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**GRADUATE BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES**  
**STUDENT HANDBOOK**  
**2018-2019**

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# INTRODUCTION

## ASSOCIATE DEAN'S WELCOME MESSAGE

Congratulations and welcome to Graduate Biomedical Sciences (GBS) at UAB. I am pleased to have you join our community of scholars on the journey toward discovery. GBS is dedicated to nurturing the curiosity of our students and equipping them with the skills to drive biomedical research forward in our state, in our country, and beyond.

My primary goal as Associate Dean is to encourage our ongoing pursuit of excellence in scholarship and research. This handbook is provided to assist you in these endeavors. In addition, GBS staff members are always on hand to support you during your transition into and through the program.

During your journey, I encourage you to take advantage of the many opportunities offered within GBS, UAB, and Birmingham. Our interdisciplinary program is designed to expose students to a wide range of experiences. In addition, we value a commitment to service as well as personal and professional development as part of your scholarly activities. We look forward to supporting your academic, professional, and personal success during your training at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and for years to come.

Sincerely,

**David Schneider, Ph.D.**

*Associate Dean for Graduate Biomedical Sciences*



## DISCLAIMER

This Handbook is an overview of general academic regulations specific to the GBS program at UAB. Although UAB will make its best efforts to abide by this handbook, UAB reserves the right to interpret and apply its procedures and policies, and to deviate from these guidelines, as appropriate in the particular circumstances and in accordance with the mission and goals of the program. UAB also reserves the right to address issues not covered in this handbook and to make changes to the policy without advance notice. Changes become effective at the time the proper authorities determine so and the changes apply to both prospective students and those already enrolled. Please refer to the [GBS website](#) for the most up-to-date version. For more complete and detailed information regarding UAB's academic regulations, see the [UAB Graduate Catalog](#).

All students are responsible for knowing and abiding by the general University rules and regulations pertaining to graduate study at UAB and the specific academic requirements of their particular degree program. This Handbook is not intended to nor does it contain all policies or regulations applicable to students. Each student is responsible for familiarizing him/herself with the contents of this Handbook.

Although the policies contained herein are intended to reflect current rules and policies of the University, users are cautioned that changes or additions may have become effective since the publication of this material. In the event of a conflict, current statements of Board policy contained in the Bylaws, Rules, official minutes, and other pronouncements of the Board or Chancellor, or superseding law, shall prevail.

This Handbook does not constitute a contract and may not be deemed or construed as part of any contract between UAB and any student or student representative.

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

UAB is committed to providing an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have been the victim of sexual discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, or sexual assault, inducing, sexual exploitation, relationship violence, stalking, and retaliation we encourage you to file a report. UAB provides several avenues for reporting. For more information about Title IX, policy, reporting, protections, resources and supports, please visit: <http://www.uab.edu/titleix>.

UAB also prohibits, and will not tolerate, discrimination in admission, educational programs, and other student matters on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, national origin, disability unrelated to program performance, veteran status, or genetic or family medical history. Complaints by any applicant or student who has reason to think he or she has been affected by discrimination will be considered through appropriate established procedures. For more information, please see the Equal Opportunity and Discriminatory Harassment policy which is available at the following link: <http://www.uab.edu/policies/content/Pages/UAB-BT-POL-000052.aspx>

UAB is committed to providing an accessible learning experience for all students. If you are a student with a disability that qualifies under Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and you require reasonable accommodations, please contact Disability Support Services for information on accommodations, registration and procedures. Requests for reasonable accommodations involve an interactive process and consist of a collaborative effort among the students, DSS, faculty, and staff. If you are registered with Disability Support Services, please contact the GBS office to discuss reasonable accommodations that may be necessary in this program. If you have a disability but have not contacted Disability Support Services, please call 205-934-4205 or visit <http://www.uab.edu/dss>.

## UAB GRADUATE SCHOOL

GBS is an interdisciplinary and interdepartmental umbrella PhD program under the UAB Graduate School.

**Mission Statement:** *Inspiring minds today to transform tomorrow*

**Vision Statement:** *Improving lives globally through the accomplishments of our scholars*

**Core Value 1 - We value an academically excellent learning environment.**

Therefore, we will:

- Strive for excellence in graduate programs and postdoctoral training by continually upgrading program offerings to compete with other leading graduate schools.
- Recruit students and postdoctoral fellows in a competitive manner by providing high quality and rigorous research and training programs.

**Core Value 2 - We value and celebrate diversity in cultural backgrounds and beliefs.**

Therefore, we will:

- Recruit graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, faculty, and other research scholars both nationally and internationally.
- Promote the importance of diversity in research and pedagogical philosophy in order to provide well-rounded educational and professional opportunities for our students and postdoctoral fellows.

**Core Value 3 - We value a student-centered learning environment.**

Therefore, we will:

- Prepare graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to participate successfully in both academic and other professional arenas.
- Develop and sustain interdisciplinary graduate and postdoctoral training programs that will promote creative thinking across disciplines.
- Advocate for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows while serving as a liaison between trainees and the University administration.

**Core Value 4 - We value University growth.**

Therefore, we will:

- Create and enforce policies that promote progress for both trainees and the University.
- Provide leadership in the development and evaluation of innovative graduate and postdoctoral training programs.

# PROGRAM INFORMATION

## PROGRAM INTRODUCTION

UAB offers a tremendous, diverse community of scientists focused on innovation in modern biomedicine. As evidence of the excellence and innovation of the research community, UAB is routinely ranked among the top research-intensive universities for extramural funding and research productivity. The thrill of discovery is evident across campus.

The Graduate Biomedical Sciences (GBS) interdisciplinary themes are designed to provide our trainees with rigorous, interdisciplinary education and mentorship in a wide array of scientific disciplines, ranging from the study of fundamental cellular processes to translational therapeutic strategies. GBS trainees can perform their doctoral research in more than 350 different labs across UAB's campus. Because of the scale of GBS and the number of affiliated faculty, GBS is subdivided into eight individual themes, based on scientific disciplines. Students enter with a chosen theme but have the opportunity to switch themes. These themes provide discipline-specific training and opportunities for smaller-scale connections within the overall community.

The eight GBS themes are:

- Biochemistry, Structural, and Stem Cell Biology
- Cancer Biology
- Cell, Developmental, and Molecular Biology
- Genetics, Genomics, and Bioinformatics
- Immunology
- Microbiology
- Neuroscience
- Pathobiology and Molecular Medicine

Our students capitalize on UAB's research team that includes many of the nation's top principal investigators. UAB is consistently listed in the top 25 in the nation on U.S. News & World Report's list of "America's Best Graduate Schools". UAB is the only Alabama university recognized by the Carnegie Foundation for both "highest research activity" and "community engagement." As a measure of this scientific excellence, UAB attracts over \$470 million per year in extramural grant support and ranks in the top 20 in the nation in National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant support among the 125 accredited medical schools in the USA.

GBS seeks to provide our students with all of the resources they need to cultivate excellence in their careers, irrespective of individual goals or aspirations. We take advantage of the exceptional research capacity of our community, the commitment of our faculty to excellence in mentorship, and modern, flexible methods for educating young professionals in advanced scientific topics. We realize that the decision to pursue a PhD in science is serious. Each trainee in our program has a different goal or dream. Our mission is to help each student reach those goals, to the best of their ability.

## MISSION STATEMENT

Driving biomedical discovery through interdisciplinary training and innovative research.

## VISION

Demonstrating world-class excellence in all areas of biomedical research through the achievements of our students.

## COMPETENCIES

GBS offers a wide array of courses, seminars, journal clubs, research opportunities, and professional development that are designed to support the growth and development of our students. The following list consists of desirable competencies for our students to achieve while in GBS.

- Content-Specific Conceptual Knowledge
- Critical Thinking and Data Evaluation
- Quantitative Analysis
- Research-Skill Development
- Communication Skills
- Professionalism
- Leadership & Management Skills
- Career Exploration and Preparation
- Personal Development
- Responsible Conduct of Research

## CURRICULUM

Please see the following curriculum checklists for theme specific requirements:

- [BSSB](#): Biochemistry, Structural, and Stem Cell Biology
- [CANB](#): Cancer Biology
- [CMDB](#): Cell, Molecular, and Developmental Biology
- [GGB](#): Genetics, Genomics, and Bioinformatics
- [IMM](#): Immunology
- [MIC](#): Microbiology
- [NESC](#): Neuroscience
- [PBMM](#): Pathobiology and Molecular Medicine

## COURSE REGISTRATION

Students will receive registration announcements from the GBS Curriculum Manager, through Blazernet, and via the GBS newsletter.

GBS students will follow the dates listed below for registration deadlines:

- Fall- July 1
- Spring- December 1
- Summer- May 1

Students are responsible for registering for classes on time, even if they are not on campus. Incomplete or inappropriate registration can affect stipend distribution and may result in the student paying tuition and fees. If a student needs to withdraw from a class or make any changes to the course schedule after the registration date, please notify the GBS Curriculum Manager. Failure to do so may result in the student being responsible for tuition payment, late fees, etc.

GBS students may register through Blazernet until the GBS registration deadline. If students experience difficulty with Blazernet, contact One Stop at (205) 934-4300 or email [onestop@uab.edu](mailto:onestop@uab.edu).

## ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

Students are expected to be aware of their academic standing at all times. The student is responsible for maintaining the accuracy and integrity of their academic record. We highly recommend that students review their academic records through their GPS audits in BlazerNet and transcripts each semester. If problems are identified, contact the GBS Curriculum Manager for guidance.

Each student is required to register for 9 hours per semester. Any courses over 9 hours must be documented and approved by the mentor and GBS Curriculum Manager. All students are required to register for 27 credit hours per academic year (fall, spring and summer terms). Students on certain diversity grants are required to register for 10 hours fall, 12 hours spring, and 10 hours summer, totaling 32 hours in an academic year. Students are required to be registered for at least one hour of GBS research credit each semester, either lab rotations, non-dissertation research, or dissertation research.

All students are required to complete first-year fall courses focused on fundamentals of biomedical science.

- GBS 707: Basic Biochemistry/Metabolism
- GBS 708: Basic Genetics and Molecular Biology
- GBS 709: Basic Biology Organization

All students are required to complete training in statistics, scientific-writing/grant-writing, and ethics. **For further information, reference the [GBS coursework page](#) for approved courses.**

Courses outside of GBS are not allowed for students within their first 16-months in the program. Once a student joins a lab home, classes outside of GBS may be taken at the discretion of the mentor.

GBS students are expected to exhibit a working knowledge of the content in the three core topic courses (Biochemistry, Genetics, and Biology). A letter grade of "C" or below is considered a failing grade. If a student does not pass any one of the three core courses (GBS 707, 708, 709), they will be required to retake that course as soon as it is offered. Upon earning a failing grade, the student will meet with their Theme Director(s) to discuss training resources and academic remediation plans. **If a passing grade is not obtained in the second attempt, the student will be dismissed from GBS.**

All students are required to complete four spring semester modules. Please reference theme checklists for recommendations and requirements by each theme. Students that earn a "C" or lower in a first-year spring modular course must retake the course. **If a student receives a failing score ("C" or lower) in the same course twice, the student will be dismissed from GBS.**

**Three failing grades (“C” or lower) in any combination of first-year courses or rotations will result in dismissal from GBS.** Dismissal will be effective at the end of the spring semester.

#### *Academic Appeal*

A student who wishes to appeal their dismissal decision must file a written appeal to the Associate Dean for GBS, who will present the appeal to UAB. Appeals must include supporting documentation on behalf of the student which addresses the reasons for dismissal, lists specific actions the student believes that they have taken to remedy the reasons for dismissal, and a realistic completion plan for graduation that includes a listing of GBS requirements yet to be met with a timeline for each. If an appeal is granted, a written remediation plan and expectations will be provided. This plan will detail the benchmarks that must be reached and allotted time for completion. **Failing to reach the benchmarks indicated will result in dismissal from GBS.**

#### *Academic Probation*

In the event that expectations/requirements of GBS are not met satisfactorily, a student may be placed on academic probation. Probation is not intended to be punitive, rather, the probation system is designed to clearly identify academic issues and provide remediation plans for each issue. Academic issues should be brought to the attention of the student’s Theme Director(s) as soon as they are identified. Mentors, committee members, course directors, or GBS staff can raise issues of concern. If the Theme Director(s) agrees that probation is justified, they will discuss the issue with the Associate Dean for GBS, and if applicable, fill out a remediation plan.

The remediation plan must clearly articulate the identified issue(s), describe the benchmarks that must be reached to overcome the issue(s), and set a date by which the benchmarks must be achieved. The Theme Director(s) will discuss the remediation plan, in detail, with the student, and the student must sign the plan during that meeting, if he/she agrees with the plan.

**If benchmarks for remediation are not achieved, the student will be dismissed from the program.** The timing of this dismissal will be agreed upon by the Associate Dean for GBS, research mentor, Theme Director(s) and student. It is expected that in most cases, dismissal will occur within 30 days of the failure to comply with the remediation plan and the indicated deadline.

If the student does not agree with the benchmarks or wishes to appeal dismissal, they can follow the standard GBS grievance policy. The GBS grievance policy is the mechanism used in cases involving academic probation; the failure of a student to secure a lab home/mentor; and also in cases in which a student has been displaced and is unable to secure a new lab home/mentor within the established timeframe as identified by GBS policy. **For further information, please reference the [GBS website](#).**

## LAB ROTATIONS

Research rotations provide an opportunity for each student to experience the research environment in several different labs. These experiences are critical for choosing an appropriate lab/mentor for one’s thesis work. All students receive instructions on best practices for successful lab rotations at orientation and are encouraged to work with the Theme Director(s) concerning selecting lab rotations.

**Students must complete at least three lab rotations in three different labs prior to joining a thesis lab\*.** Students are expected to complete the [Lab Rotation Verification Form](#) within 10 days of the beginning of the rotation. Early summer admits are to complete prior to receiving their summer appointment letter. The decision to join a lab is by mutual agreement between the student and mentor, with approval by the mentor’s department chair. No later than 10 days after the end of a lab rotation, the student and the mentor complete and submit the appropriate GBS mentor and student lab rotation evaluation form to document the lab rotation experience from each perspective.

\*A student may join a lab after two rotations if the student can document that he/she has extensive research experience prior to joining GBS. To forego the third rotation, the student must have identified a lab to join and discussed the options with their Theme Director(s). The Theme Director(s) will request permission to waive the third lab rotation from the Associate Dean for GBS, providing a brief description of the student’s past experience.

The academic year is designed to accommodate four lab rotations within the fall and spring semesters for first-year students. If a student cannot identify a permanent lab after these four rotations, the student may begin a shorter series of 4-week lab rotations designed to rapidly identify a proper mentor and student match.

Students who are not placed in a thesis lab at the end of the fourth GBS rotation period must schedule a meeting with the Theme Director(s). This meeting will result in a plan tailored to the student’s specific needs and will be designed to assist the student in selecting potential lab rotations that are more likely to result in a thesis lab for the student. The plan will be based on a review of the student and mentor lab rotation evaluation forms from each of the student’s previous lab rotations; results of discussions concerning the learning/work environment best suited for the student’s success in the GBS program and how this relates to various laboratories of interest to the student; and input related to observations of the Theme Director(s) based on the student’s experience in the program to date.

A student will be allowed up to three additional lab rotations during the summer semester. If a student who has not identified a suitable lab after seven rotations. **If a student cannot identify a suitable lab after seven rotations, they will be dismissed from GBS. For further**

**information, please reference the GBS [website](#).** They may follow the GBS grievance policy by submitting documentation no later than 10 days after the seventh lab rotation, or the date that the seventh lab rotation would have ended should the student have followed the published GBS lab rotation dates, whichever date comes last.

**All students completing their first year in GBS are expected to present a poster on one of their lab rotations at the GBS Symposium.** The Symposium is an opportunity to showcase the research and achievements of GBS students and to give first-year students an opportunity to practice presentation and discussion of their research.

## ADVANCED COURSES

**At least three advanced courses are required for students in all GBS themes.** Approved advanced courses are listed on the GBS Coursework [page](#). If a course is not listed, then the student may contact the GBS Curriculum Manager or Theme Director(s) to see if the course qualifies. Each theme may require more than three advanced courses, particularly if the advanced courses taken are listed for fewer than three credit hours each.

Advanced courses can be offered off-campus, such as those offered for students in labs outside of UAB, by Cold Spring Harbor or AAI Advance Immunology Course. These courses must be pre-approved by the Theme Director(s) and the mentor.

Graduate courses offered by other UAB departments require prior mentor approval and documentation of approval to the GBS Curriculum Manager. The mentor and the student's thesis committee will decide the appropriateness of all advanced courses taken by each student.

Completion of the course with a grade of "B" or better is required to count toward the advanced courses requirement. The three advanced courses have to be 700 level or above classes with letter grades assigned (not pass/fail) to count toward this requirement. Other courses, such as 500 or 600 level classes, can be taken for graduate credit, but they will not count toward the "three advanced courses" requirement.

**In order for a student to receive credit for a 2-hour course, off-campus course, or non-GBS course as advanced course credit, the student must complete the [Advanced Course Verification Form](#).**

## JOURNAL CLUBS

All GBS students are required to register and attend journal clubs in the fall and spring semesters, past the first year. Journal club courses help students develop competency in several areas: fundamental understanding of modern research topics, scientific writing, critical evaluation of research findings, and oral presentation skills. **For further information, reference the GBS [website](#).**

## QUALIFYING EXAM (QE)

### *Timing*

Since fellowship applications are more competitive when students have completed their qualifying exams, it is suggested students follow the dates below for completion of written and oral portions of the exam during their second year. Students who require additional time can complete the exam later; however, this delay may negatively impact fellowship and T32 applications.

Turn in written proposal to all committee members:	March 31 <sup>st</sup>
Committee members return comments to student:	April 30 <sup>th</sup>
Oral defense* completed on or before:	May 31 <sup>st</sup>

\*Due to difficulty in arranging schedules, students may schedule oral defense prior to successful completion of written portion.

The final deadline for all students to complete written and oral portions of the exam is the end of the fall semester of the student's third year.

MSTP students follow a different schedule and should consult the MSTP manual for deadline information. However, the format of the exam will remain consistent with all other GBS students.

### *QE Committee Chair*

A committee chair for the qualifying exam will be selected by the student in consultation with the mentor and potentially other leaders within the program. The mentor cannot serve as chair. The committee chair will serve as the primary point of communication of outcomes to the student for both the oral and written portions of the exam (pass, fail, or conditions). It is the student's responsibility to communicate with the chair of the committee and confirm their willingness to serve in that role. The GBS program will provide a description of duties/expectations to the chair and all committee members as soon as the dates of the exam are set.

### *Committee Composition*

All student committees are to be composed of at least five faculty members, including the mentor, who maintain [UAB Graduate Faculty Status](#).

### *Mentor Participation in Meetings*

The mentor is an important member of the committee and can freely participate in all regular committee meetings, but the mentor does not participate in the qualifying exam. The mentor may attend (to take notes and provide advice later), but cannot participate or answer exam questions from the student or the committee. In cases where factual interpretations are important for progress of the meeting, committee members may ask the mentor for clarification of a point.

The mentor is not required to attend the exam. In cases where the mentor prefers to be absent during the examination, the committee of at least 4 faculty members will conduct the exam and inform the student of their performance.

**For further information, reference the GBS [website](#) for specific requirements for the QE Written Proposal and Oral Defense.**

After successful completion of both the written and oral components of the QE, the student may apply for candidacy. It is the student's responsibility to notify the GBS Finance Manager when the official admission letter is received from the Graduate School, so that the student can receive the \$1,000.00 increase in stipend.

In the event that a student fails to meet the standards set by the thesis committee for the written and/or oral portion of the exam, the student will have one additional opportunity to pass that portion of the exam. **If the committee determines that the student did not pass the exam a second time, the student is dismissed from GBS.**

## ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY

Admission to candidacy is an important transition during doctoral education. Advancement into candidacy reflects completion of the first stage of training and transitioning into dissertation research. Passage of the qualifying exam is one part of this transition.

### *Requirements*

- Successful completion of all first-year courses (earning a B or better)
- Completion of ethics training (e.g. GRD717)
- Successful completion of one of the approved biostatistics courses (earning a B or better)
- Completion of 48 semester hours of coursework and pre-dissertation research (see the [UAB Graduate School policy](#) for further details and exceptions)
- Successful completion of the written qualifying exam
- Successful completion of the oral qualifying exam

The student is to verify that these requirements have been met by contacting the GBS Curriculum Manager. Once all of these milestones are achieved, the student may call a meeting of the committee together, discuss the research plan (as any normal committee meeting), and have the committee verify advancement to candidacy by signing the official [Graduate School form](#). This sign form must be delivered to the GBS Finance Manager within two business days.

**For further information, reference the [Graduate School Catalog](#) under Admission into Degree Candidacy.**

## THESIS DEFENSE

The thesis defense is the final certification of the student's achievement of a deep, expert-level understanding of their research area as well as the ability to critically evaluate scientific concepts and develop rationale arguments supporting their positions. Over the course of the student's training and during the thesis defense, the thesis committee must evaluate the student's intellectual strengths as well as evaluate their growth over the course of training. The PhD degree prepares an individual for a large variety of high achieving careers, and intellectual fortitude and acuity are key areas of competency that must be developed.

Future success in research or in related areas requires proof that a scientist has been productive. In science, original research papers are the standard currency for proof of productivity. Publications are concrete demonstrations that the student has asked important questions, answered those questions convincingly and articulated those findings concisely and compelling to the public. **For this reason, GBS requires that each student publish at least one "first-author" original research paper during their training.** This is the minimum requirement. Most students far exceed this level of productivity. GBS expects that most students will publish two or more first-author papers and one or more collaborative works as a result of their dissertation research. The format of the thesis defense can vary between themes. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of the specific requirements of their theme, which may have requirements above those of the Graduate School and the general GBS requirements.

The written thesis is a summary of the student's research and scholarship over several years. Each committee member is expected to read the thesis prior to oral defense of the dissertation; **thus, the student must deliver the written thesis to each committee member at**

**least 14 days prior to the oral defense.** Failure to meet with deadline may result in rescheduling the oral defense.

**For further information, including format requirements and a graduation checklist, reference the [GBS website](#).**

## TIME LIMITATION

Students are generally expected to complete their program in fewer than seven years from the date of admission to the doctoral program unless an exception is granted by the Theme Director(s) and Dean of the Graduate School at the request of the student and with approval of the mentor. Students requesting to stay in the program longer than 7 years must have an approved completion plan.

**For further information, reference the [Graduate School Catalog](#) under Time Limitations.**

## COMPLETION PLAN

A "Completion Plan" should include specific goals and specific deadlines for meeting those goals, as well as prescribed consequences if the goals are not met within the proposed deadline time points. The plan should include a stipulation that the student will meet with their committee to review progress at each of the proposed deadline times. It is recommended that the time intervals between proposed committee meetings be no longer than three months.

The plan should be incorporated into a written document, signed by the student, by their advisor, and by the Theme Director(s). The plan must be submitted to the Graduate School Dean for review and approval.

**For further information, please reference the [Graduate School Catalog](#) under Time Limitations.**

## DEFERRING ADMISSION

Students who have accepted GBS's offer of admission and wish to defer their enrollment should complete the student section of the [Request to Defer Admission](#) form and send it to the GBS Admissions Manager with a statement on why the deferral is being requested. The request will be reviewed by the theme admissions committee for approval. Deferred students will be held to the academic expectations and financial support effective at the time of enrollment in their first semester of classes.

Deferrals may be granted for the purposes of work, travel, military service, the pursuit of a special interest, health-related issues, etc. Deferred students may not enroll in another college or university.

## EXAMS AND GRADING

Examinations in GBS 707, 708, 709 and selected other GBS courses will be mixed format examinations (essay, short answer, and/or multiple choice). The course instructors who have lectured on the topics to be tested, the heads of the relevant lecture blocks, and the course director will determine the exact composition of each examination. **A letter grade of C or below is considered a failing grade.**

Students who miss an examination will be allowed to make up the test only in cases of documented medical or family emergencies. This documentation must be provided immediately before or after the date of the examination. The decision to administer a make-up examination, and the format of that examination, will be at the discretion of the course director.

Many classes (journal clubs, seminars, non-dissertation and dissertation research) are scored as pass/fail, rather than assigned letter grades. To receive a passing grade, the student must complete all expectations of the course to the satisfaction of the course director. Research grades (GBS 798 and GBS 799) are assigned in consultation between the Associate Dean/GBS office and the research mentor. In addition to progress in the laboratory, to receive research credit, students must also report their research and other scholarly activities to the program each semester through the Canvas Progress Report.

### *Temporary Grade Notations*

The temporary notation of "I" may be reported at the discretion of the instructor to indicate that the student has performed satisfactorily in the course but, due to unforeseen circumstances, is unable to finish all the course requirements. An "I" should never be given to enable a student to raise a deficient grade. This notation should not be used unless there is reasonable certainty that the requirements will be completed during the following semester. The student will have one semester to complete the remaining course requirements. If the student does not complete the remaining course requirements within one semester, the "I" will be changed to an "F." If the course is offered once per year, the theme may request an extension for the amount of time that the student has to complete the course requirements. Requests for extensions must be approved by the course instructor, Theme Director(s), and GBS Associate Dean. Requests for extensions should be made well in advance of the semester's end, in order to avoid the "I" being changed to an "F." Students should not register for the course during the extended period since they are completing the requirements for a course from a prior term.

The temporary notation of "N" denotes late or no submission of a grade by the instructor. If no permanent grade is reported by the end of the following term, an "F" will be automatically assigned to replace the "N".

## TUTORING

Tutoring is available for first-year GBS students in the core courses (GBS 707, 708, and 709). Student tutors will be chosen from GBS peers. If a student needs a tutor, please contact the GBS Curriculum Manager.

## CHANGING LABS

This policy covers students who need to change laboratories due to circumstances out of their control, including but not limited to, the following: mentor leaving UAB, mentor illness or death, incompatibility between mentor & student. If a student needs to change labs, then the Theme Director(s), Associate Dean for GBS, and thesis committee must be notified promptly. These individuals will work with the student to quickly find a new rotation mentor.

The person who wishes to end the mentor/mentee relationship is to provide written documentation explaining why, on the date that the decision is communicated. The student will meet with the Theme Director(s) to create a plan tailored to the student's specific needs, which will be designed to assist the student in selecting potential lab rotations that are more likely to result in a thesis lab for the student. The plan will be based on a review of the documentation concerning the end of the previous mentor/mentee relationship, the student and mentor lab rotation evaluation forms from each of the student's previous lab rotations; results of discussions concerning the learning/work environment best suited for the student's success in the GBS program and how this relates to various laboratories of interest to the student; and input related to observations of the Theme Director(s) based on the student's experience in the program to date.

The student will be free to choose a rotation mentor from any GBS faculty at UAB. Rotation within the same theme is not a requirement. If the mentor is not in the student's theme, then this choice and the impact on coursework requirements will need to be discussed with the current and future Theme Director(s) before the rotation will be approved.

If the student does not have an agreement for a new thesis lab by the end of the 4 weeks following the receipt of notification of the need for a new thesis lab, the student is to provide documentation of circumstances related to this situation in support of the student's continuation in GBS. This documentation will be considered with all other information concerning the student's status in the program. The rotation with the potential new thesis mentor is approximately four weeks in length. If a second rotation is necessary, it will also be four weeks in length. Thus, the maximum total time available for a displaced student to settle in a new thesis lab is eight weeks. **If the student has not been accepted in a new thesis lab within 8 weeks of leaving the initial lab, then the student will be dismissed from GBS, may withdraw from the program, or may take a leave of absence for up to one year from the program.**

The time taken to find a rotation lab is included in the eight-week period. Thus, a student who requires 4 weeks to identify a rotation lab may only have time to have one rotation before they are either accepted for thesis research by a new mentor or terminated from GBS. **If the displaced student has not identified a rotation lab within four weeks of leaving the original thesis research lab, then the student may be dismissed.**

The student's stipend during these rotations will be initially covered by the department of the previous mentor. If the student chooses a faculty mentor in the same department, then the Chair will decide when the stipend cost is transferred to the new faculty mentor. If the student chooses a new faculty mentor in a different department, then the stipend costs for the time of the final determinate rotation (four weeks) will be reimbursed to the original department by the new department. There will be no reimbursement of the charge back monies already paid by the original department.

Permission for more than two four-week rotations may be given on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the Associate Dean for GBS, the original Theme Director(s), and original Department Chair. If additional rotation time is warranted beyond the initial eight weeks, no stipend will be provided to the student during that rotation time unless special permission is granted. The student and the "additional" rotation mentor will be informed, in writing, of this condition.

## FINANCE

Students traditionally accepted into GBS receive an annual stipend and fully paid tuition and fees. Students traditionally accepted into the GBS program are fully funded for 5 years, pending satisfactory academic progress. The sources of support for students vary, but generally Graduate School Fellowships support the first sixteen months for each student. In subsequent years, students are supported by their mentors' research grants, institutional funds or training grants. All students are encouraged to apply for individual fellowship awards, with the guidance and assistance of their mentors. Upon successful completion of requirements for admission to candidacy, the GBS student's annual stipend will increase by \$1,000.

### *GBS Policy Regarding Stipend Increases for Students Admitted to Candidacy*

Upon successful completion of the qualifying exam, GBS students applying for admission to candidacy will receive a \$1,000 stipend increase effective the start of the next pay period following the GBS Finance Manager receiving documentation that the candidacy paperwork has been approved by the Graduate School. It is the student's responsibility to follow up with the GBS Finance Manager,

after receiving an approval email from the Graduate School.

In order to register for dissertation research credits for the subsequent term, candidacy forms must be approved by the dates posted on the Graduate School [website](#).

#### *Tuition Payments, Late Fees and Overpayments Policy*

Graduate students in GBS are awarded a tuition scholarship, which covers in-state tuition and fees until the degree requirements for the student's theme have been met. As a condition to receiving this tuition scholarship:

1. Students must register for and successfully complete **27 hours** of approved graduate credits each year. Any hours taken above 27 semester hours must be approved by the student's theme and mentor.
2. Courses offered by entities outside of the GBS curriculum must be pre-approved by the student's mentor and Theme Director(s) in advance.
3. Students must remain in good academic standing. This tuition scholarship may be terminated for students who fail to meet requirements outlined by academic probation.

All coursework must either fit within the student's theme checklist or be pre-approved by their research mentor and/or thesis committee. If not, the student will be responsible for the associated tuition/fees and may be subject to non-resident tuition rates.

Each term, the deadlines for tuition payments are posted on the [UAB Academic Calendar](#). Students are also sent emails from Student Accounting in regards to the student account balance. It is important that students are aware of these deadlines and emails regarding their student accounts be forwarded to the GBS Finance Manager, if appropriate. It is the student's responsibility to notify the GBS Finance Manager concerning an outstanding student accounting balance. **Students who do not contact the GBS Finance Manager in a timely manner are responsible for any late fees incurred on their student account.**

**If for some reason there is an overpayment on the student account, immediately notify the GBS Finance Manager.** Overpayments must be corrected immediately. In cases where the overpayment is not adjusted prior to the payment deadline for the following term, the student will be responsible for repaying the amount of the overpayment to offset a portion of the tuition balance for the current term.

#### *Tax Information*

**Taxes for graduate students vary depending on the type of financial aid the student is receiving. There are three types:**

1. **Scholarships:** Scholarships are generally given to graduate students to cover tuition and fees. If there is no requirement for service to the university or a third party, a scholarship is not subject to state, local, or federal taxes. Most scholarships are applied directly to student fees. No W-2 form is issued by UAB.
2. **Fellowships:** Fellowships typically provide a stipend to defray living expenses, tuition and fees. If no service is required to receive the fellowship, it is exempt from state and local taxes. Any portion of a fellowship in excess of tuition, fees, and required books and equipment is subject to federal income tax. UAB does not withhold taxes from fellowships or issue W-2 forms. Students are advised to pay quarterly estimated federal taxes.
3. **Assistantships:** Assistantships are compensation given for work performed. The most common forms of assistantships are teaching and research assistantships. These awards are not exempt from taxes. UAB will deduct taxes from checks and issue a W-2 form at the end of the year.

Most first-year GBS students are funded by fellowships so are advised to pay quarterly estimated federal taxes. More information on UAB fellowship taxes can be found [here](#). Graduate students funded by grants and sources other than individual fellowships and training grants are considered to receive assistantships, so taxes are taken out of their paycheck. All students are advised to file taxes annually. [International Student and Scholar Services](#) has resources to assist international students with taxes.

## HEALTH SERVICES

All students in the GBS program are required to have single-coverage health insurance. Students may choose to be covered by UAB student health insurance or provide their own private insurance. If the student elects to be covered by their own private insurance and waive UAB student health insurance, verification of comparable coverage must be on file with the UAB Student Health Services. Support is available for single coverage health insurance only. Family coverage (for spouses or dependents) can be obtained at additional cost to be paid for by the graduate student.

For additional information regarding health insurance and policies, visit [UAB Student Health Services Insurance & Waivers Information](#) or contact Candace Ragsdale at [craggs@uab.edu](mailto:craggs@uab.edu) or 205.996.2589.

UAB provides prevention, counseling, and treatment services to students through the UAB Student Health Services. **Detailed information about services and operating practices is located on the UAB Student Health Services website [here](#).**

## GRADUATE SCHOOL INDIVIDUAL FELLOWSHIP INCENTIVE PROGRAM

The Graduate School has established an incentive plan designed to encourage more students to apply for individual fellowships. The Graduate School will provide a monetary incentive for students to APPLY FOR individual fellowships funded by extramural agencies or foundations. Graduate students who apply for an individual fellowship (e.g. NSF Individual, NIH NRSA, or other) will be awarded \$500 from the Graduate School through the UAB Financial Aid office as a reward for submitting the application.

If a GBS student's application is funded, the student will receive an additional financial reward. For an NIH, NRSA, or other grant that provides less than the base stipend currently being offered to all students in that student's program, the student will receive supplementation of the fellowship stipend to an amount equal to the base stipend plus \$1,500 per year for the term that the grant is funded. The supplemental funding will be provided by the Graduate School. If the stipend amount from the external award is equal to or greater than the equivalent of \$1,500 more than the current base stipend in the student's program, the student is entitled to receive the full amount of the stipend. **For additional information on how to apply, visit the [Graduate School Individual Fellowship Incentive Program page](#).**

## GRADUATE STUDENT TRAVEL

Graduate students who are traveling for professional reasons may apply to trips for the purpose of attending a scientific conference or learning new techniques. With appropriate documentation, travel costs can be paid by grant or other sources. The specific documentation required will be determined by the student's status as a graduate research assistant (GRA) (employee policies apply) or as a trainee/fellow (i.e., funded by a training grant or individual fellowship)

**For information, please visit the following [UAB Trainee Travel page](#).**

### *International Professional Travel*

All UAB-Related Foreign Travel Requests must be made online through the UAB Forms [site](#). UAB policy requires prior approval through this online request process for all UAB-related foreign travel, including for all students who participate in Study Away programs and/or travel overseas as part of UAB-related activities.

**Students may direct questions to the Office of Study Away at 205.975.6611 or via email to [studyabroad@uab.edu](mailto:studyabroad@uab.edu).**

## INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (IDP)

NIH has encouraged institutions to develop Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for all graduate students and postdoctoral researchers supported by NIH awards. Use of IDPs is to be reported in all progress reports submitted after October 1, 2014, using the Research Performance Progress Report (RPPR).

Individual development plans are important tools in career planning. It is required that all GBS students participate in IDP instruction, with each newly matriculating student receiving initial IDP instruction by October 1 of their year of entry. The Graduate School offers IDP instructional sessions that include participant initiation of IDP using the Science Careers website tool myIDP [here](#). Individual themes may also establish their own IDP instruction and related requirements. MSTP students will participate in MSTP-organized IDP training rather than GBS theme-related IDP sessions.

Primary responsibility to assure that GBS students receive IDP instruction resides with the GBS Curriculum Manager. A record of IDP must be provided to the Graduate School by October 1<sup>st</sup>, to be forwarded to and monitored by the UAB Compliance Office. A session sign-in list or screen shots of the myIDP personal information summary page can provide evidence of participation.

The initial IDP information session is scheduled for incoming students during the entering fall semester. The GBS office will arrange these sessions with first-year students. **For more information, please visit [here](#).**

## GRADUATE STUDENT GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

### Responsibilities of the Graduate Student

A fundamental responsibility of the graduate student is to work closely with the faculty supervisor in carrying out research activities, while at the same time making good progress toward the completion of the degree program. If the student's assistantship responsibilities and academic program are properly coordinated, these responsibilities will be compatible. The student should articulate his or her goals early in the term of appointment and work with the supervisor to achieve them. The graduate student is obligated at all times to maintain high ethical standards in academic and nonacademic activities and to report violations of these to the faculty supervisor or other appropriate leader (e.g. Theme Director(s) or Associate Dean for GBS). The graduate students should keep well informed of departmental, school, and institutional regulations, and follow them consistently. If problems arise in the assistantship assignments, the graduate student should seek help first from the faculty supervisor. If problems cannot be resolved, the student should consult the Theme Director(s) or Associate Dean for GBS.

In general, GBS graduate students are expected to be available in the periods between academic terms\*. Graduate students are not entitled to any paid leaves.

All leaves must be requested and require approval by the mentor and Theme Director(s). With the agreement of the mentor and Theme Director(s), extended, unpaid, nonemergency absences from campus for periods up to a month may be approved. Extended absences (without pay) for non-academic purposes should be limited. GBS policies regarding leaves of absence must apply equitably to all full-time students in good standing in the program. Students should consult the Graduate School policies and procedures concerning academic leaves of absence. In emergencies, graduate assistants should inform their mentors or Theme Director(s) as soon as possible about the need for an academic leave of absence.

**NOTE:** Graduate students (Trainees and Research Assistants) are not eligible for [Family and Medical Leave Act \(FMLA\)](#).

*\*GBS Policy on Winter Break*

- **First year students:** First year rotation students should not be expected to be present in the lab during the week between Christmas and New Year's Day, regardless of whether or not UAB remains open. Rotation schedules and courses are organized to accommodate this break.
- **Second year students and beyond:** All breaks, including winter break, are a matter of individual negotiation to be decided between the student and the student's research mentor.

## POLICIES ON CONDUCT

*GBS Academic Ethics and Conduct Policy and Procedure*

GBS students will be informed of UAB Academic Ethics and Conduct guidance contained in the Graduate School Handbook in a mandatory session to occur during new student orientation. Students are expected to be and stay familiar with the guidance as well as the UAB Honor Code and will sign a copy of the UAB Honor Code, to be retained in their student files.

Issues regarding potential infractions must be reported to the Theme Director(s) who will communicate with the Associate Dean for GBS. A faculty member, staff member, or student, who sees cause to charge a student with academic misconduct, must inform the Theme Director(s) and/or Associate Dean for GBS as soon as practical, and preferably within seven (7) calendar days of noting the incident. A failure to report the incident within seven (7) days will not prevent the SFAC from considering the allegation.

The Associate Dean for GBS may convene a GBS Student & Faculty Affairs Committee (SFAC) should the Associate Dean deem the circumstances warrant this. This committee is assembled ad hoc and will consist of two graduate student (peer) representatives, two faculty representatives, and the Associate Dean for GBS. The SFAC will review allegations of Honor Code and professional standard violations for any GBS student.

A meeting to review the charge will be convened within 7 calendar days after the SFAC is assembled. The student will be notified in writing of the date of the meeting and the topic(s) that will be addressed. The student will meet with the Committee to respond to the charge or to accept responsibility. A student who accepts responsibility will be subject to discipline for the violation(s). A student who accepts responsibility cannot appeal the decision to the Graduate School Appeals Board ("GSAB").

At the meeting, the student may present any information they wish for the SFAC to consider, including presenting any witnesses or witness statements. The student may also have an advisor present to consult with the student. The advisor, however, may not address the SFAC or otherwise participate in the meeting. The student's Theme Director(s) will attend as a non-voting participant. The meeting may be recorded and the recording will be the property of UAB.

The committee will deliberate and determine the validity and consequences of the allegation and may recommend expulsion or other discipline. Generally, a first violation shall result in the assignment of a failing grade in the assignment or in the course in which the violation occurred, at the discretion of the instructor. A notation on the student's permanent academic record may also be made to indicate that a reduced or failing grade was assigned because of an Honor Code or Professionalism Standard violation (e.g., "F, Academic Misconduct violation, June 15, 2006"), on the judgment of the SFAC. A second violation of the Honor Code shall result in expulsion from the university. Should a student withdraw from the GBS program before a decision on an outstanding issue be made, the process will be finished and documentation of the final decision will be placed in the student's GBS academic record. No student may graduate until pending allegations of an Honor Code violation have been resolved.

The SFAC's decision will be communicated to the student and the Theme Director(s) via UAB email, within 7 calendar days of the meeting. The student may have the right to appeal the SFAC's decision to the GSAB if certain grounds are met. These grounds are described here: [Graduate School Appeals Board](#). If the SFAC's decision is to dismiss the matter, the decision will not be a part of the student's record.

*Ethical Standards in Research and Other Scholarly Activities*

Allegations of GBS student research misconduct will be managed according to [UAB Responsible Conduct of Research](#) policies. Proper procedures for reporting concerns about proper procedures for reporting concerns about potential research/scholarly activity misconduct at UAB:

- For most cases, reports should follow the "chain of command". The immediate supervisor should be first notified unless

the problem involves that individual, in which case the next highest supervisor should be notified. Any situation that endangers personnel safety should be reported directly to UAB Police, Occupational Health and Safety (205.934.2487), Facilities, or others as appropriate with subsequent notification of a supervisor.

- Scientific misconduct, defined as “fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or other practices which seriously deviate from those that are commonly accepted within the scientific community for proposing, conducting, or reporting research” should be reported to the UAB Research Integrity Office, Pam Bounelis at 205.934.9693. UAB’s Policy Concerning the Maintenance of High Ethical Standards in Research and Other Scholarly Activities can be found [here](#) and provides information about the ethical standards expected of UAB faculty and staff.
- Concerns about research or research administration can also be reported directly to the UAB University Compliance Office [here](#) or through the hotline maintained by this office. Anonymous reports are accepted.
- Problems related to personnel issues should be reported through the supervisory chain of command unless it is more appropriate to go directly to Human Resource Management Relations 205.934.4701.

#### *Non-Academic Conduct*

The university is a community of scholars and learners; therefore, all participants are expected to maintain conduct that (1) facilitates the institution’s pursuit of its educational objectives, (2) exhibits a regard for the rights of other members of the academic community, and (3) contributes to the maintenance of a healthy learning environment. Through appropriate procedures, action will be taken in response to behavior that violates these principles. The office of Non-Academic Student Conduct supports the mission of the university by protecting the rights of all members of the university community and by promoting civility, integrity, responsibility, openness, mutual respect and justice by enforcing community standards. A more detailed description of nonacademic misconduct can be found in the [UAB Student Handbook](#). It is the student’s responsibility to be fully aware of the policies and procedures described.

The Office of Student Life and the Vice Provost for Student and Faculty Success have the responsibility for coordinating policies and procedures regarding students’ nonacademic misconduct.

#### *Grievance Policy and Procedures*

Although rare, disagreements can arise that may affect a student's progress towards the completion of the degree. The parties involved in such a dispute should make a good faith effort to discuss and resolve the disagreement. The following guidelines may be helpful.

**Step 1.** Identify the problem; clearly define what you believe happened and what you perceive is needed to resolve the issue.

**Step 2.** Approach the other person or group involved with the dispute one-on-one. Set up a mutually agreeable time to talk; listen and ask to be listened to; use "I" statements when speaking; avoid assigning blame or leveling accusations.

**Step 3.** If these steps do not culminate in a resolution, the parties involved with the dispute should agree to approach an impartial third party, a mediator, who will respect confidentiality and with whom the situation can be discussed. The Theme Director(s) will suggest such a third party if asked. The mediator may be able to help the parties involved reach a resolution.

**Step 4.** If no resolution is found then you may submit the disagreement to the Graduate Program for resolution. Please follow these procedures:

- Each party in the dispute should submit a written description of the disagreement to the Theme Director(s) and the department Chair. Please include a description of the actions taken to resolve the dispute to date and the name of the mediator who was involved.
- The Associate Dean for GBS will review the written documents. The Associate Dean, in consultation with the GBS Theme Director(s), will make a determination as to whether or not the disagreement is Program-related and thus appropriate for resolution at the Program level.
- If the dispute is found to be Program-related, the Associate Dean, together with the GBS Theme Director(s), will form a Committee to resolve the dispute. If the dispute involves the Associate Dean, Theme Director(s), Associate Director or any member of the GBS staff, then that individual will be excused from the deliberations. The Committee may request additional information from the parties involved. The Committee will meet to discuss the problem within 14 calendar days following receipt of the written documents or following the receipt of any additional materials.
- The result of the group’s deliberations will be communicated via UAB email to the parties involved in the dispute within seven (7) calendar days after the meeting.

**Step 5.** If a party involved in the dispute is not satisfied with the outcome of the resolution process, an appeal may be submitted to the Graduate School Appeals Board, the Dean of the Graduate School, or the GBS Associate Dean. Please see the Graduate Student Handbook, [Graduate School Appeals Board](#) for specific information about the appeals process.

**Note:** Issues involving conduct covered by the UAB Honor Code and related UAB Codes are to be handled by the SFAC and that issues involving GBS student academic conduct/GBS policy will be heard through the GBS grievance procedures. This procedure is not be used to resolve complaints alleging discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex (including harassment), age, religion, sexuality, national origin, disability, veteran or marital status. Students with such complaints will be referred to the appropriate University administrators. This procedure also does not apply to alleged violations of UAB Non-Academic Student Conduct Code.

## FACULTY AND STAFF

The faculty and staff of GBS are prepared to deliver high quality education to all GBS students and are committed to the growth of future professionals. GBS draws faculty from many disciplines and professional programs in the School of Medicine, the Joint Health Sciences, and other departments across campus.

### GBS Theme Director(s):

#### *Biochemistry, Structural, and Stem Cell Biology (BSSB)*



*Theme Director*

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*Theme Co-Director*

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#### *Cancer Biology (CANB)*



*Theme Director*

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*Theme Co-Director*

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#### *Cell, Molecular, and Developmental Biology (CMDB)*



*Theme Director*

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*Theme Co-Director*

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*Genetics, Genomics, and Bioinformatics (GGB)*



*Theme Director*

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*Theme Director*

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*Theme Director*

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*Theme Co-Director*

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*Neuroscience (NESC)*



*Theme Director*

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*Theme Co-Director*

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*Pathobiology and Molecular Medicine (PBMM)*



*Theme Director*

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*Theme Associate Director*

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