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 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 School 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 be committed to my graduate education and will demonstrate this by my efforts in the classroom and the research laboratory. I will maintain a high level of professionalism, self-motivation, engagement, scientific curiosity, and ethical standards.

- **I will meet regularly with my research advisor and provide him/her with updates on the progress and results of my activities and experiments.**

- **I will work with my research advisor to develop a thesis/dissertation project**. This will include establishing a timeline for each phase of my work. I will strive to meet the established deadlines.

- **I will work with my research advisor to select an Advisory Committee**. I will commit to meeting with this committee at least every six months. I will be responsive to the advice of and constructive criticism from my committee.

- **I will be knowledgeable of the policies and requirements of my graduate program, graduate school, and institution**. I will commit to meeting these requirements.

- **I will attend and participate in laboratory meetings, seminars and journal clubs that are part of my educational program.**

- **I will comply with all institutional policies, including academic program milestones**. I will comply with both the letter and spirit of all 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/dissertation research.**

- **I will be a good lab citizen**. I will agree to take part in shared laboratory responsibilities and will use laboratory resources carefully and frugally. I will 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 tangible research data are the property of my institution but that I am able to take a copy of my notebooks with me after I complete my thesis/dissertation.

- **I will discuss policies on work hours, sick leave and vacation with my research advisor**. I will consult with my advisor and notify fellow lab members in advance of any planned absences.

- **I will discuss policies on authorship and attendance at professional meetings with my research 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 primarily my responsibility to develop my career following the completion of my doctoral degree**. I will seek guidance from my research advisor, career counseling services, thesis/dissertation committee, other mentors, and any other resources available for advice on career plans.

Commitments of Research Advisors

- **I will be committed to the life-long mentoring of the graduate student**. I will be committed to the education and training of the graduate student as a future member of the scientific community.

- **I will be committed to the research project of the graduate student**. I will help to plan and direct the graduate student's project, set reasonable and attainable goals, and establish a timeline for completion of the project. I recognize the possibility of conflicts between the interests of externally funded research programs and those of the graduate student, and will not let these interfere with the student's pursuit of his/her thesis/dissertation research.

- **I will be committed to meeting one-on-one with the student on a regular basis.**

- **I will be committed to providing financial resources for the graduate student as appropriate or according to my institution's guidelines, in order for him/her to conduct thesis/dissertation research.**

- **I will be knowledgeable of, and guide the graduate student through, the requirements and deadlines of his/her graduate program as well as those of the institution, including human resources guidelines.**

- **I will help the graduate student select an Advisory Committee**. I will assure that this committee meets at least every six months to review the graduate student's progress.

- **I will lead by example and facilitate the training of the graduate student in complementary 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 graduate student to share common laboratory responsibilities and utilize resources carefully and frugally.**

- **I will not require the graduate student to perform tasks that are unrelated to his/her training program and professional development.**

- **I will discuss authorship policies regarding papers with the graduate student**. I will acknowledge the graduate student's scientific contributions to the work in my laboratory, and I will work with the graduate student to publish his/her work in a timely manner prior to the student's graduation.

- **I will discuss intellectual policy issues with the student with regard to 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 provide career advice**. **I will advise the student on employment opportunities in both the academic and private sector.** I will provide honest letters of recommendation for his/her next phase of professional development. I will also be accessible to give advice and feedback on career goals.

- **I will provide for every graduate student under my supervision an environment that is intellectually stimulating, emotionally supportive, safe, and free of harassment.**

- **Throughout the graduate student's time in my laboratory, I will be supportive, equitable, accessible, encouraging, and respectful**. I will foster the graduate student's professional confidence and encourage critical thinking, skepticism and creativity.

Our signatures below indicate that we have read and discussed this document.

_____	_____	_____
Advisor (print name)	Advisor Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Student (print name)	Student Signature	Date