

## Petition for the Ph.D. Candidacy Examination, Off-Topic

[Please refer to the GSBS Policies and Procedures  
(<http://go.uth.edu/gsbscandidacy>) for detailed instructions]

To: Academic Standards Committee via Office of Academic Affairs

From: Advisory Committee for \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

We, the undersigned members of the Advisory Committee, agree that the above student is prepared to take the Ph.D. candidacy examination. We have (1) reviewed and approved the attached summary of the student's proposed dissertation project; (2) reviewed the student's off-topic abstracts and agreed that they are, indeed, off-topic; and (3) selected one off-topic abstract for the student's exam.

(Please type each committee member's name and degree(s) under signature line.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student advisor: \_\_\_\_\_

### Attach the following documents in the order given:

- I. **Dissertation Summary:** Attach a specific aims page describing the student's dissertation project (see [template](#)). Head the page as "Dissertation Summary" and provide a title for the project. Limit 1 page.
- II. **Off-Topic Exam Proposal Summary:** Attach a specific aims page (see [template](#)) summarizing the planned off-topic exam proposal selected by the advisory committee. Limit 1 page.
- III. **Student Code of Conduct Acknowledgment and Pledge signed by student** – please review carefully. Your exam proposal will be subject to Turnitin anti-plagiarism analysis.
- IV. **Ph.D. Examination Committee form (see [below](#))**

*These documents must be submitted for approval to the Office of Academic Affairs, **at least 7 days** before the scheduled monthly meeting of the Academic Standards Committee (ASC). Note that if the student is formally affiliated with a Ph.D. Program, the composition of the Examining Committee must be approved by the Program Director or the Chair of the Program Ph.D. Candidacy Exam Steering Committee prior to submission of this form to the Office of Academic Affairs.*

**Template for Summary of Dissertation Project or Off-topic exam proposal**

**Header: “DISSERTATION PROJECT SUMMARY” or “OFF-TOPIC EXAM PROPOSAL SUMMARY”**

Title of Project/Proposal

Your name

Advisor's name

A specific aims page is a summary of the logic for an entire project or research proposal. Writing them well is a skill that you'll need to master. You must convince the reader that your project addresses an important need, and then logically describe your hypothesis and approach -- all in one page.

**First 1/3 – Establish need for the project:** State key background/significance information, identify the problem that needs to be addressed and define the gap in our current knowledge.

**Second 1/3 – Justify and describe your hypothesis:** State the long-term goal that motivates the project. Describe the rationale for your approach in the context of what has been done already in the field. *Be sure to succinctly state a central hypothesis for your proposal.*

**Last 1/3 - Specific aims:** Describe each of your specific aims in a list (1, 2, 3..). Usually there are only two or three aims. Each should be a self-contained group of logical experiments and/or studies that will address the central hypothesis or goal. Start each aim by stating its goal succinctly. For example: “Determine if X is required for Y during mouse embryogenesis”. Then briefly describe your approach and any vital elements of the experimental design. You don't have much room so each aim is only a few sentences in length.

Finish the page with 1-2 sentences indicating the likely impact of the whole project once the aims are completed.

**Format:** 11 point Arial, 0.5” margins.

Tips:

- Don't exceed 1 page
- References are not necessary
- Proof read and spell check your document.
- Be sure to include a clearly stated central hypothesis and make sure each aim is directed at addressing that hypothesis.
- In the aims, provide a clear indication of important experimental approaches you plan to use (RNA-seq, immunoblotting, histology, etc).
- Avoid needless detail (concentrations, experimental conditions).
- Avoid aims that depend on the outcome of another aim before they can be attempted.
- If you originally submitted abstracts without specific aims to your committee, then you should rewrite the selected abstract in the form of a specific aims page before submitting it to GSBS.

**The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center UTHealth  
Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences**

*(Please type)*

**Ph.D. Candidacy Examining Committee**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Submitted

\_\_\_\_\_  
Program Affiliation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of committee member outside the student's research  
*(choose one only)*

a) Name, Degree b) Dept & Institutional Affiliation & Position c) Membership in GSBS Faculty (yes or no) d) Program Affiliation(s) (list all)	Faculty must affix hand-written Initials*	Area of Expertise (key words)
Chair 1. a) b)  c) Membership in GSBS Faculty:   Yes   No  d)		
2. a) b)  c) Membership in GSBS Faculty:   Yes   No  d)		
3. a) b)  c) Membership in GSBS Faculty:   Yes   No  d)		
4. a) b)  c) Membership in GSBS Faculty:   Yes   No  d)		
5. a) b)  c) Membership in GSBS Faculty:   Yes   No  d)		

\*Initials indicate willingness to serve on student's committee

- The student named above has completed the necessary Program requirements and is eligible to take the Ph.D. candidacy exam. \_\_\_\_\_ Program Administrator's initials (optional)
- By my signature below, I approve the above Examining Committee and confirm that the student has met all pre-candidacy Program requirements.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Program Director or Chair, PhD Candidacy Exam Steering Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Associate Dean for Graduate Education (will sign after submission to GSBS)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair, Academic Standards Committee (will sign after ASC meeting)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Return to GSBS Front Desk or email to Bunny Perez ([lourdes.v.perez@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:lourdes.v.perez@uth.tmc.edu))**

# The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center UTHealth Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

## Code of Conduct for Students of the MD Anderson UTHealth Graduate School

### PRINCIPLES

Scientific research is the search for truths about our physical and natural world. This search can succeed only if it is carried out with the highest levels of integrity and honesty. Simply put, the search for truth must itself be truthful.

These same principles apply to students preparing for careers in scientific research. Their studies and their research must be conducted with absolute honesty and integrity. This Code of Conduct describes the behaviors that characterize academic honesty and integrity and, conversely, those behaviors that violate the standards of both The University of Texas System and the Faculty of the MD Anderson UTHealth Graduate School. Further information is provided on the consequences of unacceptable behavior and what responsibilities students have for encouraging appropriate behavior on the part of others.

### THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SYSTEM RULES ON STUDENT CONDUCT

The University of Texas System Board of Regents has promulgated, in its Rules and Regulations (Rule 50101), a set of guidelines concerning student conduct and discipline. These guidelines include the following:

- "The component institutions shall adopt rules and regulations concerning student conduct and discipline....Each student is responsible for notice of and compliance with the provisions of the Regents' Rules and Regulations and the rules of the component institution."
- "Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts."

### MD ANDERSON UTHEALTH GRADUATE SCHOOL

In compliance with the Regents' Rules, MD Anderson UTHealth Graduate School has set forth the following definitions and regulations concerning scholastic dishonesty:

- Confirmed cases of cheating, plagiarism, or dishonesty in research are grounds for dismissal from the MD Anderson UTHealth Graduate School.
- Unless a professor specifically states it is acceptable, it is considered academic dishonesty to either receive or give help on class papers and assignments.
- Plagiarism means: 1) knowingly submitting work as one's own when it contains direct or paraphrased quotes from another source; 2) knowingly using someone else's ideas and presenting them as one's own.
- Dishonesty in research includes deliberately fabricating, falsifying or distorting data and/or research protocols.

### CONSEQUENCES OF UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIORS

Once an allegation has been made that a student has committed an act of scholastic dishonesty, the Rules of the Regents are followed. These Rules specify the manner in which the investigation is conducted, the rights of the student concerning due process, the appeals that the student may make, and the disciplinary actions that may be taken. Penalties may range from disciplinary probation to a failing grade in a course to expulsion from the school.

### STUDENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE CONDUCT OF OTHERS

In addition to ensuring that their own work is above reproach, researchers and scholars have a collective responsibility for the integrity of the scientific enterprise. One aspect of this responsibility entails an intolerance for academic dishonesty on the part of their colleagues. Students, as future research scientists have the same responsibility. Accordingly, MD Anderson UTHealth Graduate School students should not hesitate to report what they believe are instances of scholastic dishonesty to the appropriate instructor or Dean. However, under this Code of Conduct, a MD Anderson UTHealth Graduate School student has no formal or binding obligation to report such incidents.

**The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center UTHealth  
Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND PLEDGE**

MD Anderson UTHealth Graduate School students are expected to read this Code of Conduct and sign the pledge below before starting classes in the Graduate School and at the time of petitioning for advancement to candidacy:

- I acknowledge that I have read the Code of Conduct for MD Anderson UTHealth Graduate School students and understand its objectives and principles.
- I understand that I am responsible for knowing and obeying the rules and regulations of The University of Texas Board of Regents and the MD Anderson UTHealth Graduate School.
- I understand that if I am found guilty of an act of scholastic dishonesty, the penalties can be severe, including expulsion from the MD Anderson UTHealth Graduate School.
- Accordingly, I pledge that I will neither give nor receive unauthorized help on any examination, paper, or assignment that requires individual responsibility and that I will be scrupulously honest in the conduct of my research and the presentation of my research results.

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of student

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date