use of AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, etc.) during quizzes, exams, or any assessment is prohibited unless explicitly permitted. This includes AI assistance in drafting, answering, or reviewing any part of an assessment.

- Accessing Unauthorized Materials:

No access to reference materials, textbooks, notes, websites, or files is permitted during closed-book assessments unless otherwise stated.

- Leaving the Assessment Page:

For online assessments, students must remain on the quiz or exam page at all times. Navigating to other windows, tabs, or applications is not allowed.

- Communication and Collaboration:

Students may not communicate with classmates or others in any form (verbal, written, electronic, or otherwise) during assessments, nor may they view or share the work of others.

- Use of Prohibited Devices:

Unless specifically authorized, no phones, smartwatches, earbuds, or any other electronic devices may be used during assessments.

- Proctoring and Lockdown Compliance:

Students must comply with proctoring requirements, including the use of lockdown browsers and video monitoring when specified.

Alignment with Certification Standards

This policy mirrors the professional expectations of board exams and clinical practice, where independent decision-making and integrity are critical. Violations undermine readiness for credentialing and licensure.

Consequences of Violation

All violations of academic integrity are taken seriously and will be managed in accordance with the SHRS Academic Integrity Code and MSPO Student Code of Conduct. Sanctions may include:
- A failing grade on the assessment
- Formal letter of concern
- Academic probation
- Dismissal from the program, in cases of repeated or egregious conduct

Acknowledgment

Students will be required to review and acknowledge this policy prior to each academic term in which assessments are administered. Faculty will remind students of this policy prior to major evaluations.

University of Pittsburgh MSPO Student Code of Conduct:

1. Through their acts and words, both oral and written, MSPO students shall respect the rights and dignity of all individuals.
2. MSPO students will act in a trustworthy manner towards others, including all faculty, staff, peers and patients.
3. MSPO students will attend all MSPO program classes for which they are registered.
4. MSPO students will arrive for class, clinic visits, clinical experiences or any other assigned meetings/gatherings on time.
5. MSPO students will turn in every assignment made by a faculty member to that faculty member on time and in a completed condition.
6. MSPO students will demonstrate a positive attitude toward all curricular requirements.
7. MSPO students will behave in a professional manner at all times. They will avoid behaviors that may be distracting to others.
8. MSPO students will take responsibility for reading and following the syllabus for each course they enroll.
9. MSPO students will take responsibility for their actions by accepting the consequences of their choices and responding in a mature manner.
10. MSPO students must be aware that the ingestion of drugs/alcohol prior to, or during, a training session will result in dismissal from the program. For the protection of fellow students, faculty, staff, and patient models, the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences and Technology reserves the right to drug/alcohol test(s) any student during any training activity. Failure to submit to drug/alcohol testing will result in dismissal from the program.
11. MSPO students will assume the role of adult learners by taking initiative in the learning process and seeking help from the faculty or other resource(s) when it is needed.
12. MSPO students will engage in learning and implementing the practice of self-assessment and professional development.
13. MSPO students will assist in maintaining laboratory and classroom cleanliness by cleaning their own tools and workspace each day, by adhering to schedules of cleaning laboratory common space, and by adhering to other policies set by the MSPO faculty.

Cell phone use in the classroom or lab during presentations is prohibited. If you are texting or on your cell phone, you will be dismissed from class for the day.

The use of headphones and/or ear buds is prohibited in the classroom and lab.

Note: MSPO students are also subject to the University-wide SHRS Policy on Failure to Communicate and the SHRS Impaired Student Policy, which addresses professional fitness for classroom, clinical, and research settings.

Absence Policy

Students are allowed up to a maximum of one (1) excused absence per term. Students are required to contact their instructor prior to missing class and retain written proof of excuse. (i.e., email) Tardiness is not acceptable. Three (3) tardy / late arrivals to class will result in an unexcused absence. Two (2) unexcused absences will result in a decrease of one letter grade. Remediation steps will be taken as needed on a case-by-case basis.

Students are responsible for any content missed during an absence (excused or unexcused). It may not be possible to make up curriculum sessions that are not feasible to recreate, such as clinical skills sessions with patients, a skills lab, standardized patient session, or hands-on simulation program. As a result, grades may be affected.

When any academic or clinical faculty member identifies and documents an instance of unprofessional behavior, the following procedures will be followed:

1. The faculty member meets with the student to identify the unprofessional behavior, and counsels the student to demonstrate conduct consistent with the standard.
2. If the faculty determines that the student subsequently fails to meet the professional conduct standard, the faculty member, student, and program director meet to further counsel the student to demonstrate conduct consistent with the standard and the student is given a letter of concern documenting the pattern of behavior and dates of counseling. The letter will state that the student must meet with his/her advisor to develop a remediation plan. The letter will also state that if the student is not successful in completing the remediation plan or is not able to meet the professional conduct standard by the date specified, as observed by the faculty, the student will be placed on probation.
3. The terms of the probation will include that the student is required to meet with his/her advisor. At that meeting, the student, assisted by the advisor, develops a remediation plan, including the required date of completion. A written copy of the plan will be signed by the student and faculty advisor indicating readiness for implementation. The student and faculty advisor will each retain a copy of the signed plan for future reference
4. The student is required to implement the remediation plan and complete it by the date specified.
5. If the student is not successful in completing the remediation plan by the date specified or is not able to meet the professional conduct standard by the date specified, as observed by the faculty (including clinical faculty), program chair and/or advisor, the student will be dismissed from the program.

If a student behaves unprofessional or inappropriate during the clinical internship, the student will be asked to leave that clinical site. The student will meet with their academic advisor and Program Director to receive verbal counseling and a verbal warning to correct the behavior. The student will have to preform remediation work designed by the advisor / director and will send a letter of apology to the clinical internship site.

Class Liaison selection:

All students will select two fellow students to represent the class as liaisons.

Fall term students will be divided into two groups (lab A and lab B) by faculty.

Liaison responsibilities:

It is recommended that the liaison meet weekly with their half of the class to gather anonymous comments from the group.

- Class leader, voice for members of the class
- Distributes pertinent information (announcements and emails) to designated lab section Comprehensive role as class liaison.
- Meet with faculty on a monthly basis.
- Assist staff as needed, proactive with inventory control Assist faculty with monitoring lab cleanliness and safety.
- Assist faculty with dress code, conduct, lab and classroom rules.

Miscellaneous:

Parking: Students are encouraged to ride the bus, bike or walk to Bakery Square. Bike racks are accessible on the property. Parking is available in the Bakery Square parking garage for a fee.

Building Access: Students will be given access the Bakery Square Building with an access card or key fob. Security is available to escort you to your car if needed. Security is on site and available 24/7. They can be reached by calling 412-770-6789.

Communication: All students are expected to check their @pitt.edu email address while attending the University. It is important to stay in contact with faculty and staff about current events. Additionally, students will work with class lab liaisons and PORTSO to create a group communication system (phone tree, group text thread, ect) to enhance communication of school closing, class cancellations or delays.

Fundraising, fliers and printed materials: Any item, photo or literature with the MSPO / Pitt Logo or program name or school name must be approved by the program director prior to dispersing the materials or goods. i.e. fundraising fliers, t-shirts, thank you cards, etc. This pertains to the student group as well.

MSPO Student Dress Code

Policy

It is the policy of the University of Pittsburgh's Master of Science in Prosthetics and Orthotics Program that personal appearance reflects general cleanliness, good grooming, and professional identity. These guidelines were developed in careful consideration of our public image, infection control and safety. Exceptions to this policy may be made based on medical, religious and ethnic issues.

General Guidelines

MSPO students are expected to present a professional, businesslike image at all times when representing the University of Pittsburgh's MSPO Program. This includes clinical affiliations, meetings, labs, classes, etc. that are held outside of the University, and in the classroom when guest lecturers, patients or other visitors are present. For patients and visitors, the appearance of the faculty and students can be an indication of the quality of care they can expect. Students are to dress in a manner that encourages respect for the dignity of patients and visitors and that enhances the professional environment. When attending facilities outside of the University of Pittsburgh for educational purposes, students will be expected to comply with the dress codes of these facilities or wear proper professional attire. A professional appearance must be always maintained. For example, clothing must be clean and neat and appropriate undergarments must be worn.

Laboratory Clothes

When studying surface anatomy, muscle testing, goniometry, and other measurement or evaluative techniques, students may need to wear clothes that will expose body segments or joints. In these circumstances, the course instructor will inform students to come to class prepared for this. Gym clothes (shorts, t-shirt, tank- top) can be worn under scrubs or other outer clothing. Nylons and leggings are also permitted to wear.

When working on fabrication of orthotic or prosthetic devices, students should wear clean scrubs over a t-shirt. A lab coat can be worn over the scrubs. Shoes should be closed-toe.

Long hair contained in hair net or hair tie. Personal protective equipment worn to protect eyes (safety glasses) and ears (disposable ear protection) provided in the lab.

General Classroom Clothes

In the interest of personal safety and consideration for others, it is the policy of the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences that students adhere to some basic standards of dress and grooming while attending classes and when in SHRS buildings. Students are expected to:

- Wear closed-toe footwear,
- Dress modestly (no inappropriate skin exposure, no exposed undergarments),
- Maintain personal hygiene,
- Present themselves in a professional manner with wearing business casual clothing or issued scrub set.

Exceptions to this policy may be made based on verified medical, religious, or ethnic issues. In addition, students are expected to abide by any dress code policy established by their program or department.

Bakery Square: When visitors or patients are present, students will be expected to wear clean scrubs or neat slacks or skirt and a collared shirt or blouse. When only faculty and students are present in a classroom

situation, scrubs and shoes used during fabrication can be worn. Please do not wear hats or bandannas in the classroom or lab.

Clothes for clinical education or clinical visits

Students should follow the guidelines of the clinic that they are attending. To understand the policies and expectations at the clinic site, the student should contact the site in advance of attendance.

General Guidelines for Students with Direct Patient Care and/or Uniform Requirements

Students required to wear uniforms must comply with the facility-specific color guidelines and dress code.

In consideration for infection control and patient safety:

- Hair should be neat, clean and pulled back with small simple hair accessories so hair does not come in contact with the patient. Hair color of an unnatural tone is not permitted (green, blue, pink, purple, etc.)
- Beards and mustaches should be short, clean, and well groomed. Males must be clean shaven when using ventilation masks.
- Wearing excessive jewelry is not appropriate. Facial and oral jewelry is not permitted.
- Nails should be well groomed and kept to a length that is not detrimental to patient safety
- When having direct contact with patients at high risk, artificial fingernails or extenders must not be worn and natural nail tips must be less than one quarter (1/4) inch long.
- Footwear must be clean, closed-toe duty or leather or vinyl athletic shoe, primarily white. The athletic shoes must be in good condition and used for work purposes only. Foot coverings (hose or socks) are required.

Orthotics and Prosthetics Laboratory and Classroom Cleanliness

The classroom and laboratories of the MSPO Program should be kept as clean as possible for safety and appearance purposes. We are located within Bakery Square, which houses other University offices and other businesses. Therefore, we also need to respect the needs of the other occupants of Bakery Square. For example, we cannot track plaster in the hallways or leave messes in the common areas.

Procedures:

Each day, you, the student, are responsible for:

- Cleaning up your own work bench and tools, including the floor around the work bench,
- Cleaning up your treatment table and surrounding area after use,
- Cleaning any common-use tools or equipment after use,
- Putting all common-use tools, equipment, or supplies back where they belong,
- Storing projects or materials that you are using on your workbench or in your locker,
- Completing any general cleaning assignment given to you,
- Cleaning up any spills or splashes of plaster in the plaster room or elsewhere.

Plaster should not be put into sinks since it will clog the drains. Instead, allow excessive plaster to dry, and then discard it into waste baskets. Plaster in water solution remaining after making casts/impressions can be poured into sinks, while the faucet is on to facilitate drainage.

Upholstered chairs are not to be used in the functional analysis lab to prevent plaster and other fabrication materials from ruining them.

Clean plaster debris and dust from your shoes before leaving the O&P fabrication areas to prevent the tracking of plaster into classrooms or hallways.

Materials and equipment provided in laboratories and classrooms is to be used for course- related work only. Violation of this may be cause for monetary restitution in which the student may be required to reimburse the MSPO program for any damages.

If a student has any program concerns, questions, or complaints please request an appointment with your academic advisor or Program Director to address your issues.

General Information

Pitt Website: http://www.pitt.edu/

SHRS Website: http://www.shrs.pitt.edu/

SHRS Graduate Student Handbook:

https://www.shrs.pitt.edu/student-handbooks/2024-2025_graduate-student-handbook/

Pitt Photo ID: https://www.pc.pitt.edu/panther-card/pre-submit-your-panther-card-photo

Libraries: https://www.library.pitt.edu/

Student Affairs: https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/campus-recreation/

Campus Map: http://www.tour.pitt.edu/

Academic Calendars: https://www.registrar.pitt.edu/calendars

MSPO Student Guide

Official Statement of Acknowledgement

By signing this form, I certify that I have read, understand, and received the University of Pittsburgh's MSPO student guide and acknowledge the terminology, rules, policies, conduct including plagiarism, tardiness, absence, attitudes, behaviors, expectations and program hierarchy.

_____

(Printed Student Name)

_____

(Signature of Student) Date