

UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO GRADUATE STUDENT PROGRAM
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS *(February 2018)*

1. Why was this program developed?

Columbia has been in regular communication with the administration of the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) starting soon after Hurricane María devastated the island to determine how best to help UPR in the aftermath of the storm. We also consulted extensively with the [Leadership Alliance](#), which was coordinating many of the UPR relief efforts by mainland institutions, to ensure that our efforts to support faculty and students in Puerto Rico were aligned with their needs. After UPR decided that it would no longer seek to place its undergraduate students in universities on the mainland, it asked Columbia to develop opportunities for graduate students whose research progress had been interrupted or slowed due to the effects of the storm. One key way identified by UPR to help was for Columbia faculty to host UPR PhD students in their labs for a semester or more.

2. What research will UPR students be engaged in while at Columbia?

UPR students will be at Columbia to engage in research in furtherance of the completion of their thesis projects. All participants will be expected to return to UPR to complete their degrees.

3. Can international students at UPR participate?

International students studying at the University of Puerto Rico may be eligible depending on their visa status. These cases should be immediately shared with the [ISSO Faculty and Scholar Services Team](#) by the Columbia faculty member's school to ensure all requisite visas can be secured prior to the appointment being finalized and the student's arrival at Columbia.

4. How will "matches" between UPR students and Columbia host labs be made?

If a Columbia Principal Investigator's stated research areas appear to be a good fit for a UPR graduate student, a UPR faculty mentor will reach out directly to the potential Columbia mentor to explore details. If the UPR and Columbia faculty members agree that a student's research will benefit from the opportunity to spend time in the given Columbia lab, the Columbia faculty member must contact the head of their school's graduate program to move forward with necessary approvals, which vary by school. Participation in this program will at that point be coordinated through the Columbia faculty member's school.

5. When would a student arrive and how long would s/he stay?

This is flexible. The duration of the student's time at Columbia, as well as the starting date, can be determined jointly by the Columbia faculty host, the UPR student mentor, and the student, in consultation with the relevant Columbia graduate program dean.

6. What Columbia schools are participating, and who are the points of contact there?

The schools participating at this time (and the main points of contact there) are the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (Carlos J Alonso, Dean), the Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science (Soulaymane Kachani, Sr. Vice Dean), the Mailman School of Public Health (Pam Factor-Litvak, Associate Dean for Research Resources), and the College of Physicians and

Surgeons (Yinghui Mao, Assistant Dean for Graduate Affairs). Faculty should contact these individuals directly with any questions about the program or individual student matches and to move forward with a match as soon as a UPR student candidate is identified.

7. What type of appointment will UPR PhD students have while at Columbia?

UPR students will have zero-salary appointments as Staff Associates, an entry-level Officer of Research title. This is the standard appointment for students who are visiting Columbia on a temporary basis from other institutions to further their own research projects.

8. Who is responsible for the costs associated with this program?

UPR students will be responsible for their own travel, living expenses, and housing, while the budget of the Columbia host lab would be expected to cover incidental research expenses for the duration of the student's visit. There is no tuition associated with this program.

9. What benefits will UPR students have while here?

While at Columbia, UPR PhD students will have Columbia email addresses, CUIDs, access to the Libraries, and access to equipment in their host labs. They will not have Columbia employee or student benefits. Zero-salary Staff Associates are not required to provide proof of health insurance unless they are on J-1 visas and will be responsible for their own healthcare costs and coverage while at Columbia.

10. In addition to securing necessary approvals for the appointment, is anything else needed before a UPR student arrives at Columbia?

It is essential that any faculty member who has a student candidate for this program contact their school point person before moving forward. Schools will coordinate details and appointments and must be aware of any possible participant before the match is finalized.