

Rules and Policies for the program leading to the Graduate Certificate in Bioethics “Certificate Program Handbook” as of August 2026

INTRODUCTION

This handbook is a compendium of program requirements for the Graduate Certificate in Bioethics of the University of Pittsburgh. Any discrepancy between the guidelines contained herein and those of the University shall be resolved in favor of the University’s guidelines.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with a disability that requires special testing accommodations or other classroom modifications need to notify both the instructor and the Office of Disability Resources and Services no later than the 2nd week of the term. Students may be asked to provide documentation of their disability to determine the appropriateness of accommodations. To notify Disability Resources and Services, call 412-648-7890 (Voice or TDD) to schedule an appointment. The Office is located in 140 William Pitt Union. Upon matriculation students should also inform the Program Director of their particular needs.

GUIDELINES OF THE PROGRAM

THE PROGRAM OF STUDY

A total of 15 credits is required for the Graduate Certificate in Bioethics. Each student will meet with the Program Director, and together they will arrange the student’s program. Incoming students register at the beginning of their first term. Continuing students must adhere to registration deadlines promulgated by the Dietrich School of Arts & Sciences each year. Students must also adhere to guidelines and deadlines for adding, dropping, or withdrawing from classes and must have the permission of the Program Director to do so. Course descriptions and schedules are available online. The Program Administrator will provide permission numbers to enable students to register after they have consulted with the Program Director. Each semester the Program Administrator will need to “lift the advising hold” that is placed on students’ ability to register; this hold is placed each term to ensure that students consult with the Program Director prior to registering.

Students whose grade point average falls below 3.0 will not be allowed to continue until the Program faculty have reviewed their work and decided whether or not they may continue in the program. The program of study includes core courses and electives.

CORE COURSES

Students take three core courses (9 credits) focused on the philosophical foundation of the interdisciplinary field of bioethics: *Philosophy of Medicine*, *Theoretical Foundations of Applied Ethics*, and either *Bioethics*.

BIOETH 2658: *Philosophy of Medicine* (3 cr.) An examination of key philosophical concepts and issues, such as concepts of health and disease, subjective experience of pain and illness, production of knowledge, causality, and paradigms of medical reasoning.

BIOETH 2661: *Theoretical Foundations of Applied Ethics* (3 cr.) An examination of classical ethical theories focusing on the relationship between ethical theory and ethical decision-making.

BIOETH 2664: *Bioethics* (3 cr.) A graduate-level introduction to classic topics, texts, and approaches in contemporary bioethics, and critical examination of the practice of bioethics itself.

ELECTIVES: A minimum of six additional credits of elective course work is required. Courses are chosen from the University's graduate offerings. The choice of these courses should be made in accordance with the student's interests, other academic work, and career objectives. Students should also be aware that neighboring institutions, including Carnegie Mellon University and Duquesne University, may offer relevant courses that students may petition to count as electives; reciprocal arrangements with these institutions enable full-time students to take such courses without paying additional tuition. More information is available at [Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education \(PCHE\)](#).

This list is intended to suggest the range of potential electives. Each term, students should consult the current course offerings and the Program Director to select elective courses. Students may petition to have particular courses count as an elective. The process is informal; send an email to the program director. Students should keep in mind that many departments and programs, including the Bioethics Program, offer Directed Readings and Special Topics courses.

Course name	Department/School and course number
<i>Bioethics and Law</i>	Law 5464
<i>Clinical Ethics Practicum</i>	Bioethics 2604
<i>Dimensions of Aging: Culture and Health</i>	Behavioral and Community Health Sciences 2532
<i>Ethical Issues in Genetic Counseling</i>	Human Genetic 2052
<i>Ethical Issues in Public Health Genetics and Research</i>	Human Genetic 2062
<i>Ethnographic and Qualitative Methods</i>	Behavioral and Community Health Sciences 3007
<i>Feminist Social Work</i>	Social Work 2058
<i>Health Law and Policy</i>	Law 5395
<i>Kantian Ethics</i>	Philosophy 2171
<i>Law of Mental Health</i>	Law 5747
<i>Moral Theory</i>	Philosophy 2310
<i>Narrative, Literature and the Experience of Illness</i>	Medicine Elective 5910
<i>Philosophy of Psychiatry</i>	History and Philosophy of Science 2740
<i>Philosophy of Psychiatry and Mad Studies</i>	Bioethics 2698 (Special Topics)

<i>Philosophy of Science</i>	History and Philosophy of Science 2101, Philosophy 2600
<i>Public Health Approaches to Women's Health</i>	Behavioral and Community Health Sciences 2599
<i>Public Health Law</i>	Law 5089
<i>Research Ethics and Responsible Conduct of Research</i>	BIOETH 2030, PUBHLT 2030 (1 cr.), this may be paired with a Directed Reading
<i>Risk Communication</i>	Behavioral and Community Health Sciences 2572
<i>Seminar in Family Planning</i>	Behavioral and Community Health Sciences 2562
<i>Social Movements</i>	Sociology 2341, History 2043
<i>Sustainability in Latin America</i>	Bioethics 2668
<i>Theories of Gender and Sexuality</i>	Gender, Sexuality, & Women's Studies 2252

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND REQUIREMENTS

ADDITIONAL BIOETHICS ACTIVITIES

Certificate students are encouraged to attend in lectures, colloquia, reading groups, and conferences related to bioethics, research ethics, and the health humanities. These activities are sponsored by a variety of University units, including the Bioethics Program; Center for Health Equity; Center for Philosophy of Science; Center for Research Ethics; Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Program; Humanities Center; Institute for Bioethics; School of Law; and the Research, Ethics and Society Initiative of Pitt Research. A curated list of these activities, including national and regional conferences, are posted on the events calendar of the [Center for Research Ethics](#) and many are listed on the [University calendar of events](#).

GUIDELINES, REQUIREMENTS, AND DEADLINES

Students are responsible for obtaining and adhering to relevant guidelines, requirements, and deadlines described in University documents and on University websites, including the [Academic Integrity Code](#). To learn more about Academic Integrity, visit the library system's [Academic Integrity Guide](#) for an overview of the topic and especially consult [Understand and Avoid Plagiarism](#) by English Professor Mark Kemp.

Incomplete grades (I or G) must be cleared within the deadline established by the Dietrich School of Arts & Sciences or the course instructor, whichever is more stringent.

Failure to complete the Program requirements will be considered grounds for termination from the program.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE / GENERATIVE AI

Most importantly, people learn by doing. In the case of learning about bioethics and learning how to “do” bioethics, students learn by reading, listening, thinking, finding flaws in others’ arguments, organizing ideas, making arguments, outlining papers, re-organizing papers, revising drafts, as well as by observing, collecting data, analyzing them, interpreting them, comparing those

interpretations to previously published findings, and talking with others. Students learn by doing all these activities themselves.

At some point, a person likely does not learn anything more about the processes of multiplication or division by doing yet another calculation “by hand.” At that point, it makes sense to use a calculator. It is unclear at this time in the introduction and evolution of AI, at what point a person working in bioethics and its related disciplines might not benefit from reading another article in full (rather than reading an AI summary), or might not benefit from outlining an argument the first, second, or “umpteenth” time (rather than prompting a generative AI tool to do it); however, it is unlikely that students will fail to benefit from doing these activities themselves.

It is likely that studying bioethics –and maybe even doing bioethics across a long career—will always be more like reading a poem than like doing long division. People have found value in reading poems, novels, and stories, even after they’ve already mastered the skill of reading, and even when they’ve read a particular work before and know “what it means” or know how the story concludes. The meaning and the value changes over time as the reader brings additional experience and ideas to the text. Reading bioethical arguments and reports of empirical findings may be a lot like reading poems and stories in that regard.

It will take time to discover when and how generative AI can be helpful in bioethics in the ways that calculators (and specialized computer programs) are useful in arithmetic and de rigueur in so many fields (like accounting, architecture, and engineering). Ultimately, it is the opportunity and responsibility of individual people, including students, to avoid becoming victims of the “deskilling” that is a risk of reliance on technologies like calculators, spellcheck, and generative AI.

Authors, including students, are responsible for the content that they produce by whatever means, including the use of AI/GenAI. When submitting work for classes or in fulfillment of degree requirements, students should ascertain and adhere to applicable guidelines, including limitations, regarding the use of AI/GenAI. This would mean consulting relevant course instructors, advisors, and University policies and guidance regarding the use of AI/GenAI. When creating or submitting work for publication or other forms of evaluation (e.g., for grant funding or awards), students must ascertain and adhere to applicable policies and guidelines. Editors, publishers, and funding agencies are among the entities that have established policies and guidelines. It is important to remember that both these technologies and the policies and guidance regarding them are constantly evolving. Among relevant policies and guidelines are:

- International Committee of Medical Journal Editors, [*Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals*](#)
- Congressional Research Service, [*Generative Artificial Intelligence and Copyright Law*](#)
- [*Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Generative AI in Research and Education*](#) [*Generative AI Resources for Faculty*](#), University of Pittsburgh

INACTIVE STATUS

A graduate student who is not registered for at least one credit during a 12-month period is transferred to inactive status and must file an application for readmission to graduate study

(application fee may be required) before being permitted to register again. Readmission is not automatic, the application fee must be paid, and the original statute of limitations remains in effect. Students on inactive status may not apply to graduate.

LEAVES OF ABSENCE

Students may request a leave of absence and are advised to do so to avoid becoming inactive. Students should consult the Program Administrator or the Dietrich School's Office of Graduate Studies to obtain the correct form to submit their written request to the Program Director detailing the reason for and length of their proposed leave. The Program Director will consider such requests in consultation with core faculty as necessary.

A student may apply for an official leave of absence from graduate study in cases of illness or personal concerns. The length and rationale for the leave of absence must be stated in advance, and the leave must be recommended to the Dean by the Program Director and approved by the Dean. Only one leave of absence may be obtained by a student during her or his graduate career. If the leave of absence has been approved, the statute of limitations for the degree is extended by the length of time of the leave. A student on an approved leave of absence must apply for readmission, but readmission is automatic and the fee will be waived. Leaves cannot be granted to inactive students.