

## Frequently Asked Questions about MCB, UConn and Storrs

### **How much are grad student's fees?**

PhD students are supported with a Graduate Assistantship during their career as an MCB PhD student which carries a full tuition fee waiver and you would only be responsible for the fees set by the UConn Graduate School (typically \$1000 to \$1500 detailed on the Graduate School Website: <https://bursar.uconn.edu/graduate-students-3/> )

### **When are grad student fees due?**

When you register for the semester, there will be a fee bill due date provided to you. If fees are not paid in full you will receive a late fee. After day 10 of the semester, if the fee bill continues to have a balance, you will receive a second late fee.

### **Are there resources for students who become pregnant/ have a medical issue and need time off?**

To apply for a leave of absence or to step away from your academic studies or GA employment, please submit a Voluntary Separation Notification form to The Graduate School.

### **Are there Health Insurance options for MCB PhD students?**

Graduate Assistantships include the opportunity to continue to purchase subsidized health insurance under the Connecticut Partnership Plan. Information about the medical and dental insurance plan as well as other optional benefits you may purchase are available at the following website: <http://www.hr.uconn.edu>.

### **Do students get paid during breaks and summers?**

Technically, students do not get paid over the summer. However, there are fellowship opportunities that students can apply for and many PIs pay their students a stipend over the summer, if funds are available.

### **What university and department requirements/ checkpoints/ exams exist and what is the success rate of these for students?**

Our PhD student schedule involves a student meeting with their committee every year, to insure progress towards and success in the program. In the third year, students write and present their research proposal, which is the most rigorous "exam". Most students pass their milestones or require a minor corrective action to fill gaps in background or research knowledge (e.g., take a class). Further details regarding PhD program milestones can be found here: <https://mcb.uconn.edu/milestones/>

### **How many past students have found postdocs/ how long after their defense did they get one?**

Yes we have found that most students who want a postdoc are able to find one in a timely fashion. Our students have gone on to postdoc positions at Yale, Harvard, Penn, UNC, Johns Hopkins, Cornell, Penn, UVA, BC along with many in government and industry, such as NIH, National Cancer Institute, USDA, NIAID, Walter Reed, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Boehringer Ingelheim and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory.

### **How much is rent?**

It sounds like most rents are \$700 - \$1000/month but can be lower or higher, depending on various parameters (mostly distance from Storrs, number of roommates.)

### **Where are good places to find housing/ roommates?**

Lots of students find roommates through Facebook (Marketplace) or through their contacts during recruitment or other students in their cohort. UConn has this site: <https://offcampushousing.uconn.edu/> that should allow grad students to look for roommates.

### **Where do most grad students live?**

The majority of our grad students live within a half an hour from Storrs, in towns such as:

- West Hartford
- Tolland
- Glastonbury
- Vernon
- Manchester
- Willimantic
- Storrs Center
- Coventry
- Willington
- Putnam
- Ellington
- Marlborough
- Andover
- Rockville
- South Windsor

### **What do grad students do on weekends in Storrs?**

- Bushnell Park –Ice Skating and Musicals
- Boston
- Hiking Trails - Nipmuck, Appalachian, Mattabasset, etc.

Shoreline beaches  
Coventry Farmers Market  
Climbing at Central Rock Gym  
West Hartford  
UConn Basketball Games  
Racquetball  
Explore Breweries/Wineries  
New York City  
Running on the rail trail  
Biking  
Vermont  
UConn Rec Center  
Jorgensen Center of Arts events  
Bowling / Laser tag/play pool  
Intramural sports  
Providence  
Cross country ski  
Kayak

### **Are most students from the area?**

A lot of MCB grad students are from the Northeast, but we also have students from all over the country, as well as some international students.

### **How long is your commute?**

Living in:

Mansfield/Storrs <10 minutes

Willimantic ~20 minutes

Manchester ~25-30 minutes

Hartford area ~40+ minutes

### **What's the COVID situation at UConn, Storrs, and CT?**

Connecticut has been very good about masks and social distancing and the numbers for the state are "ok" and can be viewed here: <https://portal.ct.gov/coronavirus>

UConn itself has encouraged distance learning, limited students on campus and is having many people work from home, so the campus has been pretty successful at limiting the spread of COVID.

The UConn COVID dashboard is here: <https://reopen.uconn.edu/covid-dashboard/>

All the UConn COVID resources are here: <https://reopen.uconn.edu/>

### **Do UConn GAs/TAs/RAs have a union?**

Yes.

### **Where does everyone park?**

Graduate students can obtain a parking pass for Area 2 or the North/South parking garages. More information can be found at <https://park.uconn.edu/>

### **Do graduate classes require expensive textbooks?**

Some MCB graduate classes do require textbooks. As graduate students, you'll be taking fewer classes than you did as an undergrad, and not all of them require textbooks.

### **Is it appropriate the contact faculty / grad students to talk about rotations before new grad students come to campus?**

YES.

### **Who can you contact for various administrative problems?**

Our MCB office has an amazing set of administrators. Chelsea Bartos is our Graduate Program Coordinator, and she can help you with questions about admissions, payroll, TA assignments and student records. Ashley Landon is our Administrative Coordinator and she handles travel, reimbursements, office supplies and room scheduling. Maggie McDonnell is the Department Administrator and she oversees finances, personnel, fellowships and awards and facilities. Dana Masse is our Administrative Assistant who works with visas, student labor and payroll. All their [contact information is on the MCB website](#).

### **(For Ph.D. students) How long can I expect to have TA support?**

PhD students are guaranteed 6 years of support, but this is a minimum, depending on a student's progress/status.

### **(For Master's students) What are the chances that I will receive a TA?**

Most Master's students who want a TA have historically been able to get one but it varies semester to semester depending on the course load.

### **What other mechanisms of financial support are there?**

In addition to your nine-month TA/RA stipend, MCB has a number of fellowships which provide support for student's summer research. More information can be found here: <https://mcb.uconn.edu/financial-support/>. In addition, many labs provide RA summer fellowship which are paid for from extramural grants.

### **Can students manage without a car?**

While most students have cars, this answer depends entirely on where you live. If you live within walking/biking distance to Storrs, you might not need a car because there is a grocery store and some restaurants and some other necessities (e.g., laundromat).

### **What is the average time-to-degree for a Ph.D.?**

6 years.

### **What wellness support is there for graduate students (mental health, nutrition, etc.)?**

UConn has a [Student Health and Wellness page](#) that contains a lot of information about their many different services. They have a specific page about mental health [here](#) and another about nutrition [here](#). There is also an [on-campus rec center](#).

### **Is there support for grad students who have a conflict with their PI/ a lab member?**

The departmental organization is meant to help in these (rare) circumstances. There are four “AOC heads” that students can go to for help resolving conflicts, as well as other PIs in the department. There are also people on campus that can help that are not in the MCB department: the [Graduate School](#), the [Ombuds Office](#), or even the [multiple cultural centers](#) on campus are options for trying to resolve conflicts in a safe and professional context.

### **How many professional meetings do students typically go to? Are there funding sources available for them?**

Pending budgetary approval, The Graduate School awards a limited number of spring and fall Doctoral Student Travel Fellowship (DSTF) awards in the amount of \$750 for doctoral students. Funds are limited and not guaranteed. Funding is dispersed on a first-come, first-served basis. More information can be found here: <https://grad.uconn.edu/financing/fellowships/travel-fellowship/>

The department offers two travel fellowships of \$1,000 each to students who present their research at our MCB Research Seminars on Fridays.

The number of meetings a student attends varies and is a decision that is made between student and PI. Deciding factors include available funds in laboratory budgets, conference scheduling and status of research projects.

### **What type of career counseling resources are available?**

UConn has a [Center for Career Development](#) that has abundant resources, from general tips, to online resources, to one-on-one meetings. Individual PIs and lab groups are also great resources for career questions and development.

### **Can a PhD student leave with a Master's degree?**

Yes, we have a mechanism in place for this.

### **Can a Master's student apply to the PhD Program?**

Yes, we have a mechanism in place for this.

### **Are there clubs or organizations to join? Do students socialize with each other?**

MCB has a graduate organization, called [Go:MCB](#), that students can join specifically within the department. UConn has many additional social/cultural/entertainment/etc clubs that students are welcome to join.

### **What are the teaching responsibilities like?**

Students on a GA are expected to work ~20 hours/week on teaching duties, which vary by class but include in-class instruction, out of class organizational meetings, and grading.

### **Are there technology resources or support available to students?**

Yes. UConn has a [Technology Support Center](#) available for students.

### **Are there childcare options available?**

UConn has a day care and preschool on campus, called [Child Development Labs](#), with a sliding fee based on household income. However, placement can be competitive, depending on the age of the child and room in the program; it is probably a good idea to contact them as soon as you can if you are interested in getting a spot. It has also been strongly affected by COVID, since it partially relies on students to maintain required child to teacher ratios.

Storrs has several other child care options and one that is particularly close to campus (and also excellent) is [Educational Playcare](#). [CCC](#) is a little farther from campus, but is a little cheaper and has a strong focus on outdoor learning.