

GSBS Core Tenets of Graduate Training: Compact Between Graduate Students and Their Research Advisors

GSBS Commitment

The mission of The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center UTHealth Houston Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS) is to train scientists, to generate new knowledge in the biomedical sciences, and to increase public understanding of science. The GSBS is committed to maintaining the highest standards of training and to providing a program for the graduate student to learn to function independently as a scientific professional. The Office of Academic Affairs provides oversight for all matters relevant to the support of its graduate students.

Quality Training

Individuals who pursue a biomedical graduate degree are expected to take responsibility for their own scientific and professional development. Individuals should be trained to independently formulate meaningful hypotheses, design and conduct interpretable experiments, adhere to good laboratory practices, analyze results critically, understand the broad significance of their research findings, and uphold the highest ethical standards in research. The development of additional skills - including oral and written communication, grant writing, and laboratory management - are considered integral to this training.

Importance of Mentoring

Effective mentoring is a critical element of graduate education and requires that the primary mentor dedicate time to enhance the student's potential for personal and professional development. A good mentor builds a relationship with the student that is characterized by mutual respect and understanding. Attributes of a good mentor include being approachable, available, and willing to share his/her knowledge, listening effectively, providing encouragement and constructive criticism, and offering expertise and guidance.

Commitments of Graduate Students

- I acknowledge that I have the primary responsibility for the successful completion of my degree.
- I will complete the MS program within the three year program limit.
- I will meet regularly with my advisor and provide updates on the progress and results of my activities and experiments.
- I will work with my advisor to develop a thesis project, including a timeline for each phase of my work.
- I will work with my advisor to form an Advisory Committee, which I will meet with at least every six months.
- I will be knowledgeable of the policies and requirements of my graduate program (if applicable), graduate school, and institution. I will commit to meeting these requirements.
- I will participate in laboratory meetings, seminars, and journal clubs that are part of my educational program.
- I will comply with all institutional policies, including institutional safe laboratory practices, and animal-use and human-research policies at my institution.
- I will participate in my institution's Responsible Conduct of Research training program and practice those guidelines in conducting my thesis research.
- I will be a good lab citizen. I will take part in shared laboratory responsibilities and maintain a safe and clean laboratory space. I will be respectful of, tolerant of, and work collegially with all laboratory personnel.
- I will maintain a detailed, organized, and accurate laboratory notebook. I am aware that my original notebooks and all research data are the property of my institution.
- I will follow institutional policies on work hours, sick leave, and vacation, and will communicate with my advisor in advance about any planned absences. I will consult with my advisor and notify fellow lab members in advance of any planned absences. I will notify the GSBS of any time away from lab of 14 calendar days or more.
- I will discuss policies on authorship and attendance at professional meetings with my advisor. I will work with my advisor to submit all relevant research results that are ready for publication in a timely manner prior to my graduation.
- I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to develop my career throughout my matriculation at the GSBS. I will seek timely guidance from my advisor, my committee, the office of career development, and any other resources available.
- I will commit to the high standards of professionalism that are outlined above: responsibility, accountability, effective communication, and excellence. Additionally, I am committed to fostering an environment of mutual respect and understanding for all team members.

Commitments of Research Advisors

- I will commit to the life-long mentoring of the student as a future member of the scientific community.
- I will support the student to graduate within 3 years of their entry into the MS program, consistent with GSBS expectations.
- I will commit to the research project of the student. I will help guide the project, set reasonable and attainable goals, and establish a timeline for project completion.
- I will not let conflicts with externally funded research programs interfere with the student's thesis research.
- I will commit to meeting one-on-one with the student on a regular basis.
- Unless the student is self-funded, I agree to assume financial responsibility for the student's Graduate Research Assistantship including stipend, tuition/fees, and health benefits, as outlined in the GSBS Financial Commitment Agreement.
- I acknowledge that emergency financial support from GSBS will only be considered after all departmental and institutional resources have been explored.
- I will be knowledgeable of, and provide guidance on, the requirements and deadlines of the institution, including human resources guidelines.
- I will help the student form an Advisory Committee, and I assure that they will meet at least every six months to review the graduate student's progress.
- I will lead by example and facilitate the student's training in skills needed to be a successful scientist, such as oral and written communication skills, grant writing, lab management, animal and human research policies, the ethical conduct of research, and scientific professionalism.
- I will expect the student to share common laboratory responsibilities and utilize resources carefully and frugally.
- I will not require the student to perform tasks unrelated to their training and professional development.
- I will discuss authorship policies with the student. I will acknowledge the student's scientific contributions to my laboratory, and, when appropriate, I will work with the student to publish their work in a timely manner prior to graduation.
- I will discuss intellectual property issues with the student including disclosure, patent rights, and publishing research discoveries.
- I will encourage the graduate student to attend scientific/professional meetings and make an effort to secure and facilitate funding for such activities.
- I will participate in career planning with my student through annual IDP meetings and support the exploration of the career of their choice.
- I will foster an environment that is intellectually stimulating, emotionally supportive, safe, and free of harassment while ensuring that mentoring practices are open and fair for all.
- I will be supportive, fair, accessible, encouraging, and respectful. I will foster the graduate student's professional confidence and encourage critical thinking, skepticism, and creativity.
- I may supplement this agreement with a lab-specific mentor-mentee compact to provide mutual understanding beyond these commitments.