

RICE NATURAL SCIENCES  
Biosciences

2025-2026  
BIOCHEMISTRY & CELL BIOLOGY  
GRADUATE PROGRAM





## HANDBOOK OVERVIEW

This handbook summarizes the Biochemistry & Cell Biology Graduate Program policies and procedures and is updated annually.

In addition to complying with the policies in this handbook, Biochemistry & Cell Biology graduate students must also comply with the General Announcements and Code of Student Conduct. In the case of conflicting information, university-wide regulations take precedence over graduate program regulations, which take precedence over research group regulations.

When questions arise, students should first seek help at the graduate program level (graduate program administrator, graduate program director, assistant chair, and/or department chair) before seeking help at the central administration level (Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies).

Please contact Denise Torres, Susan Cates, or Bonnie Bartel with suggestions for additions or clarifications.

### BIOCHEMISTRY & CELL BIOLOGY GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION

POSITION	PERSON	EMAIL@rice.edu
Co-President	Robyn Alba	raa5
Co-President	Presley Bird	pb38
Vice President	Hannah Johnson	hlj3
Treasurer	Leah Peralta	lp58
Secretary	Aaron Stibelman	as380
BCB GSA Program Representative	Olivia Reed	or6





## FACULTY COMMITTEES

### **BCB Graduate Program Director**

Bartel

### **BCB Graduate Program Advising Committee**

Bartel (Chair), Cates, Kirienko, Nikonowicz

### **BCB Graduate Program Curriculum Committee**

Bartel (Chair), Cates, Bennett, Silberg

### **Biosciences Graduate Student Grievance Committee**

Warmflash (Chair), Dunham, Evans

### **Biosciences Department Chair**

Nikonowicz

### **Natural Sciences Ombusperson**

Lauren Kapcha

### **BCB Graduate Program Recruiting and Admissions Committee**

Kirienko (Chair), Cates, de Moraes, Lwigale, Tao, Uribe

### **Biosciences Access, Responsibility, and Engagement Committee**

Amy Dunham (faculty, co-chair), Tom Miller (faculty, co-chair)

Ed Nikonowicz (faculty), TBD graduate student members

## WELCOME TO BIOSCIENCES!

BioSciences is firmly committed to Rice University's goals of fostering a welcoming and supportive environment on our campus, in our classrooms, and in our research. We value the contributions of different perspectives, ideas, and backgrounds in all our endeavors. BioSciences does not discriminate in admissions, educational programs, or employment against any individual on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual preference, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, or veteran status. We are committed to creating welcoming spaces in our teaching, in the laboratory, in field sites, at conferences, with our staff, and across academia. We invite feedback and conversations so that we can continue to do better.



## GRADUATE STUDENT HELP MENU

BCB graduate students are welcome to ask any of our staff for assistance at any time. This page provides information regarding each staff member's job title.

The first resource for graduate students is the graduate program administrator, Denise Torres, who is the contact for all graduate student records, stipends, scheduling, travel, reimbursements, GSA and graduate student events, as well as candidacy and defense logistics. The direct back-up for academic matters such as academic records, university offices and procedures, travel, awards, and scholarships is Susan Cates. Ivy Gonzalez is the third member of the academic administrative team; if Denise and Susan are both unavailable, she can often answer student questions. Laurie Ebertowski and Nidia Aguilar supervise the accounting team; Cassandra and Jennifer specialize in purchasing and research accounting, respectively. Juan Sanchez is the first person to contact for assistance with facilities and equipment; Mauro works with Juan and handles most of the department's equipment and other large deliveries. The faculty coordinator will be the primary contact for the guest seminar series (including lunch with the speaker) and faculty searches and will also work with Denise and Ivy to manage the department conference room reservations, building and key access, and other basic department access issues.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>Email @rice.edu</b>
Graduate Program Administrator	Denise Torres	X4207	dtorres
Assistant Chair	Susan Cates	X5777	susan.cates
Undergraduate Program Coordinator	Ivy Gonzalez	X4230	ivy.i.gonzalez
Accounting Manager	Nidia Aguilar	X3403	nidia.aguilar
Post-Award Accounting	Jennifer Ramos	X2131	jennifer.ramos
Purchasing Accounting	Paola Araiza	X4878	pa55
Facilities Administrator	Juan Sanchez	X4233	cjds
Receiving/Shipping	Mauro Alcorta	X4294	malcorta
Executive Administrator	Laurie Ebertowski	X4774	laurie.ebertowski
Faculty Coordinator	TBD	X4198	TBD

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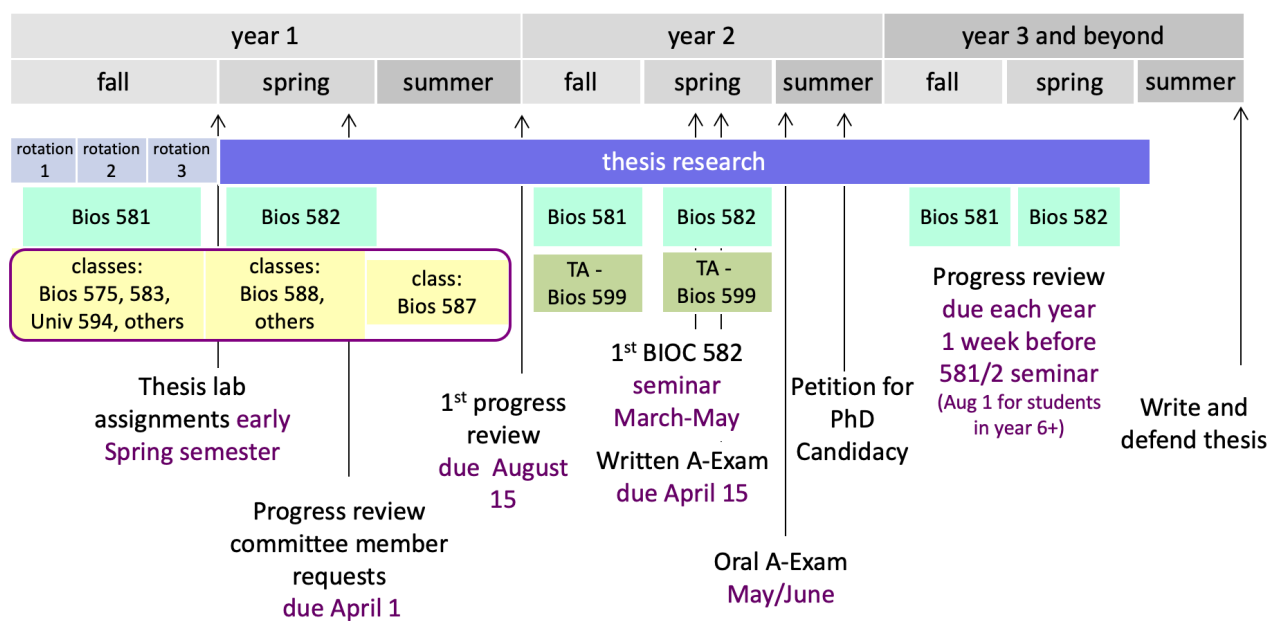
Student Wellbeing Office • Phone: 713-348-3311 • Email: [wellbeing@rice.edu](mailto:wellbeing@rice.edu)

SAFE Office • Phone: 713-348-3311 • Email: [titleixsupport@rice.edu](mailto:titleixsupport@rice.edu)

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## Timeline of Biochemistry & Cell Biology PhD Program





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## 1. THE CHALLENGES AND GOALS OF GRADUATE STUDY

Graduate education provides advanced specialized training beyond the baccalaureate program. The goals of the graduate training provided by the Biochemistry & Cell Biology Graduate Program are to guide students as they develop into doctoral recipients who:

- Are knowledgeable of past and current research accomplishments and techniques in biochemistry and cell biology
- Are adept in independent problem solving and critical thinking skills
- Have demonstrated capacity for independent, publishable research
- Can thoughtfully relate their research to that of others in their field
- Have effective written and oral communication skills
- Assume responsibility for continued professional growth
- Strive to continuously acquire the knowledge and skills needed for scholarly achievement and success in their chosen career

Graduate study requires that students be committed to:

- Assuming responsibility and demonstrating initiative in their research and scholarly activities
- Engaging in active learning, including participating in weekly departmental and graduate student seminars, attending relevant seminars outside of the department, and reading extensively within their chosen field of study
- Initiating and completing innovative and productive research activities
- Improving oral and written communication skills
- Accepting and providing constructive scientific criticism
- Exercising high professional standards in all aspects of work

The Biochemistry & Cell Biology graduate program faculty members are committed to training and mentoring graduate students to reach their full potential as scientists. We seek to facilitate students' progression towards fulfilling and exciting careers in academia, industry, or government, and to develop their skills as future leaders in science and society.



## 2. ADMISSIONS

Admission for graduate study in Biochemistry & Cell Biology requires: (1) a bachelor's degree in biochemistry, biology, chemistry, chemical engineering, physics, or the equivalent; and (2) demonstrated quality and motivation as indicated by the student's previous academic record, research experience, and recommendation letters. While we do accept students who have already earned their master's degrees, our program is designed to be a five-year program from the bachelor's degree to the doctorate.

Students must sign and return the "Memorandum of Understanding" which states, in part, that acceptance of the stipend requires that no outside employment or course enrollment is allowed unless approved by the thesis advisor and department chair.

The advanced degree requirements given on the following pages are those established by the Biochemistry & Cell Biology Graduate Program and are above and beyond the general requirements of Rice University for the M.S. and Ph.D. degrees. Students should be familiar with the general University regulations for graduate students that are listed in the Rice University General Announcements. Any changes in these policies and/or regulations will be brought to students' attention by the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and/or the Department of Biosciences.





### 3. DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREE PROGRAM IN BIOCHEMISTRY & CELL BIOLOGY

Most of the formal courses will be completed in the first year of residence to allow students to commence thesis research at the end of their second semester. During the first year, graduate students will be advised by the Graduate Advising Committee (current members listed in preface, page iii). This committee will tailor the formal course program to be taken during the first year.

Students are required to have training in biochemistry and cell biology. If students are missing formal training in these subjects, they are required to take the equivalent background courses during their first year.

**The corresponding courses at Rice are:**

- BIOS 301 Biochemistry (fall, prerequisite, does not count for graduate level credit)
- BIOS 341 Cell Biology (fall, prerequisite, does not count for graduate level credit)

**All Ph.D. students are required to take the following graduate courses:**

- BIOS 575 Introduction to Research (fall, 1 hr)
- BIOS 581, 582 Graduate Research Seminars (fall & spring, 1 hr per semester of residence)
- BIOS 583 Molecular Interactions (fall, 4 hr)
- BIOS 587 Research Design, Proposal Writing, and Professional Development (summer, 2 hr)
- BIOS 588 Cellular Interactions (spring, 4 hr)
- UNIV 594 Responsible Conduct of Research (fall, 1 hr)
- BIOS 599 Graduate Teaching in BCB (2 semesters in year 2) (fall & spring, 1 hr each)
- BIOS 701, 702 Graduate Lab Research (1st year rotations) (fall, 2 hr/course; 4 hr/semester)

**Students also must take 6 credit hours from the following advanced courses:**

- BIOS 505 Physical Biology (3 hr) BIOS 510 Stem Cell Biology (3 hr)
- BIOS 520 Molecular Basis of Diseases (3 hr)
- BIOS 524 Microbiology and Biotechnology (3 hr)
- BIOS 525 Plant Molecular Genetics and Development (3 hr)
- BIOS 530/535 Graduate Laboratory Modules in Molecular Biophysics (2 hr each)
- BIOS 538 Analysis and Visualization of Biological Data (3 hr)
- BIOS 543 Developmental Neurobiology (3 hr)
- BIOS 547 Experimental Biology and the Future of Medicine (3 hr)
- BIOS 549 Advanced Cellular and Molecular Neuroscience (3 hr)
- BIOS 550 Viruses and Infectious Diseases (3 hr)
- BIOS 551 Molecular Biophysics (3 hr)
- BIOS 552 Structural Biology (3 hr)
- BIOS 560 Cancer Biology (3 hr)
- BIOS 570 Computation With Biological Data (3 hr)

Students also may take additional advanced level BIOS courses and other select graduate courses at Rice, Baylor College of Medicine, University of Houston, or University of Texas Health Science Center. Once the student selects a thesis advisor, the advisor may require additional specialized course work. Safety training will be provided during the first year and must be updated annually according to the policies of Rice's Environmental Health and Safety office.



## Course Registration.

Continuing graduate students must register three times per year to remain in the program. Registration is on-line through the Esther system. New students register for fall classes during orientation after meeting with the advising committee. After the first semester, continuing students register in mid-November for the spring, in early March for the summer, and in early April for the following fall. Exact dates are found at the registrar's web site (<http://registrar.rice.edu/calendars/>). Late registration is permitted but incurs a fee (currently \$75 - \$125) that must be paid by the student. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of the registration dates and to register by the deadline each semester. The graduate advising committee will confer with students about course selections for the first two semesters of residence or until all required coursework is complete.

First-year students register for at least 14 hours in the 1st semester and at least 12 hours in the 2nd semester. Any adds or drops during the first year require the written approval of the chair of the graduate advising committee. First-year students should register for 2 hours each of BIOS 701/702 Graduate Lab Research rotations unless otherwise instructed by the advising committee. After the first year, students register for any courses required by the graduate program or the advisor, and then register for enough hours of BIOS 800 Graduate Research to equal 15 hours total for each semester, Fall, Spring, and Summer. (The advising registration worksheet in the Appendix has detailed instructions.)

All second-year students are required to take two semesters of BIOS 599 (Graduate Teaching in Biochemistry & Cell Biology). In this course, students will gain experience in teaching by serving as discussion leaders and graders in sections of undergraduate courses. A required workshop before courses begin will provide TA training and expectations.

All students are required to register for BIOS 581 and 582 during all years of residency.

Students are also required to attend Biochemistry & Cell Biology invited guest seminars beginning with their first semester of residence. The seminar schedule is on the main Biosciences web page, and the seminars are usually held on Mondays at noon.

Students must achieve a minimum overall average of B ( $\geq 3.0$ ) in the formal Biosciences courses to be a candidate for the Ph.D. degree. The BCB graduate program faculty will evaluate the student's overall performance (Chapter 7).



## 4. TRANSFER CREDIT GUIDELINES

The Biochemistry & Cell Biology Program does not generally accept transfer students from other programs except when the student accompanies a faculty member who is joining the department. All other students, even students who come into the program with master's degrees, must meet all the requirements of our degree program while enrolled at Rice (Chapter 3). Most courses should be taken at Rice, but with advance approval from the graduate advising committee, graduate students can meet some degree requirements with courses that qualify under the Inter-Institutional Graduate Program agreement between Rice University, the University of Texas System, Baylor College of Medicine, and the University of Houston. The program allows a full-time graduate student to enroll in a course at one of the participating schools when the course is not offered at the student's school. The course is then transferred to the student's home university, as long as the proper procedure is followed. (The registrar dictates the proper procedure and provides forms for the inter-institutional transfer credit; see [https://registrar.rice.edu/students/grad\\_transfer](https://registrar.rice.edu/students/grad_transfer).)

### **Students Transferring into the Program with a Faculty Advisor.**

Students transferring into the program with a faculty member who is joining the department may receive some transfer credit for courses taken at their previous graduate institution if the graduate advising committee determines that the course(s) taken are equivalent to courses at Rice. In this case, the registrar's Graduate Transfer Request form must be submitted, showing the mapping of the courses from the previous institution's transcript to the appropriate Rice course number and title. Graduate students who have met the Ph.D. candidacy requirements at their previous institution can sometimes transfer into the program with their candidacy intact, if the graduate advising committee determines that the previous institution's requirements for candidacy were comparable to the BCB graduate program's requirements.



## 5. LAB RESEARCH ROTATIONS (BIOS 701/702)

Lab rotations (BIOS 701/702) are a critical part of the graduate school experience. Rotations assist students in their choice of research advisor, allow students to demonstrate research competence, and provide an opportunity for students to become acquainted with different research areas in the department. Students rotate in three labs in the fall. Most students will be matched with their thesis labs after three rotations; a fourth rotation in the spring is optional if additional lab exposure is desired.

Each rotation lasts approximately 5 weeks. During rotations, the student will spend a minimum of 12 hours a week in the lab performing research and will be mentored by the advisor. The student also will benefit from the help of other graduate students and postdocs in the lab

to learn the methods and techniques used in the lab's research. Students should use this opportunity to demonstrate to potential advisors their enthusiasm, responsibility, maturity, and initiative, because rotations are an important component in the process by which first-year students are evaluated and in determining lab assignments for thesis research (described in the next section).

### Choosing Lab Rotations.

Each student emails the graduate program administrator a list of three possible choices for the upcoming rotation, ranked in order of preference, on the dates and times listed below. For the first list, students should meet individually with at least 3 faculty members to learn about possible research projects and obtain signatures to turn in with the ranked list. **Students and advisors do not schedule rotations; rotation assignments are made by the department chair.** The student will receive confirmation of the rotation assignment as soon as lab assignments are made.

#### Important Dates:

	Ranked List of 3 Due	Rotation Dates	Rotation Talks
<b>Rotation 1</b>	August 22 at 4 pm	Aug 25 - Sep 26	Sep 25 - 26
<b>Rotation 2</b>	Sep 22, noon	Sep 29 - Oct 31	Oct 30 - 31
<b>Rotation 3</b>	Oct 27, noon	Nov 3 - Dec 12	Dec 11 - 12
<b>Thesis Lab Choices</b>	Dec 5, noon		

Provide a ranked list of 3 faculty names for each rotation to the graduate program administrator; after the first rotation you do not need to get faculty signatures. However, students should talk to all listed faculty members just prior to submission of the list to remind them that they intend to request them for a potential rotation, even if they spoke with the faculty at the beginning of the year. Your second rotation list can contain a completely different set of faculty names from the first list, as long as you have personally spoken with all faculty on your list.



### **During the Rotation.**

After a rotation lab has been assigned, it is the student's responsibility to meet with the advisor to discuss and design a research project for the rotation period. The advisor should make clear their expectations for the rotation. The student must keep an up-to-date laboratory notebook (Chapter 32) and record the experiments conducted and other useful information for anyone who may follow up on the work.

### **At the End of Each Rotation.**

The laboratory notebook is to be turned in to the research advisor on the last day of the rotation. After each of the three required rotations, students present 10-minute rotation talks in which they briefly describe their rotation projects, including the background and goals underlying

the project, any specific accomplishments achieved during the rotation period, and possible next steps. The students should submit a draft of their presentation to the rotation advisor one week before their talk and invite the advisor to attend once the student has been notified of their scheduled time slot (approximately one week in advance). These talks will be attended by first-year BCB graduate students, the graduate advising committee, and any interested faculty. Individual labs also may have rotating graduate students present their results to other lab members in a group-meeting format. It is advisable to ask the rotation advisor for an opportunity to give the rotation talk in the group-meeting format in advance, because this provides an opportunity to practice the presentation, to receive suggestions from lab members, and to make sure the talk stays within the allotted 10-minute time frame. The advising committee encourages the first-year students to be an active audience and ask questions/provide suggestions to their peers.

A grade of S (satisfactory) or U (unsatisfactory) will be given for each rotation (BIOS 701/702) based on motivation and effort in the lab and completion of the rotation talk.



## 6. SELECTING A THESIS ADVISOR

Students and thesis advisors are matched during the second semester in residence. Advisor selection is a very important decision and should be based upon information obtained through BIOS 575 (Introduction to Research), seminar presentations by faculty members, research rotations, and meetings with individual faculty members.

Selection of and acceptance into a lab depends on multiple factors, including funding, available space, the student's academic standing, rotation performance, and the relationship between the potential faculty mentor and the student. All of these factors are taken into consideration to decide on the final thesis lab and faculty mentor who will help shape the graduate career. It is important that students actively engage in lab work during the rotation period, including attending lab meetings, interacting with other lab members, and discussing research with the faculty member. These interactions are invaluable to the selection of a lab and thesis advisor by providing insight into the research being conducted in the lab and the laboratory training environment.

After three rotations are completed, each student will submit a list of three faculty members, in order of preference, to the graduate program administrator (see Chapter 5 for due date). The department chair, in consultation with the graduate advising committee and faculty, will consider thesis advisor requests and attempt to accommodate student selections within the constraints of available funding, research space, and the judgment of the concerned faculty.

Because thesis lab assignments are made by the department chair, individual faculty members cannot make commitments to individual students prior to the lab assignment date. In addition, students should not make commitments to faculty members beyond providing the ordered preference list.

The thesis advisor preference list should be carefully composed based on criteria that might include the lab's research field, potential future research interests, how well the student and advisor interact on personal and professional levels, and interactions between the student and other lab members. In most cases, the student will be granted their primary choice for a thesis research advisor. When a match with the top choice is not possible, the student will likely be matched with one of their alternative choices. BCB students who are matched with an advisor with a primary appointment in a different program or department will still need to complete the BCB program requirements. In addition, the advisor may have expectations beyond those required by the BCB program (e.g., additional coursework and publications).

In the rare case when no match satisfactory to both the student and a faculty member is made, the chair will recommend that the student transfer to another department at Rice or to another institution that is more in line with the student's interests. The student must be assigned to a thesis lab by the end of the second semester in residence to continue in the program.





## 7. EVALUATION OF PROGRESS IN GRADUATE STUDY

Six procedures are used to evaluate a graduate student's progress in the Biochemistry & Cell Biology Graduate Program.

1. At the end of each of the first two semesters of residence, the graduate program faculty review each student's course work, performance in laboratory rotations, and motivation. ***To remain in good standing in the Ph.D. program, students must maintain at least a B average (3.0/4.0), obtain satisfactory marks in research rotations, demonstrate potential for research, and have matched with an advisor willing and able to financially support the PhD stipend and associated costs.***
2. ***Continual review of research progress*** is made by the thesis advisor. Satisfactory research progress will be indicated by a grade of "S" in BIOS 800 each semester. A written evaluation is provided by the advisor prior to each progress review meeting after the A-Exam. A grade of "U" in Bios 800 will result in research probation for the following semester and an extra progress review committee meeting to discuss conditions for a return to good standing.
3. ***Written and oral progress reports*** are evaluated by the student's progress review committee every year until completion of their degree. See Chapter 9 for details.
4. ***A research seminar is presented annually*** in BIOS 581/582 beginning in the second year and continuing through the fifth year in the program or until the thesis defense is scheduled. Attendance and participation at the presentations is mandatory for all students. See Chapter 15 for details. Attendance at the Biosciences Department guest seminar series is a critical part of the student's professional development and is also expected.
5. By April 15 of the fourth semester in residency, each student must have submitted the ***"Admission to Candidacy Examination (A-exam)"***. This examination consists of a written Ph.D. thesis proposal similar in format to an NIH predoctoral grant proposal. The research plan is developed in collaboration with the thesis director, but the proposal is written by the student. The student's progress review committee will evaluate the proposal. The student defends the proposal in an oral examination in front of this committee and the thesis advisor. The goals are to demonstrate:  
(a) abilities to organize and present scientific information;  
(b) a thorough background knowledge of the relevant background literature; and  
(c) familiarity with the techniques required to carry out the project.  
Successful completion of these goals will help to facilitate rapid progress toward completion of thesis research. See Chapter 10 for details.
6. ***The Ph.D. thesis defense*** involves a public seminar presentation, followed by oral examination defending the written thesis. All Ph.D. students must defend the thesis before the end of their 16th semester in residency, according to university policy. See Chapter 16 - 17 for details.

Failure to meet the above requirements can result in a recommendation for termination from the program by the department chair, after consultation with the faculty. More details are found in the Rice General Announcements section on dismissal (<http://ga.rice.edu/>).



## 8. THE RESEARCH PROGRESS COMMITTEE

Each graduate student in the Biochemistry & Cell Biology program is assigned a Research Progress Committee (three faculty, including at least two Biosciences department faculty members) who, along with the faculty advisor, oversee the progress made by the student on their thesis work.

### **Committee Roles.**

The purpose of the committee is to evaluate the student's research progress by administering the Admission to Candidacy Exam (A-exam) after the end of the student's second year and by reading, critiquing, and actively participating in the student's annual progress reviews. This advisory committee, along with the thesis advisor and an outside member, also administers the student's final oral defense and evaluates the thesis manuscript (Chapter 17).

It is important that the student and committee maintain an effective working relationship. Committee members can help resolve disputes (if any) between student and thesis advisor, can supply scientific and technical advice, can assist the student in achieving career goals, and might provide references for a student when they apply for fellowships or search for professional positions.

### **Committee Selection.**

The committee is made up of two or three faculty members from the Biosciences Department (one of these members will be designated as the chair). The third member can be a faculty member from a neighboring institution, including adjunct Biosciences faculty members. The selection of a committee involves the student, the advisor, and the department chair. The student and advisor should meet and discuss possible committee members, and a list of 4-6 prospective committee members should be submitted to the graduate program administrator no later than May 1st of the first year of residence. Candidate faculty members whose **primary** appointment is in Biosciences should be requested **without** contacting the faculty members.

Jointly-appointed Biosciences faculty, adjunct faculty members, and faculty members from other institutions should be contacted by the student or advisor to see if they are willing to serve if selected.

The department chair assigns the final committee, making every effort to include at least one committee member from the student's preference list. The final Research Progress Committee is generally assigned by mid-July of the student's first year.

After achieving doctoral candidacy, the student will be required to name an "outside" committee member on the Petition for Doctoral Candidacy (Chapter 11). The outside member must be a faculty member with a primary appointment in another department at Rice. If the research progress committee already has a Rice faculty member from outside of Biosciences, this person could fulfill the requirement of "outside" member when the student petitions for candidacy.



## 9. ANNUAL REVIEW OF RESEARCH PROGRESS

In addition to the continual review of progress by the thesis advisor, the research progress committee conducts an annual research progress review of each student. The first meeting (in the 3rd semester of residence) will include the thesis advisor; advisor presence is optional for meetings after the candidacy exam. There are two components of the progress review: the written report and the committee meeting.

### Due Dates.

The first written progress report is due on August 15 of the 2nd year and is submitted to the research advisor by the last week in July to enable time for feedback. After receiving feedback, the student should incorporate appropriate changes and corrections. The Admission to Candidacy exam (A-exam; Chapter 10) replaces the progress review at the end of the 2nd year. Subsequent progress reviews occur annually in conjunction with the BIOS 581/582 seminar until the student reaches the 5th year of residency or has completed a doctoral thesis. The written report must be submitted to the thesis advisor for feedback 3 weeks prior to the BIOS 581/582 research seminar. The final version of the progress report, along with the progress review supplemental documents, described later, will be submitted by 5 pm 1 week prior to the student's BIOS 581/582 presentation (or by August 15 for 2nd-year students or by August 1 for students entering year 6 or beyond).

The student emails a PDF of the final report to all committee members, the advisor, and the graduate program administrator. The student is responsible for submission by the due dates (including supplemental documents). Failure to meet these deadlines may result in probation. If the report is not submitted within 3 weeks of the deadline, the department chair, after consultation with the faculty, can dismiss the student from the program.

### Document Due Dates:

	Due to Advisor for Feedback	Due to Committee
<b>1st Progress Review</b>	Last week of July before 3rd semester	Aug 15 before 3rd semester
<b>A-Exam</b>	March 15, semester 4	April 15, semester 4
<b>Subsequent Progress Reviews through yr 5</b>	3 weeks before 581/582 seminar	1 week before 581/582 seminar
<b>*Progress Review yr 6+</b>	July 15	Aug 1
<b>Thesis</b>	consult advisor	2 weeks before thesis defense

\* See Modified options for 6+ year students at end of chapter.



## The Written Report.

Students should review the progress review document guidelines, including plagiarism definitions, prior to preparing documents. The progress review report should be no more than eight single-spaced pages, excluding figures, figure legends, tables, and references. Use Arial 11 or Times 12 font sizes. Excessive length is generally detrimental rather than helpful.

The document provided to the thesis advisors 3 weeks before the 581/582 seminar should not be a "rough" draft. It should be a complete, high-quality document ready for the committee. The review by the thesis advisor is meant as a final check to ensure that the student has written a clear and cogent document. If students want feedback on rough drafts, the drafts should be provided to the advisor much earlier to enable substantial writing improvements far in advance of the document due date. The Rice University Center for Academic and Professional Communication is available for writing and presentation feedback; schedule a consultation online (<https://pwc.rice.edu/center-academic-and-professional-communication>). In addition, Dr. Mary Purugganan can provide some writing guidance. Please contact any writing coach well in advance if you would like assistance.

## The report should contain the following sections:

**TITLE**—A succinct and informative title that describes the proposed research.

**SPECIFIC AIMS**—Provide context that allows a reader to understand the rationale for the aims in one or two brief introductory paragraphs. Then, for each aim, list the hypothesis to be tested or rationale for the experiments, the key experiments planned, and the expected results (1 page). The aims should be updated each year to reflect current plans.

**BACKGROUND**—Should contain all relevant information required to evaluate the current status of the proposed research. All mentions of published work must be referenced. Parts of this section may remain unchanged from previous reports. However, this section must remain current and include recent relevant advances. Advanced students may shorten this section to allow more room to discuss current results (2-3 p).

**RESEARCH PLAN**—Should contain experimental results pertaining to the specific aims. This section should constitute the bulk of the report. Divide each aim into sections with the following headings (“hypothesis” can replace “rationale” as appropriate).

Aim 1: rationale, previous results, results since last review, future plans

Aim 2: rationale, previous results, results since last review, future plans

Aim 3: rationale, previous results, results since last review, future plans

Data discussed at previous progress review meetings should be only briefly mentioned, whereas data obtained since the last progress review should be discussed in more detail. The future plans should include a concise description of the remaining experiments to be conducted (4-5 p).

**REFERENCES**—In-text citations should be in the "(author, date)" format. The reference list should include full author lists and article titles.

## Figures and tables.

The use of informative figures and tables describing results or models is encouraged. Figures must be called out in the text and accompanied by legends that enable understanding of the figure without reference to the text. Figures should be of publication quality and incorporated into the text at a point after their first mention. Figures from other sources should include a reference to the source in the legend.



## Progress Review Supplemental Documents.

### **A. The Self-Evaluation (for students entering years 2-4).**

The student will fill out a self-evaluation questionnaire and submit along with the Progress Review report. The questionnaire and a set of progress review guidelines are included in the Appendix of this handbook.

**Supplements are not required for the A-Exam.**

### **B. Updated C.v. (for students in year 3 and beyond).**

The student provides an updated copy of their C.v. along with the progress review document beginning in year 3. This is an opportunity to receive feedback from the advisor and committee members on the format and content of the C.v., as well as an opportunity to discuss how various activities might support ultimate career goals. Any C.v. format may be used; an optional template is provided in the Appendix of this handbook.

### **C. Plans for completion of experiments (for students entering year 5 and beyond).**

As students near completion of the Ph.D., the Progress Review Committee attempts to help focus the student's remaining time on completing experiments, publishing results, and writing the thesis. Students entering year 5 and beyond should work with their advisor prior to committee meetings to provide the information requested in supplement C (included in the Appendix of this handbook). Although the Progress Review document takes its usual form, it will be useful to structure the presentation to the committee around questions in the supplement, i.e., show the publication-ready data, show the first attempts at the in-progress experiments, and then outline remaining experiments for each planned publication.

### **D. The Advisor Letter (for students in year 3 and beyond).**

The research advisor must submit a letter containing a written evaluation of the student's progress to the graduate program administrator and to the student prior to each progress review after the candidacy exam, regardless of whether the advisor attends the meeting. This letter is part of the student's permanent file. The meeting will be rescheduled if the advisor's letter has not been submitted. A letter is not required for the first progress review meeting or for the A-exam.

#### **Document Summary:**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Advisor Presence</b>	<b>Advisor Letter</b>	<b>Supplement (Forms Appendix)</b>
1st Progress Review	yes	no	A
A-Exam	yes	no	none required
Subsequent Reviews	optional	required	A and B (yr 3 and 4) or B and C (yr 5+)
Thesis Defense	yes	no	none required

#### **Advisor Presence.**

The advisor attends the first progress review and the A-exam as a silent observer. The goal of the meeting is to allow the student to interact directly with the committee; the advisor is present to observe and to provide input or clarifications only when requested by a committee member. After the A-exam, advisor presence is optional at progress review meetings. A letter from the advisor to the committee and student outlining student performance must be submitted prior to the meeting even if the advisor attends the meeting,



beginning with the first progress review after the A-exam. After the formal meeting, the advisor departs and the student meets with the committee or committee chair privately.

### **The Committee Meeting.**

The student's committee members are encouraged to attend their BIOS 581/82 seminar to evaluate the student's progress in seminar presentation skills. However, committee members will reserve major questions for the subsequent committee meeting. Beginning in the third year, the progress review meeting will be scheduled by the graduate program administrator for as soon as possible after the student's BIOS 581/582 presentation.

The student should arrive at the meeting with an abbreviated, seminar-style presentation of relevant data including figures from the report, prepared to explain any conclusions with original data and observations, and ready to discuss difficulties encountered in the research and plans for next steps. Along with a laptop, the student will need an adaptor to connect to the projector in the scheduled room. The committee chair will review the degree requirements checklist and transcript at the beginning of the meeting until all requirements are met, and the chair can sign the checklist.

Students approaching graduation are encouraged to focus the progress review meeting on completed and planned experiments that will be part of research articles that remain to be submitted for publication. See Progress Review Supplement C (Plans for completion of experiments) in the Appendix of this handbook for more details.

Each progress review is as important as the initial admission to candidacy examination. If the committee judges that the student is not making progress or exerting sufficient effort, the committee members can recommend to the department chair that the student be placed on research probation or dismissed from the program. However, the primary purpose of the annual progress review is to provide guidance and help for the student's research work. The student should be prepared to take notes of the committee's comments, concerns, and suggestions for discussion with the thesis advisor and, if appropriate, incorporation into future experiments and progress reviews.

Students are encouraged to seek advice from committee members or other faculty as needed. Students or advisors might occasionally find it helpful to have an additional progress review meeting outside of those automatically scheduled after the BIOS 581/582 seminar, e.g., for assistance in dealing with difficult scientific problems or for advice in choosing an effective experimental approach. Any student wishing to schedule an additional meeting should contact their committee chair.

### **Post Meeting Synopsis.**

The committee chair summarizes the meeting in writing. This summary is provided to the student and the advisor and is part of the student's academic record.

### **Summary of Committee Meeting Components.**

- (1) Committee members discuss the written progress review document and the advisor's input without the student present.
- (2) The student presents experimental rationale, data, and future plans, and answers committee member questions.
- (3) The student leaves the meeting room and committee members discuss the student's progress.
- (4) The student returns, the research advisor leaves the meeting (if present), and the committee members ask the student about any concerns or comments regarding the advisor.





- (5) All committee members except the committee chair leave. The chair and student remain to discuss the committee's suggestions.
- (6) The committee chair prepares a written summary of the meeting that is shared with all committee members, the advisor, and the student; a copy is added to the student's academic record.

**\* Modified Progress Review Document Option for year 6+**

For students entering year 6 or beyond, two options are available for the progress review document due August 1. Along with updated Supplements B (C.v.) and C (Plans for completion of experiments), provide either:

1. A draft of a manuscript in preparation on which you are a first author. Using this option may streamline the time spent preparing for the meeting by making it time spent preparing your manuscript.
2. A normal, 8-page progress review document outlining your accomplishments and plans.

In either case, senior students should focus their presentations for the in-person meeting on experiments remaining to be completed and plans for publication.



## 10. ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY EXAMINATION

The admission to candidacy examination (A-exam) occurs at the end of the fourth semester during May or June. Only under special circumstances (e.g., the absence of a committee member or student due to a family emergency or an approved academic activity) will the exam be scheduled later than June 30. The graduate program administrator will schedule the A-exam and inform participants of the date before May 1.

### **Exam Format.**

The A-exam includes a formal written proposal and an oral examination conducted by the student's research progress committee (Chapter 8). This committee will determine the suitability of the student's candidacy for further pursuit of the doctoral degree based on their performance on the written and oral portions of the A-exam. The student's overall academic record and research progress also are considered in determining the student's "pass" or "fail."

### **Written Exam.**

The written exam consists of a research proposal on the thesis project that is due on **April 15** of the student's second year. The proposal format is similar to the progress review document, except that more space is allotted and more detail is expected. The proposal should be of a quality that could be submitted to a federal funding agency (e.g., NIH NRSA). Students are encouraged to request feedback from their advisor, other lab members, and the writing center to ensure that the written document is clear and cogent. Preliminary data should be presented in publication-quality figures and diagrams, and there should be no typographical or spelling errors. The proposal **should not exceed 15 pages** (single-spaced, font Times 12 or Arial 11), including specific aims, figures, and tables, but excluding references and the title page. An abstract is not required. A general overview of the necessary sections follows this paragraph. In addition, review of the handouts and lecture material from BIOS 587 (Appendix) will be useful when preparing the document. The committee rubric used to evaluate the A-exam provides additional guidance on committee expectations (Appendix).

**TITLE** -- A succinct and informative title that describes the proposed research.

**SPECIFIC AIMS** -- Provide context that allows a reader to understand the rationale for the aims in one or two brief introductory paragraphs. Then for each aim, list the hypothesis to be tested or rationale for the experiments, the key experiments planned, and the expected results (1 p).

**BACKGROUND** -- Describe the significance of your project in one or two well-written paragraphs. Provide a historical background for your proposed research including major relevant findings by others. This section also can be used to justify the feasibility or appropriateness of the methodology or to be employed (3-5 p).

**RESEARCH PLAN** -- For each aim, describe the rationale, hypotheses to be tested, the preliminary results (with figures) supporting the feasibility of the aim, and the planned experiments. For each planned experiment, include relevant controls, expected outcomes, interpretations, potential pitfalls, and possible alternative approaches. Include a timeline estimating completion of proposed experiments (9-11 p).

**REFERENCES** -- List cited literature references. References must include complete author lists and full titles (no page limit).



## Oral Exam.

The oral portion of the A-exam involves the student's research progress committee and is attended by the student's research advisor. The advisor is not allowed to initiate questions during the exam, but can serve as a resource on the topic.

The goal of the oral exam is to test both the student's understanding of the proposed thesis project and their understanding of fundamental principles of biochemistry and cell biology and other appropriate subjects. The oral exam involves a formal presentation of the student's proposed research plan in PowerPoint format; an approximately 30-minute presentation should be planned. During and after this presentation, the committee will ask questions related to the proposed project. The committee also may probe more deeply into the student's general knowledge of aspects of their project to determine the student's familiarity and overall understanding of their research topic. The oral exam is generally 2 hours in length. At the conclusion of the oral exam, the committee will decide among the following three possible outcomes:

1. **Pass.** The written proposal was judged to be a well-written, logical, and feasible Ph.D. project, and the student effectively communicated exemplary knowledge in all areas covered during the exam that were deemed to be central to the student's research.
2. **Conditional pass.** The student effectively communicated exemplary knowledge in most areas covered during the exam, but displayed incomplete knowledge or communication of some aspect of the project or the underlying science. In this case, the committee will assign one or more additional brief (usually 2-4 pages) papers on specific topics to improve the student's basic science foundation and to facilitate thesis completion. These reports will be written by the student and submitted to committee members within a short period (usually 1-2 weeks) following the exam. If the reports are acceptable, the student will formally "pass" the oral examination. (In some years, most students are in this category.)
3. **Fail.** If the committee decides that the student has failed the written or oral exam, the student may be dismissed from the Ph.D. program. Alternatively, at the discretion of the committee and in consultation with the department chair, a make-up exam may be scheduled within six months. If the student fails the second exam, the student will be dismissed from the Ph.D. program. Students who fail the candidacy exam can request permission to complete a Master's degree within one year from the date of the candidacy exam. The thesis advisor, the progress review committee, and the department chair must approve this request. A primary consideration in granting this request will be whether the preliminary research already conducted supports the likelihood of successful completion of a novel research project within the one-year time frame.

After the exam, the student is provided a written summary of the outcome from the committee chair along with copies of the rubrics used by committee members to evaluate specific exam components.



## 11. PETITION FOR PH.D. DEGREE CANDIDACY

Immediately following successful completion of the Admission to Candidacy examination, the student must submit a petition through the department chair to the Graduate Council for official approval of their candidacy for the Ph.D. degree. Note that this form requires the student to name the “outside” member of their thesis committee (Chapter 16).

BCB Program policy is that the petition should be filed prior to the first progress review after the candidacy exam, or the committee chair will be notified that the student has not filed in a timely fashion. University policy requires that approval of candidacy be achieved prior to the end of the 6th semester of residency to obtain continued financial support.

A copy of the Petition for Candidacy form is included in the Appendix of this handbook. On the form, the thesis advisor should be listed as the Director of the Thesis Committee, the outside committee member should be a Rice faculty member from another department, the chair of the progress review committee should be listed as the member from within the department, and everyone else on the progress review committee should be listed as additional members.



## 12. RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR BCB GRADUATE STUDENTS AND FACULTY ADVISORS\*

Students and advisors are encouraged to periodically discuss relevant items from the list below. These lab-specific topics do not override departmental or university policies or requirements. Regular discussion around these issues is expected to promote education, increase productivity, and avoid misunderstandings.

### 1. Research and training

What is the initial project? How flexible is the project direction? How might the project develop or change over the course of training? To what extent are students encouraged or expected to collaborate on additional projects in the lab? How will collaborations outside the lab be navigated? Who in addition to the PI will provide research guidance? What additional formal training (via courses or workshops at Rice or elsewhere) is recommended? What software is needed on the student's computer? What training is required to use instruments within and outside the lab (e.g., SEA, TMC)?

### 2. Frequency and methods of communication

How often will the student and mentor meet in person? Communicate via email? Who is expected to initiate one-on-one meetings? Will these meetings be scheduled or sporadic? What should students bring to meetings (notebooks, data, etc.)? Does the research group have regular lab meetings? What level of participation in lab meeting discussions is expected? When is it acceptable to miss lab meeting?

### 3. Preparation of progress reviews, candidacy exam, and thesis documents

Does the advisor have suggestions for possible committee members? What level of input will the advisor provide on written documents and presentations? How much time does the advisor need to provide useful feedback? What is the targeted number of iterations? Who else in the group can provide feedback? Will opportunities for practice talks be provided? What writing and organizational strategies during the project will facilitate the preparation of the thesis document?

### 4. Authorship and publication

What constitutes authorship? How is the order of authors determined on a manuscript or abstract? What is the process for writing manuscripts? In what ways, besides authorship, might a contribution be acknowledged? How is the outlet for publication decided? Is there a specific expectation for the number of manuscripts (published, submitted, and/or in preparation) and the student's authorship position on these manuscripts for graduation? Are there situations (e.g., publications by other groups) that would alter this expectation? Will there be opportunities or expectations for providing feedback on manuscripts of other lab members?

### 5. Intellectual property

What is the policy for claims on intellectual property and patents? When are claims worth considering? How will pending claims impact when the research can be presented in public forums? What happens to the potential monetary benefits of an awarded patent?



## **6. Notebooks, data, media, strains**

What are the laboratory policies for storing, backing up, and sharing notebooks, media, or other information relevant to ongoing and completed projects? How are plasmids, cell lines, and strains cataloged and stored?

## **7. Common laboratory responsibilities**

Which duties are shared among lab members? Which are the student's specific responsibilities? What is the procedure for purchasing materials for research?

## **8. Mentoring experience**

Are there opportunities or expectations that the student gain experience mentoring junior lab members (e.g., undergraduate researchers or rotating graduate students)?

## **9. Work hours and time management**

How many hours per week is the student expected to work in the lab? Does the schedule matter? (e.g., should there be substantial overlap with the hours of the advisor or another lab member?) How should students balance time conducting experiments versus reading relevant literature? Are there advantages or disadvantages to doing some work (e.g., computer work, reading, writing) off-site? Which outside activities require consultation with the advisor prior to participation? How much advance notice is required when requesting vacation days?

## **10. Seminars and conferences**

Which seminars, in addition to department-sponsored seminars, should the student attend? Under which conditions can or should a student travel to a conference? (e.g., only if the student is presenting?) Which specific meetings are most relevant? Who covers costs, and what is covered?

## **11. Professional development and career planning**

What career path is the student considering? What arrangements can be made for participation in internships, workshops, teaching, courses, etc., relevant to possible careers without compromising research training? What is the process in the field of interest for academic and non-academic job searches? Are there individuals in the career path of interest who could be useful resources for the student? A student's plans may change during the training period; this is a good conversation to revisit periodically.

\*Adapted from text suggested by a TAMU Faculty-Student Agreement Task Force with input from BCB graduate program faculty, students, and graduates.





### 13. STUDENT REQUESTS TO SWITCH ADVISORS

Because switching advisors will likely affect progress towards the degree and/or financial support arranged by the previous advisor, students should not consider switching advisors except in extraordinary circumstances. However, in rare cases a student may feel that their interests could be better served by working with a different advisor. Requests to switch advisors are handled on a case-by-case basis. The BCB graduate program will endeavor to assist the student; however, the student bears the ultimate responsibility of finding a new advisor.

**Procedure:**

1. The student should first discuss issues with the current advisor and attempt to resolve any concerns or problems.
2. If the student feels that issues are insurmountable, they are encouraged to request guidance from the BCB graduate advising committee members or the department chair.
3. If the student still wishes to switch advisors, the student should speak with a faculty member whose research interests are in line with their interests, who is willing to serve as the student's advisor, and who has funding to support the student.
4. If the student finds another faculty member willing to serve as their advisor, the student should submit a written request to the department chair for approval of the change. This request must have the endorsement of the new advisor.
5. If the department chair approves the switch, the graduate program administrator will process the paperwork required to change advisors.
6. If a student changes advisors prior to achieving candidacy, the new advisor and the student may wish to petition the graduate advising committee to request a short delay in the timeline for completion of the admission to candidacy exam.



## 14. DISPUTE RESOLUTION

### **Grievance Process.**

Problems or conflicts may arise during graduate school, and students must take responsibility for informing faculty. Depending on the problem, students should feel free to ask for advice from their advisor, members of their progress review committee, the ombudsperson (page iii), or any faculty member with whom they feel comfortable. We aim to resolve any conflicts quickly and amicably. However, if attempts to resolve a problem informally are unsuccessful, the following grievance procedure should be followed:

1. The student should submit the grievance in writing to the department chair, who will attempt to resolve the problem.
2. If the student remains unsatisfied, the problem should be presented for resolution to the Biosciences graduate grievance committee (page iii). If a member of this committee also serves as the student's advisor or on the student's research progress committee, the student may ask the chair for an alternate pro tem committee member. Both the student and the chair should submit a written record of their view to this committee.
3. If the student remains unsatisfied with the resolution of the issue, the problem should be referred to a standing subcommittee designated at the Graduate Council and composed of three faculty members (representing diverse disciplines within the University), one graduate student, and the dean of graduate studies. A written report of proceedings at stage two should be presented to the chair of the Graduate Council for forwarding to the subcommittee, together with all other written materials generated during the investigation. The decision of this subcommittee will be final.

### **Petitions and Appeals.**

Graduate students may petition for exceptions to academic requirements, regulations, and judgements by following the procedures outlined in the Rice General Announcements (<https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/rights-responsibilities/dispute-resolution/>).

### **Assault, harassment, discrimination.**

Rice encourages any student who has experienced an incident of sexual, relationship, or other interpersonal violence, harassment, or gender discrimination to seek support. There are many options available on and off campus, regardless of whether the perpetrator was a fellow student, a staff or faculty member, or someone not affiliated with the university. Title IX of the Higher Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in education programs and activities. Additional resources are at [safe.rice.edu](https://safe.rice.edu).

Students should be aware when seeking support on campus that most employees are required by Title IX to disclose all incidents of non-consensual interpersonal behaviors to Title IX professionals on campus who can support the student. In contrast, the therapists at the Rice Counseling Center and the doctors at Student Health Services are confidential, meaning that Rice will not be informed about the incident. Rice prioritizes student privacy and safety and only shares disclosed information on a need-to-know basis. If you need assistance or simply would like to talk to someone, please call Rice Wellbeing and Counseling Center, which includes Title IX Support: (713) 348-3311.



## 15. THE GRADUATE SEMINAR: BIOS 581/582

Students enroll in and attend BIOS 581/582 in all semesters of residence and are encouraged to participate actively in the discussion period that follows the formal presentations. Beginning in the second year and continuing through the fifth year, students are required to present an annual research seminar in BIOS 581/582. In the semester of the thesis defense, advanced students who have their thesis outline approved by their committee and who have scheduled their defense time and date with the Office of Graduate Studies are not required to give a 581/582 seminar even if they have not completed 5 years of residency.

There are four goals of this course:

- to provide a forum for graduate students to gain expertise in presenting a scientific seminar
- to expose students to ongoing research in the department
- to practice broad scientific discussion with peers during the Q & A session
- to develop critical analysis skills by evaluating the seminars of others

Research seminars should be 25-30 minutes in length and are followed by a question period. Seminars should be presented in a format appropriate for a general biochemistry or cell biology audience at a scientific meeting or regular departmental seminar and should include a brief background to the field and the specific research, a summary of relevant research results and conclusions, a discussion of possible future work, and acknowledgments.

While the primary audience for BIOS 581/582 is the graduate student body, students are encouraged to open their seminars to faculty, staff, and postdoctoral fellows as a way of broadening the potential feedback and discussion. The student's progress review committee is encouraged to attend the BIOS 581/582 seminar. This allows the committee the opportunity to gain a broad overview of the project and may eliminate the need for a second presentation during the progress review. Committee members will reserve major questions for the progress review meeting. For more information about preparing a BIOS 581/582 seminar, see Dr. Ed Nikonowicz or Dr. Mary Purugganan.

### **Seminar Evaluation.**

The seminar evaluation form can be found in the course Canvas site. Satisfactory completion of the seminar evaluation form is required to receive participation credit for each seminar.



## 16. FINAL PHD THESIS EXAMINATION COMMITTEE

The University committee for the final oral examination (defense of thesis exam) must be approved by the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies at the same time as the candidacy is approved (Chapter 11). This committee is composed of the thesis advisor, the members of the Research Progress Committee, and a Rice faculty member whose primary appointment is outside the Biosciences department. This latter member must be chosen in consultation with the thesis advisor and the department chair. The “outside” member must be selected prior to filing the petition for approval of candidacy (Appendix) and be approved along with the other committee members by the Graduate Council.

In addition to these required members, the student may elect to have an “external examiner” from another university also serve on the committee. In such cases, the department chair must secure the approval of the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for the addition of an “external examiner” to the committee.



## 17. PREPARATION AND FINAL ORAL DEFENSE OF THE PHD DISSERTATION

Students are expected to publish most or all of their thesis research in peer-reviewed journals. The publication record is an important metric by which research accomplishment is evaluated and is necessary to establish a scientific career following the receipt of the Ph.D. BCB program graduates generally coauthor more than two papers during their graduate career. Students should not plan to defend their thesis until the bulk of their thesis research has been accepted for publication.

### **Thesis Outline.**

Prior to writing the thesis, the student must convince the progress review committee that the thesis research is essentially complete and published, submitted, or suitable for publication in a reputable scientific journal. Permission to begin writing can be obtained at a regularly scheduled annual progress review meeting. In addition to the usual written progress report, the student submits a detailed thesis outline (approved by the research advisor and copied to the graduate program administrator) one week prior to the meeting. This outline should include thesis chapter titles and chapter subheadings. A list of figure/table titles within each subsection is also useful and may be requested by the committee. [If a progress review is not scheduled in the time window when the student is ready to begin writing, the student should send the outline to the committee via email (copying the advisor and graduate program administrator) and inquire if the committee would like to meet to discuss the outline, or if it is appropriate to begin writing the thesis.] If the committee members and the thesis advisor are in agreement, the outline is approved, and the student can begin the preparation of the thesis. Students should be aware that during thesis writing, the need for further experiments often arises. Students should make allowance for these possible complications in scheduling the final examination.

### **Dissertation.**

The requirements and format of the written dissertation are set forth by the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Students should be fully aware of these requirements before undertaking the writing process. The title page should list the thesis advisor first, then the remaining committee members should be listed in alphabetical order. Do not designate the chair of the progress review committee as "chair" on the title page (unless the thesis advisor is not a Rice faculty member). The thesis advisor should read at least one preliminary draft of the thesis and must approve the final copy before distribution to the other committee members.

**For the examination, the final copy shall consist of a manuscript, which, if accepted, could be submitted without editing to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.** The final PDF must be submitted to the thesis committee members and the graduate program administrator at least two weeks before the final examination.

The arrangement of chapters is determined in consultation with the advisor. Most theses begin with an "Introduction" chapter that reviews the relevant literature and end with a "Conclusions and Future Directions" chapter that discusses the broader implications of the findings.

Note that the thesis is a single-author document, so it is appropriate to use "I" when describing work done by the student; contributions of others should be clearly attributed. For chapters that include collaborative experiments, be sure to appropriately acknowledge the contributions of others at the start of the chapter, in the relevant figure legends, and/or in the main text. For chapters that are largely based on published research,



indicate the publication on the first page of the chapter (e.g., "Parts of this chapter have been published in XX").

### **Thesis Seminar and Defense.**

The student is responsible for scheduling the thesis defense and reserving a room, in consultation with the graduate program administrator. A 2-hour block of time is required for the lecture and subsequent examination. The final thesis defense seminar is public, and the student must arrange to have it announced in the Rice events calendar at least two weeks before the scheduled date by posting the event online through the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (via this form: <https://events.rice.edu/rgs/>).

The final thesis examination consists of two parts:

- (1) The student presents an hour-long public lecture that is handled like a departmental seminar, followed by questions from the audience.
- (2) Following the public defense, the examination continues with just the thesis committee and the student. The student leaves the room before and after the exam while the committee deliberates.

The student is expected to defend in detail their research work and the text of the written thesis. The committee members will consider both the student's research work and the final copy of the thesis. If the committee members approve the student's performance and the general text of the thesis, they sign the Approval of Candidacy Form, which the office of graduate and postdoctoral studies will send to committee members by email. The student should fill out their portion of this form when they receive their email from the office of graduate and postdoctoral studies prior to the defense.

Committee members will usually suggest corrections and other improvements to the written document. The student should incorporate these changes and provide a final corrected PDF of the thesis to the committee. Once the final thesis is approved, the title page of the thesis is electronically signed by committee members.

In the case of an unsatisfactory performance, a second examination can be scheduled. A second unsatisfactory performance will result in dismissal from the program.

### **Deadlines.**

The final copy of the thesis must be approved by committee members (by signing the title page) prior to any deadlines imposed by the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) for the student to participate in commencement exercises. Rice University requires the thesis to be defended before the end of the 16th semester of residency at Rice. However, the BCB program may terminate the stipend at the end of the 15th semester of residency at Rice in cases where the progress review committee and the faculty advisor believe the student has had ample time to complete the thesis. The student will receive advance warning if the stipend will be discontinued.

Administrative deadlines for the final semester are imposed by GPS and are listed for the current academic year in the General Announcements and on the GPS website. It is recommended that students contact the graduate program administrator, who can summarize how these guidelines are pertinent to the BCB graduate program. Additionally, the registrar's office requires that students file an application for degree by the deadline listed on the academic calendar for the semester they wish to receive the degree. The application is available in your Esther account. Students should investigate their stipend and insurance coverage end dates as they are scheduling their thesis defense. The deadline to submit the final, corrected thesis is 6 months after the defense, but the stipend and insurance coverage may end sooner.





It is recommended that students consult with the graduate program administrator because many factors can affect stipend and insurance coverage, including which semester you plan to graduate, when you plan to submit the final thesis, and when you plan to apply for degree conferral.



## 18. MASTER OF SCIENCE DEGREE PROGRAM IN BIOCHEMISTRY & CELL BIOLOGY

The course requirements for a candidate for the Master of Science degree will be determined by the graduate advising committee. As in the case of Ph.D. candidates, all students complete (unless equivalent educational experience has been obtained previously) the following courses:

BIOS 301 Biochemistry (fall, prerequisite, does not count for graduate level credit)

BIOS 341 Cell Biology (fall, prerequisite, does not count for graduate level credit)

### **All M.S. students are required to take the following graduate courses:**

BIOS 575 Introduction to Research (fall, 1 hr)

BIOS 581, 582 Graduate Research Seminars (fall & spring, 1 hr per semester of residence)

BIOS 583 Molecular Interactions (fall, 4 hr)

BIOS 587 Research Design, Proposal Writing, and Professional Development (summer, 2 hr)

BIOS 588 Cellular Interactions (spring, 4 hr)

UNIV 594 Responsible Conduct of Research (fall, 1 hr)

BIOS 701,702 Graduate Lab Research (1st year rotations) (fall, 2 hr/course; 4 hr/semester)

### **Students also must take 6 credit hours from the following advanced courses:**

BIOS 505 Physical Biology (3 hr)

BIOS 510 Stem Cell Biology (3 hr)

BIOS 520 Molecular Basis of Diseases (3 hr)

BIOS 524 Microbiology and Biotechnology (3 hr)

BIOS 525 Plant Molecular Genetics and Development (3 hr)

BIOS 530/535 Graduate Laboratory Modules in Molecular Biophysics (2 hr each)

BIOS 538 Analysis and Visualization of Biological Data (3 hr)

BIOS 543 Developmental Neurobiology (3 hr)

BIOS 547 Experimental Biology and the Future of Medicine (3 hr)

BIOS 549 Advanced Cellular and Molecular Neuroscience (3 hr)

BIOS 550 Viruses and Infectious Diseases (3 hr)

BIOS 551 Molecular Biophysics (3 hr)

BIOS 552 Structural Biology (3 hr)

BIOS 560 Cancer Biology (3 hr)

BIOS 570 Computation With Biological Data (3 hr)

Students may also take additional advanced-level courses in biochemistry and cell biology, and other select graduate courses at Rice, Baylor College of Medicine, University of Houston, or University of Texas Health Science Center.

The specific courses will be determined in consultation with the graduate advising committee. There will be an evaluation of previous course studies, and any deficiencies must be corrected, usually in the first year. Once the student selects a thesis advisor, the advisor may require additional specialized coursework.



Students must achieve a minimum overall average of B- ( $\geq 2.67$ ) in the formal Biosciences courses to be a candidate for the M.S. degree. The BCB faculty will evaluate the student's overall performance after the second semester in residence.

One progress review will be held for M.S. students during their second full year of residence. This research review session is similar to the admission to candidacy examination for Ph.D. students and requires an 8–10-page description of the student's research activities and plans. No other preliminary examination is required prior to the final oral defense of the written Master's thesis. As in the case of Ph.D. students, a petition for approval of candidacy is submitted to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies along with the names of the thesis committee members. These members include the thesis advisor and the Progress Review Committee. The department chair must approve this action.

Master's degrees must be completed by the fifth year of residency, according to university policy. To attend commencement at the end of the academic year, the student must submit a petition for candidacy prior to deadlines listed each year in Rice's academic calendar (<https://registrar.rice.edu/calendars>).



## 19. FINAL ORAL EXAMINATION AND THESIS FOR MASTER'S DEGREE

Master of Science degree candidates are required to submit a formal written thesis that is consistent with the format and requirements set by the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. It is to the student's advantage to be fully aware of these requirements before undertaking the writing process. **For the examination, the final copy shall consist of a printed manuscript, which, if accepted, could be submitted without editing to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.** A final copy of the thesis, which has been approved previously by the major advisor, must be submitted to each of the other committee members two weeks prior to the final oral examination (thesis defense).

The student is responsible for scheduling the thesis defense and reserving a room, in consultation with the graduate program administrator. Generally, a 2-hour block of time is sufficient for the lecture and subsequent examination. Additionally, the thesis defense is public, and notice of the final examination for a Master's degree must be posted with Graduate Studies (via this form: <https://events.rice.edu/rgs/>) and the Biosciences department at least one week prior to the scheduled date. After this announcement is submitted, the student receives the approval of Master's candidacy form from the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies by email and should complete their portion of the form before the defense.

The final thesis examination consists of two parts:

- (1) The student presents an hour-long public lecture that is handled like a departmental seminar, followed by questions from the audience.
- (2) Following the public defense, the examination continues with just the thesis committee and the student. The student leaves the room before and after the exam while the committee deliberates.

The student is expected to defend in detail their research work and the text of the written thesis. The committee members will consider both the student's research work and the final copy of the thesis. If the committee members approve the student's performance and the text of the thesis, they sign the approval of the Master's candidacy form. As in the case of Ph.D. candidates, the final copy of the thesis must be approved by the committee members prior to any deadlines imposed by the Office of Graduate Studies for the student to participate in commencement exercises. In the case of an unsatisfactory performance, a second examination can be scheduled. A second unsatisfactory performance will result in dismissal from the program.



## 20. BA-MS-PHD PROGRAM IN BIOCHEMISTRY & CELL BIOLOGY

### **Admission.**

Qualified Rice University undergraduates can apply to enroll in the Biochemistry & Cell Biology BA-MS-PhD program track in the spring of their sophomore year. Some course requirements for graduate studies are completed at the same time as the upper-level undergraduate degree requirements. Laboratory research performed in undergraduate and graduate research courses is presented as the MS thesis in the summer following graduation and can serve as the initial phase of the Ph.D. thesis work. As a result, the graduate careers of these students will be accelerated by an anticipated 1-2 years, and such students may be able to obtain their Ph.D. degrees approximately 3 years after obtaining their BA-MS degrees. If circumstances require, students may stop at the BA or MS level if they meet all the requirements for the respective degrees.

Criteria for selection include academic performance ( $\text{GPA} \geq 3.5$ ), motivation, previous research experience, and personal qualities. Enrollment is limited, and the BCB BA-MS-PhD Track Committee will select applicants for admission.

### **BA in Biosciences Requirements.**

All of the requirements for a BA Degree with a Major in Biosciences and a Major Concentration in Biochemistry, or Cell Biology and Genetics, or Integrative Biology are required for the BA/MS/PhD accelerated program.

### **MS in Biochemistry and Cell Biology Requirements.**

The BA-MS-PhD Track Committee will advise students pursuing the BA-MS completion and will approve the formal course program of students during their final two years in the BA-MS program. Students who wish to pursue the BA-MS track must select the MS thesis advisor by the end of the sophomore year when they declare their major to provide the opportunity to begin a project that will form the basis of the MS thesis. Students must take 12 credit hours each semester that apply to the undergraduate transcript to maintain full-time status as an undergraduate. Because 5 hours of graduate-level courses are required by the accelerated program in the fall and spring semesters of the senior year, it is advisable to take the two graduate-level electives in the junior year.

For the MS, the following courses must be completed or evidence provided of successful completion of courses that covered the same material with a B- average or better ( $\text{GPA} \geq 2.67$ ):

- BIOS 581/582 Graduate Research Seminar (4 semesters, Jr. and Sr. years; 1 presentation, Sr. year)
- BIOS 583 Molecular Interactions (senior year)
- BIOS 587 Research Design, Proposal Writing, and Professional Development (summer after junior year)
- BIOS 588 Cellular Interactions (senior year)
- UNIV 594 Training in the Responsible Conduct of Research (junior or senior year)
- BIOS 800 Graduate Research (summers after sophomore and junior years)



Students must also take 6 credit hours of advanced courses from this list (junior year):

BIOS 505 Physical Biology (3 hr)  
BIOS 510 Stem Cell Biology (3 hr)  
BIOS 520 Molecular Basis of Diseases (3 hr)  
BIOS 524 Microbiology and Biotechnology (3 hr)  
BIOS 525 Plant Molecular Genetics and Development (3 hr)  
BIOS 530/535 Graduate Laboratory Modules in Molecular Biophysics (2 hr each)  
BIOS 538 Analysis and Visualization of Biological Data (3 hr)  
BIOS 543 Developmental Neurobiology (3 hr)  
BIOS 547 Experimental Biology and the Future of Medicine (3 hr)  
BIOS 549 Advanced Cellular and Molecular Neuroscience (3 hr)  
BIOS 550 Viruses and Infectious Diseases (3 hr)  
BIOS 551 Molecular Biophysics (3 hr)  
BIOS 552 Structural Biology (3 hr)  
BIOS 560 Cancer Biology (3 hr)  
BIOS 570 Computation With Biological Data (3 hr)

Students will be responsible for the content of these courses in their MS defense (which also serves as the Admission to Ph.D. Candidacy examination).

The first progress review (see the following section entitled "Preparing for the Progress Review") will occur at the end of the junior year under the oversight of the BA-MS-PhD committee. The MS candidate should create and submit, in consultation with their research advisor, a list of potential MS thesis committee members by the start of the spring semester of their senior year. The department chair will assign three committee members, and the second progress review with the MS thesis committee will occur in the early spring of the senior year.

The MS thesis will be submitted, and a public oral defense will occur in the summer following graduation at the end of the senior year with completion of the BA requirements. MS candidates continuing to the Ph.D. must maintain a  $GPA \geq 3.0$ , complete a thesis, and make a public oral defense that includes a private examination by their MS thesis committee. Students who complete the MS requirements with a  $GPA \geq 2.67$  but less than 3.0 must defend their thesis to complete the MS degree but will not be admitted to the Ph.D. program. Students who wish to continue to the PhD at Rice after the MS should include a section on their proposed PhD research project in the senior year progress review, indicating their future goals and aims. This future work section should also be included in the MS thesis and may be part of the discussion with the thesis committee following the defense.

### **Preparing for the Progress Review.**

Students who have not yet received the MS degree should prepare for their review using the guidelines in Chapter 9 of this handbook, starting with the section entitled "The Written Report." Ignore the deadlines and supplemental documents required by the doctoral students; write a report in the indicated format with maximum of 10 pages (it is preferable to communicate clearly with fewer pages, if possible).

Students will be given personalized deadlines by email when the department schedules a student's review. A letter from the advisor to the committee summarizing research progress is required in advance for this meeting.



## **PhD in Biochemistry and Cell Biology.**

Admission to the Ph.D. portion of the BA-MS-PhD track requires successful completion of the MS thesis and oral defense, which will serve as the admission to candidacy exam required for all Ph.D. candidates, a cumulative GPA  $\geq 3.0$  for the BA-MS degree courses, approval of the thesis advisor, and approval of the department chair. Students who are in good standing in the BA-MS track and have passed their MS final oral exam may begin their doctoral studies the summer following graduation.

Course requirements for the first year of Ph.D. study include:

- BIOS 581/582 Graduate Research Seminar (required in all years of residency)
- BIOS 599 Graduate Teaching (two semesters)
- BIOS 800 Graduate Research

## **Evaluation of Progress in the PhD Phase of the BA-MS-PhD Program.**

The Graduate Advising Committee evaluates each student's record and recommends any further course work based on the requirements and on the interests of the student. Thesis advisors may require additional courses. At the end of each semester, the department chair, in consultation with the faculty, reviews student performance in the formal course work. Students must maintain at least a B average (GPA  $\geq 3.0$ ), perform satisfactorily in their research efforts, and demonstrate outstanding motivation and potential for research. Evaluation during the Ph.D. phase of the program includes:

- The MS thesis and its oral defense constitute the admission to candidacy examination
- Ongoing review of research progress by the thesis advisor; satisfactory research progress will be indicated by a grade of "S" in BIOS 800 each semester
- A yearly research progress assessment by the student's Research Progress Review Committee
- Presentation of research progress at least once a year in seminar format (BIOS 581/582) starting in the first year of Ph.D. study and continuing until four presentations have been given (including the one that was given in the M.S. phase of the program)
- Defense of the Ph.D. thesis research and text in a final public seminar presentation and oral examination attended by the student's Thesis Committee

Students in this program who progress from the MS degree into the doctoral program are governed by the same policies and procedures as all other doctoral students in the Biochemistry & Cell Biology program. Therefore, these students should refer to the appropriate section in this handbook for additional details about post-candidacy processes like evaluation of research progress, participation in the BIOS 581/582 seminar, and the thesis defense.





## 21. INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS (IDPs)

The American Association for the Advancement of Science has an online tool to help young scientists set and manage career goals. The Department of Biosciences recommends that all graduate students take advantage of these online tools at <http://myidp.sciencecareers.org>.

## 22. BIOSCIENCES TEACHING AND MENTORING TRAINING PROGRAM

The Biosciences Department offers a set of optional activities for graduate students and postdoctoral researchers interested enhancing and documenting their teaching and mentoring experiences at Rice. Prerequisites for program participation include successful completion of the Admission to Candidacy Exam (for graduate students) and a letter of support from the research advisor (for graduate students and postdoctoral researchers). Progress must be documented on the Record of Training Activities form. The Program guidelines can be found on the Biosciences website, under the Graduate Studies menu. For students seeking additional pedagogical training, the Rice Center for Teaching Excellence offers an accredited four-course "Certificate in Teaching and Learning" (<https://cte.rice.edu/grads>) that can be completed with advisor permission.

## 23. TEACHING ASSISTANT APPOINTMENTS

### **BIOS 599**

Students are required to complete two semesters of BIOS 599, Graduate Teaching in Biochemistry & Cell Biology, wherein they act as teaching assistants. This requirement is generally completed in the second year, but students with external fellowships that restrict teaching during the fellowship period may complete the requirement at other times. In BIOS 599, students gain training and experience in teaching by serving as discussion leaders and graders in undergraduate courses. Prior to teaching, students are required to attend departmental and university training workshops to learn the expectations, regulations, and strategies for effectively working with undergraduates. Course assignments for teaching assistants are made by the department chair with input from course instructors, advisors, and students. Efforts are made to match students to courses that strengthen their foundational skills.

### **BIOS 118**

Post A-Exam graduate students might have the opportunity to volunteer for additional teaching experience by serving as lead instructors in BIOS 118, a seminar that introduces freshmen to Biosciences research at Rice and the Texas Medical Center. Students read and discuss scientific papers and tour Rice and Texas Medical Center labs to see facilities and meet faculty and students. The goals of this seminar are to introduce freshmen to the excitement of research while providing interested graduate students a venue to hone their teaching skills in a small class setting (5-8 students). Graduate students serve as course instructors in a mentored, but independent, format over seven weeks. Student instructors must have the consent and support of their thesis advisors to participate. Student instructors are listed as the instructor of record and receive official Rice teaching evaluations.

### **Additional Teaching Opportunities in Biosciences**

BCB graduate students have the opportunity to gain additional teaching experience throughout their tenure at Rice by serving as teaching assistants in the third year and beyond. Teaching assistantships are valuable training opportunities that help prepare students for future roles as instructors and mentors. Teaching also offers training opportunities broadly applicable for careers in academia and beyond (e.g., leadership, subject



mastery, presentation and public speaking skills, establishing goals and expectations, and evaluating others' performance).



## 24. TRAVEL AND ATTENDANCE AT SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCES

Students are encouraged to participate in national and international scientific conferences. Participation enables students to present their work to a wide audience, listen to research presentations from a range of speakers, and meet with individuals sharing common research interests. Students also use these meetings to network with future collaborators and employers.

**Students should review and follow the guidelines detailed in the Graduate Travel Resources & Procedures guide (see Appendix).**

To expedite attendance, funds may be available to partially defray the costs of travel. These funds are available to students who will present their research (oral or poster). Calls for applications for the Biosciences Graduate Student Travel Award are generally issued in April and November each year (apply via the travel pre-authorization form referenced in the Appendix). Funds can be used for transportation, shared lodging, meals, and registration. If more students apply than funds can support in a given year, applications will be prioritized based on seniority, academic standing, time of last travel support, and importance of the meeting for the professional development of the student. Students should ask their research advisors if they recommend a particular conference. Most conferences have travel awards sponsored by the conference association. Students are expected to apply for conference travel awards and awards from other Rice sources such as the Women in Natural Science (WiNS) in addition to applying for department funds. Failure to apply for external awards could reduce chances of receiving departmental travel funds.

**Students must use the Biosciences Graduate Student Travel Pre-Authorization Form (see Appendix) for research-related travel.**

This form is essential for administrative and safety purposes. Communicate travel plans with the graduate program administrator before making travel arrangements through the travel pre-authorization form before travel arrangements are made. Whether students receive travel funds from the department, a training grant, an outside fellowship, or the advisor, travel guidelines must be followed. Reviewing guidelines in advance will prevent misunderstandings regarding costs that are reimbursable versus costs that cannot be reimbursed. The graduate program administrator can help students make travel/registration purchases in advance to avoid carrying large expenses on personal accounts and work with students on approved reimbursements.

### **Reimbursements**

Review the Travel Guidelines in the Forms Appendix of this handbook before traveling to ensure that you have a good understanding of the expenses that are allowed for reimbursement and the documentation you will require to receive reimbursement. The graduate program administrator can answer questions you have about travel.



## 25. FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND EXTERNAL FELLOWSHIPS

BCB graduate students receive a first-year research fellowship that covers their stipend while they perform research rotations. Once they enter a thesis lab, the thesis advisor generally covers the stipend unless the student receives independent funding that covers the stipend. Students receive first-year stipend and tuition waiver amounts in their offer letter and the most current stipend amount can be found on the department web site each year. All full-time graduate students who are supported by a stipend receive a full tuition waiver during their residency; BCB does not allow Ph.D. students to be part-time.

Graduate students are encouraged to apply for independent funding in the form of university fellowships, federal training grants and fellowships, and foundation fellowships. Independent funding strengthens a student's *curriculum vitae* and proposal writing is beneficial experience. Students who receive external fellowships may be eligible for a department bonus.

### **Bonuses for Fellowship Recipients.**

A one-time \$500 bonus, contingent upon availability of funds, will be awarded by the department to students who receive an external (non-Rice) fellowship in an amount that corresponds to at least 50% of the annual stipend. This bonus will be awarded for fellowships applied for after matriculation at Rice (and after July 1, 2022). The departmental bonus will be matched by a one-time \$500 bonus, contingent upon availability of funds, awarded by the advisor. A student may receive these bonuses only once during the student's residency in the graduate program regardless of number of awards or their duration.

## 26. SEMINARS AT RICE

Graduate students are required to attend the Vanzant Seminar Series. Visiting scientists share their latest findings, and students can sign up for lunch with the seminar speaker. The graduate students can nominate speakers for the seminar series; nominations are solicited through the BCB GSA. Graduate students are encouraged to attend other scientific seminars in their field of interest hosted by various Rice departments and programs and Texas Medical Center seminars.



## 27. INTERNSHIPS

Internships in biotech, other industries, hospital/clinical, or government laboratories can help students explore potential career interests, may add skills that can assist with the Ph.D. work, and can result in post-Ph.D. job offers. For training grants requiring an internship, internship support and placement can be grant-specific. In any case, participating in an internship will require proactive planning and organization by the student.

### Recommendations:

- **Preparation** – Networking is key - take advantage of networking opportunities at conferences and other venues. The Rice Center for Career Development (CCD) compiles web resources including internship listings. The CCD also runs useful workshops and schedules individual meetings. Prepare and get feedback on a professional resume. Talk with BCB students who have completed internships, who are often happy to share their insights (consult the graduate program administrator for names of previous internship participants.)
- **Permission** - Internships are allowed if the student and advisor are in agreement that the experience will be a valuable component of the student's professional development. Once the student has a general plan and timeline for a potential internship, they must secure approval from the advisor. Students on visas may have other required permissions and should consult OISS.
- **Content** - The internship should bring a new aspect to the student's training or it is unlikely to be considered more beneficial than earlier completion of the thesis research project.
- **Timing and length** - Internships are not considered until the candidacy exam has been passed. Discuss with the advisor the advantages of interning early versus late in the graduate training period. Negotiate the optimal internship length with the advisor and the host.
- **Logistics** - Consider how the internship will be funded, whether to take a leave of absence, and how to integrate a 2–3-month hiatus in the Ph.D. research project without delaying research in the advisor's laboratory. The location of the internship (local versus remote) will affect housing costs and ability to maintain some presence in the thesis lab. International students must also complete additional paperwork with OISS before the internship can be approved.
- **Fellowships** - If supported through an individual fellowship (e.g., NSF GRFP, NRSA), consult the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) to ensure that the internship is planned in a manner that does not affect eligibility to maintain the fellowship. Some fellowships specifically advertise internship opportunities.
- **Technicalities** - Consult the graduate program administrator to ensure that the plan conforms to the departmental and GPS rules and procedures in the BCB graduate program handbook and General Announcements.



## 28. VACATION POLICY

Arrangements for holidays and other time off must be made in advance in consultation with the advisor and must be in compliance with university rules and any guidelines from funding agencies. First-year students should consult with a member of the advising committee or the department chair, in addition to their rotation advisor.

Full-time graduate students are entitled to 10 weekdays of paid annual leave in addition to university holidays. Unused days may not be carried forward year to year and do not accrue payable time upon departure. Graduate students must coordinate their vacation plans with their advisors sufficiently far in advance to avoid last-minute conflicts. Students may sometimes be required to work on university holidays to staff ongoing projects and operations; students who work on a university holiday will be able to use this paid day off at another time.

Time away for professional activities (e.g., conferences, workshops, interviews) does not count against vacation time.

Short absences (those anticipated to be less than one week) due to an illness of the student or a family member should be granted upon notice to a student's advisor, provided they are commensurate with the episode. These should not be deducted from any vacation time. Longer absences may require a temporarily release from academic responsibilities. Please see Chapter 29 (Medical or Parental Leave) for more information.

## 29. MEDICAL OR PARENTAL LEAVE

If a graduate student temporarily cannot fulfill the duties of their appointment due to a medical emergency or the adoption or birth of a child, the student may be temporarily released from academic responsibilities. Medical leaves and other interruptions of study are handled according to the guidelines in the General Announcements (<https://ga.rice.edu/>) regarding leaves, interruptions of study, and withdrawals. The Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies provides information on the types of leave available (<https://graduate.rice.edu/leaves>).

A student may apply for short-term medical or parental release at any time during the semester. The application form can be found in the Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies form library (<http://graduate.rice.edu/allforms>). Enrollment and stipend support may be continued for up to six weeks or until the appointment expires (whichever occurs first). Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies requests that short-term parental release requests be submitted four weeks prior to the expected start date. Students taking a voluntary short-term release should make arrangements with their advisor and instructors to complete their academic responsibilities in a timely manner.

Students receiving a short-term medical or parental release may request a 1-semester postponement of graduate program deadlines that occur in the year following the 6-week leave. For example, upon returning to full-time research following the 6-week leave, a student may request a 1-semester delay in an upcoming BIOS 581/582 seminar, progress review meeting, and/or candidacy exam. A student may request deferral of TA responsibilities for one semester. Such requests should be made via email to the graduate program director and copied to the department chair. In subsequent years, the student would be expected to meet standard program deadlines.

We strongly encourage students who are experiencing a medical issue or anticipating the birth or adoption of a child to talk with the director of graduate studies, department chair, and/or assistant department chair to discuss the full range of options that are available.



### 30. 1ST YEAR STUDENT MENTORING PROGRAM

Each first-year graduate student in the BCB program is assigned to a mentoring group with 1 - 3 other first-year students, 1 - 2 second-year students, and 1 post-candidacy student, keeping the size of the groups between 4 and 8 persons. The graduate program administrator arranges for each group to have lunch once per month during the first year. The advanced students serve as volunteer mentors for the group. The volunteer mentors are generally experienced with the mentoring lunch practices and receive reminders from the Assistant Chair about challenges facing first-year students during each phase of the year. For example, tips for mentors in the fall include several potential discussion topics that are pertinent during the first 6 weeks of graduate school:

- Coursework and first exams - Are tests coming up soon? Discuss the level of detail required and give any tips you have; mostly just encourage everyone.
- First laboratory rotation assignments - acclimating to the lab, putting your best foot forward, lab communication.
- Preparing list of lab preferences for the second rotation - remind students that they should email the faculty about rotating before listing them as a choice.
- Rotation project presentations - give tips on how fast that 10-minute talk flies by and once again, just be encouraging. The first presentation is always the most difficult.

Although the volunteer mentors do not give details about the discussions to staff or faculty, they report the general discussion agenda to the graduate program administrator and confirm an attendance list after each meeting. Rather than repeating specific conversations, mentors are encouraged to give general feedback for the faculty, such as, "The first years are worried about presenting their first rotation project talks. Perhaps one of the advising committee members could chat with them about expectations."

In addition, any student experiencing difficulties is encouraged to talk with the BCB graduate program director, the graduate program administrator, the department chair, or the department assistant chair, who will endeavor to help. Additional resources are listed in Chapter 31, Student Resources.





## 31. STUDENT RESOURCES

### Center for Academic and Professional Communication

<https://capc.rice.edu>; (713) 348-4932

Help with writing papers and theses, presentation skills through individual consultations and workshops

### Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE)

<http://cte.rice.edu/>; (713) 348-2929

Offers Certificate in Teaching and Learning and TA training

### Graduate Student Association (GSA)

<http://gsa.rice.edu/>

Hosts community-building events and represents graduate student interests

### Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS)

<http://graduate.rice.edu/>; (713) 348-4002

Forms, registration information, time boundaries, thesis guidelines, and other resources

### Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS)

<http://oiss.rice.edu/>; (713) 348-6095

Support for international students, including visa assistance and advice for living in Houston

### Pride @ Rice

<https://ricepride.rice.edu/>

Resources for students and allies of the LGBTQ+ community

### Rice Counseling Center

<https://wellbeing.rice.edu/counseling-center/about-us> (713) 348-3311

Consultation and individual and group mental health counseling for Rice students

### Student Health Services

<http://health.rice.edu/>; (713) 348-4966

Preventive and outpatient medical care for Rice students

### Student Wellbeing Office

<https://wellbeing.rice.edu/student-wellbeing/about-us> (713) 348-3311

Advice for students, including tools for managing conflict and academic challenges

### Women's Career Planning

<https://ccd.rice.edu/students/career-resources/identity-based-resources/resources-for-women>

Key career planning resources for female students, alumni, and professionals

### Women's Resource Center

<https://owlnest.rice.edu/organization/rwrc>

Mission is to increase awareness of and sensitivity to gender issues in order to build a more supportive, dynamic, and conscious atmosphere on campus.

### Disability Resource Center

(713) 348-5841 <https://drc.rice.edu/>

<https://drc.rice.edu/students/grievances> - specific link to report a grievance



## 32. LABORATORY NOTEBOOKS AND DATA STORAGE

Notebooks are the primary documentation of what you've accomplished; proper data acquisition and record keeping are essential for all scientific work. A reasonably trained person should be able to read an experiment in your notebook and repeat it without further explanation.

Notebooks and data are the property of the university. Notebooks always stay in the lab and remain in the lab after you leave. If we cannot find the primary data, we cannot publish the result. Moreover, funders and publishers require your primary data (including notebooks) to be securely stored by the university beyond the duration of your graduate career. If your advisor agrees, you may make a copy of your notebook for your records and convenience. For additional information, review your material from UNIV 594 (Responsible Conduct of Research).

Consult your advisor about the specific type of notebook to use. Is an electronic notebook allowed or preferred? Should the physical notebook be bound? What are the additional requirements if intellectual property filings are anticipated?

### **Notebooks**

This list is a starting point; consult with your advisor for additional electronic notebook requirements and lab-specific requirements. If you have several unrelated projects, it may be preferable to log them in separate notebooks; consult your advisor for your lab policy.

- (1) Each notebook should begin with a "table of contents" that is updated frequently.
- (2) Each experiment should have a title and date (including the year!).
- (3) The purpose or objective of the experiment should be clearly stated (can be same as title).
- (4) The methods should be presented in an easy-to-follow format.
  - When using a standard method, you can reference a lab manual or other source.
  - Complex experiments should have a flow chart or numerical guide to steps.
  - Simple or often repeated experiments can also be referenced (page #) or outlined.
- (5) The notebook provides a log of notes taken during the execution of an experiment.
  - Calculations should be present for buffers, protein dilutions for gels, etc. These notes are critical for troubleshooting and should be thorough. Do not use paper towels!
  - List sources and lot numbers for chemicals (especially when using an unusual compound).
  - Record the appearance of samples (clear, cloudy, color, etc.)? Always note if something is different than usual.
- (6) Data should be accessible to you and others in the lab as designated by the professor.
  - Experiments should be "completed" in the sense that the data are graphed, labeled, or listed in a format that conveys what the numbers mean.
  - Electronic data (images, movies, spreadsheets) should be logged and matched to a page number in your notebook. Remember that your findings may be published years after you obtain the data; make sure that it is possible for you and your advisor to retrieve the primary data and your methods for obtaining the results.



- (7) Each experiment should have a summary or conclusion.
- Even simple preps (DNA, protein, etc.) should list yields and concentrations.
  - Make an entry even if an experiment fails or is terminated and clearly state the reason. ALL data should be entered, not just the data that fits with your hypothesis or that you think your advisor would like to see. This is what scientific integrity is all about.
  - When possible, interpret the data into clear sentences.
- (8) If you need notebooks that meet the standards for filing a patent, make sure to:
- Write in permanent ink.
  - Use a bound notebook, fill consecutive pages, date all entries.
  - Do not erase or change entries; create a new entry to update old entries.
  - Periodically have someone who is not part of your lab witness and initial, with a date.
  - Consult with your advisor for additional requirements.

### **Electronic Data Storage**

Consult your advisor about how to store and archive electronic data. Is there a lab computer that is backed up where lab data are archived? Does your lab store data on a server or file-sharing service?

Does your advisor provide external hard drives to individuals in the lab?

How should electronic images or files be labeled for storage? Make sure that electronic files are organized and contain sufficient information in file and folder names (date, gene, mutant, etc.) so that you (or someone else) can retrieve the data later.

Electronically stored data should be indexed in your lab notebook. No data should be stored solely on your personal computer.



### 33. PROCEDURE FOR LAB ACCIDENTS

Graduate students classified as a Fellow, Teaching Assistant (TA) and/or Research Assistant (RA) injured in the lab at Rice University are covered under Workers Compensation. Rice Student Health Center does not provide medical services for workers compensation care. Therefore, students injured in the lab should not go to Rice Health Services. The following protocol should be used for all lab injuries.

#### **Emergency**

**Call Rice University Police Department at 713-348-6000** (Do not call 911).

RUPD will dispatch officers to the scene and Rice EMS if needed. In case Houston Fire Department trucks or ambulances are needed, RUPD will meet them at the entrance gates and guide vehicles to the location. Be sure to tell the RUPD dispatcher of your location and clearly describe the incident.

**Administer first aid, if necessary.**

**Evacuate the area, if necessary.**

**If the incident involves chemicals, biological material, or radioactive materials your supervisor or someone in the laboratory should contact Rice Environmental Health and Safety at 713-348-4444.**

When injury or illness involves a chemical, a Safety Data Sheet (SDS) should accompany the victim to the hospital. A First Report of Injury Form must be filed with the Director of Risk Management, VP for Administration (MS-670). An Accident/Incident Report must be submitted to the department head and Environmental Health and Safety. The form is available on the Environmental Safety website at <http://safety.rice.edu/>

#### **Non-Emergency**

Minor medical injuries/illness occurring in the workplace should be reported immediately to the injured party's supervisor. The supervisor should fill out a First Report of Injury Form (available from Risk Management <http://riskmanagement.rice.edu/> or Environmental Health and Safety <http://safety.rice.edu/>). Submit this form to Risk Management staff as soon as possible; their contacts are provided at the above-referenced Risk Management website.

If non-emergency medical attention is needed, the student should seek treatment at NOVA Clinic (workers compensation care) located at 9563 Main Street. Contact Risk Management for an appointment (x5082). If transportation is not available, a request can be submitted to NOVA to provide transport.



## 34. GRADUATE STUDENT AWARDS

The BCB graduate program and the Biosciences department recognize students whose performance or accomplishments have been particularly outstanding. Awards are presented for outstanding teaching, service and leadership, and seminar presentations during the previous year. In addition, Schroepfer awards, given in honor and memory of George Schroepfer, Jr., founder of the former Biochemistry Department, are given for outstanding BCB Ph.D. theses and for outstanding BCB research publications during the previous year. Most of the award nominations are submitted by faculty only, but the outstanding BCB Student Seminar is selected by the graduate students, and nominations for the Biosciences Leadership Award can be submitted by any member of the department. Students are only eligible to receive each award once.

A certificate and monetary prize accompany each award. Recipients from recent years are listed below.

### **George J. Schroepfer, Jr. Award for Outstanding Ph.D. Thesis in Biochemistry & Cell Biology**

2019: Miguel Betancourt

2020: Razan Alnahhas and Elissa Tjahjono 2021: Zachary Wright

2022: Barbara de Freitas Magalhaes

2023: Melissa Traver and Adam Howard

2024: Caleb Chang and Alex Kang

2025: Rodrigo Ibarra and Siliang Li

### **George J. Schroepfer, Jr. Award for Outstanding Published Research in Biochemistry & Cell Biology**

2019: Joseph Massey

2020: Carlos Origel

2021: Adam Howard and Phillip Baker

2022: Alex Kang and Maria Claudia Villegas Kcam

2023: Shikai Jin and Liyang Zhang

2025: Katie Scholand and August Staubus

### **Outstanding BCB Student Seminar**

2019: Zach Wright

2020: Adam Howard

2021: Matt Ykema

2022: Li Chieh Lu

2023: August Staubus

2024: Luisa Rezende

2025: Robyn Alba



### **Biochemistry & Cell Biology Excellence in Teaching Award**

2019: Melissa Traver

2020: Joshua Moore

2021: Alena Streletskaia

2022: Armando Moreno

2023: Matt Demelo, Jiwoo Kim, Malyn Selinidis

2024: Hannah Johnson

2025: Presley Bird

### **Biosciences Leadership Award**

2019: Jordan Bluford

2020: Melissa Traver, Marion Donald 2021: Marina Hutchins

2022: Joshua Moore, Mario Escobar, Robert Laroche

2023: Andrea Ameruso, Hengxing Zou, Gabby Buck

2024: Ana Swearingen

2025: Onyekachi Idigo



## 35. BCB GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION (BCB GSA) CONSTITUTION

Last revised 2/16/2024

### **Article I. Name**

The name of this organization will be “Biochemistry and Cell Biology Graduate Student Association”

### **Article II. Purpose**

The BCB GSA represents the interests of all graduate students in the Biochemistry and Cell Biology Graduate Program. Any graduate student is welcome to discuss matters of concern, introduce new ideas to modify the graduate program, or suggest community building or career development activities. BCB GSA officers act as liaisons between the graduate students and graduate program administrators. The BCB GSA also organizes monthly events where graduate students can mingle socially and academically. All graduate students are encouraged to participate in GSA-sponsored activities. As the program welcomes new first-year graduate students, the BCB GSA will aid in the new students' orientation to the department.

### **Article III. Members**

All currently enrolled BCB graduate students are eligible for membership and are automatically a part of the graduate student association until they graduate or leave the program. There are no dues required for members.

### **Article IV. Officers**

The BCB GSA Officers consist of the President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, GSA Departmental Representative, and Year Representatives. All currently enrolled BCB graduate students are eligible to become officers of the BCB GSA. The BCB GSA officers have one meeting per semester, typically held within the first month, to plan the events for that semester. The President may call additional meetings if necessary.

### **Article V. Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee consists of four positions: President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary. The Executive Committee coordinates activities of the BCB GSA. Members of the Executive Committee cannot hold another position within the BCB GSA. The Executive Committee has a monthly meeting with the BCB GSA Faculty Advisory Committee, currently the Department Chair, Assistant Chair, and BCB Director of Graduate Studies, henceforth called the Advisory Committee. These meetings are scheduled by the Assistant Chair. The Executive Committee and Advisory Committee work together to improve the graduate program and coordinate BCB GSA involvement in departmental activities such as graduate student and faculty recruiting. The Executive Committee will perform the duties in this constitution and is authorized to spend this organization's funds, arrange fundraisers, and propose an annual budget.





## **President**

The president position is limited to one year and is usually assumed by the previous year's Vice President. However, if the previous year's Vice President wishes to renounce taking up the role, or if another candidate wishes to run for the position, elections can be held for this position as well. Once a graduate student has served as president, they are no longer able to serve on the Executive Committee, but may become a Year Representative. The President of BCB GSA has the authority and duty to perform the following tasks:

- Lead Executive Committee and Officers meetings.
- Assume responsibility for the operations of the BCB GSA.
- Direct BCB GSA actions with aims to improve graduate education and overall conditions within the BCB graduate program.
- Attend club development training and/or risk management training.
- Coordinate events, with BCB GSA officers' input such as, but not limited to:  
Schedule semester meetings with all BCB GSA officers to plan events for that semester and designate a point person to lead each event.  
Remind officers to review Rice's events policy at <https://alcoholpolicy.rice.edu/>, which is required for hosting GSA events with alcohol.
- Gain approval (budgetary and programmatic) for the annual Biosciences Welcome Symposium. Assemble and lead a panel of graduate students to plan and host the annual Biosciences Welcome Symposium and Retreat. Coordinate with Advisory Committee and BCB Graduate Program Administrator to plan the event. The President and the panel determine the schedule of events, invited speakers, retreat portion plans, etc.
- Aid in recruitment efforts of new graduate students and/or faculty candidates by leading the BCB GSA as encouraged by the Advisory Committee.
- With the Vice President, choose 1st year representatives at the end of the fall semester.
- Recruit the candidates for executive committee positions that are turning over prior to the April elections.
- Coordinate the PRACTICE program to mentor 2nd year graduate students nearing the A-exam.

## **Vice President**

This position has a 1-year term with the expectation of assuming the role of President the following year. The Vice President has the following duties:

- Assume the duties of the President in the President's absence.
- Attend monthly Executive Committee meetings.
- Gain approval (budgetary and programmatic) for the planning of recruitment weekends.
- Attend club development training and/or risk management training for BCB GSA club registration with Rice Student Activities.
- With the President, choose 1st year representatives at the end of the fall semester.
- Aid in recruiting candidates for executive committee positions that are turning over prior to the April elections.
- Assume the role as President when the term of Vice President ends.

## **Treasurer**

The treasurer position has a maximum of two years. The Treasurer of BCB GSA has the authority and duty to perform the following tasks:



- Establish and maintain financial records of credits and debits of BCB GSA monies throughout the year.
- Report the finances of the BCB GSA at each Executive Committee meeting.
- Advise the Executive Committee on budget and other fiscal activities of the BCB GSA.
- Ensure all bills related to BCB GSA activities are paid in a timely manner.
- Coordinate the BCB GSA goggle sale fundraiser and coordinate sales advertisements with BIOS lab instructors.
- Assume responsibility for maintaining the BCB GSA vending machines and to obtain help from BCB GSA officers for stocking, purchasing, etc.
- Spend the organization's funds on approved activities after consulting the other BCB GSA officers.
- All funds collected by or on behalf of the organization must be deposited within one business day of receipt.

### **Secretary**

The secretary position has a maximum of two years. The Secretary of BCB GSA has the authority and duty to perform the following tasks:

- Maintain the minutes of meetings scheduled by the President.
- Compile and distribute reports to the BCB GSA officers by emailing the minutes on the Google group listserv and archiving on Google Drive (or related cloud service).
- Maintain the records of the BCB GSA in the BCB GSA Google Drive folder.
- Manage access to both the Google group listserv and Google Drive folder.
- In years when there is sufficient graduate student interest, schedule bimonthly BCB GSA-sponsored journal clubs with the BCB Graduate Program Administrator. These dates will be posted to the departmental calendar. The Secretary is in charge of notifying the speaker for that week, approving the article to be presented, and emailing the Biosciences graduate students and postdocs. At every journal club, it is up to the Secretary to take attendance and turn this into the BCB Graduate Program Administrator, along with the citation of the article being presented.
- Communicate with department administrators to add events to the Biosciences' graduate student calendar.

### **Rice GSA BCB Program Representative**

The Rice GSA Representative position has a maximum of two years. The BCB Program Representative is required to attend monthly Rice GSA meetings. These meetings are currently held the third Tuesday of every month from 6-7pm. Departmental Representatives are responsible for determining how the University's GSA Budget is spent and represent the interests of the graduate students of their department to the University. The Rice GSA Representative has the following duties:

- Represent the BCB GSA at monthly Rice GSA meetings.
- Act as a social event coordinator for GSA sponsored events.
- Forward emails from the Rice GSA listserv to the BCB graduate student listserv.

### **Year Representatives**

The Year Representative positions have no term limits and there can be more than one representative per class year. The 1st year Representative(s) are chosen by the President and the Vice President at the end of the fall semester, with nominations and volunteers from the 1st years. Any 1st-year student(s) can volunteer for the position; there is no election. These 1st year reps may continue to represent their class until their



graduation. Any 2nd, 3rd, and 4th+ year students who do not volunteer in their first year but are interested in subsequent years may contact the President to become a Year Representative. The Year Representatives of BCB GSA have the authority and duty to perform the following tasks:

- Relay the concerns of the students in their class year to the Executive Committee.
- Attend any meetings called by the President.
- Volunteer to host or aid in hosting a BCB GSA event at least once a year.

## **Article VI. Elections**

A call for nominations (including self-nominations) for new GSA Officers will be made by the President at the first BIOS 582 April meeting. Students nominated will be informed by the Executive Committee and asked if they are willing to serve if elected. Elections will be held to choose the officers at the beginning of the last BIOS 582 meeting and decided by a simple majority vote. 25% of the student members will constitute a quorum. The current President will email the entire graduate student population, as well as the Advisory committee, to announce the newly elected officers.

## **Article VII. Turnover of Positions**

July 1st serves as the annual turnover date for the Executive Committee. Because the position of Secretary, Treasurer, and Rice GSA BCB Program Representative can be a two-year term, it is possible to have no turnover every July 1st. There is no turnover date for the Year Representatives. The current Executive Committee will facilitate continuity of the association by mentoring their successor. The student that holds the current position is obligated to train their successor for takeover on July 1st.

## **Article VIII. Officer Removal Process**

If an officer has failed to perform the duties of their office on multiple occasions or acted in a manner that violates the mission and/or policies outlined in this constitution, a meeting between the Executive Committee and the club sponsor may be called. If the officer in question is found to be at fault, the remaining officers and club sponsor may vote to remove said officer by a 2/3 supermajority vote. An election will be held by all members of the BCB GSA within two weeks of the officer's removal to select a replacement.

## **Article IX. Faculty/Staff Sponsor**

The President will schedule a meeting of the Executive Committee to select a Faculty/Staff sponsor who will serve until a replacement is selected. The Faculty/Staff sponsor must be a current faculty or staff member of Rice University.

## **Article X. Financial Authorization**

The Executive Committee is authorized to spend club funds and make purchases on behalf of this organization.

## **Article XI. Meetings**

The Executive Committee will have a monthly meeting with the BCB GSA Faculty Advisory Committee, currently the Department Chair, Assistant Chair, and BCB Director of Graduate Studies. Additionally, the President may schedule additional meetings for the Executive Committee when deemed necessary. The members of the Executive Committee are expected to attend all meetings.



## **Article XII. Sponsoring a BCB GSA Semester Event**

For the success and continuation of these events, it is necessary to follow all Student Judicial Programs (SJP) policies and rules. BCB GSA events must be held in accordance to these policies:

- Follow the <https://alcoholpolicy.rice.edu> on SJP website.
- Sponsors are responsible for all items necessary for the event; this includes movies, games, sports equipment, grill etc.
- Purchase/Order food and drinks (abiding by SJP policy and guidelines), or have a plan in place to pay for drinks at Valhalla.
- Coordinate with the President for any help necessary.

## **Article XIII. Primacy Clause**

This organization shall recognize the primacy of the Graduate Student Association Council and, ultimately, the Graduate Student Association. This organization shall adhere to the Graduate Student Association Constitution and Bylaws and any associated rules or regulations. This constitution shall be subordinate to the Graduate Student Association Constitution and Bylaws.

## **Article XIV. Anti-Hazing Policy**

This organization shall not engage in any form of hazing, as defined by the Code of Student Conduct and any other applicable Rice University rules and regulations.

## **Article XV. Nondiscrimination Policy**

This organization shall not discriminate against individuals on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national or ethnic origin, ancestry, age, disability, or veteran status.

## **Article XVI. Amendment Procedure**

Any member of this organization may propose an amendment to this constitution. The Executive Committee and the Advisory Committee will discuss the proposed amendment(s) at their monthly meeting and may approve the proposed amendment by a 2/3 supermajority vote. Proposed amendments to this constitution will be submitted to the Graduate Student Association Vice President of Internal Affairs. Before going into effect, the amendment must be approved by the Graduate Student Association Vice President of Internal Affairs and ratified by the Graduate Student Association Council. The Date of Last Revision on the title page of this constitution will be updated to reflect the date of the Senate's ratification.



## 36. PRACTICE MENTOR PROGRAM GUIDELINES

### **PRACTICE program overall goals.**

The Peer Research Admission to Candidacy Training In Competence Educator (PRACTICE) mentor program is an optional program designed by previous BCB graduate students to help 2nd-year BCB graduate students prepare for the A-exam. It may be particularly useful for students who do not have senior graduate students in their lab or with a PI who has not recently gone through the A-exam process.

The PRACTICE program pairs 2nd-year students with post-A-exam students to help with the oral component of the A-exam. At least two additional post-A-exam students serve along with the PRACTICE Chair on a student's PRACTICE A-exam committee to give presentation feedback. PRACTICE mentors and committee members are generally chosen based on lab affiliation in connection to the 2nd-year student's committee membership.

The program was piloted in the spring of 2015 and is currently coordinated by the BCB GSA President, who solicits volunteer PRACTICE Committee Members and Mentors and assigns them to interested 2nd-year students.

### **2nd-year student responsibilities.**

The 2nd-year students can choose to seek as much or as little help from the mentor as they would like. However, using a mentor does not lessen the work involved. It is the 2nd-year student's responsibility to schedule the practice A-exam with the PRACTICE mentor and committee with plenty of time to make changes to the presentation before the actual A-exam.

Note that getting feedback from your PRACTICE mentor does not lessen the importance of getting feedback from the PI on the presentation. Both can help students prepare for A-exams, but the focus should be on the PI.

### **PRACTICE Committee Member responsibilities.**

PRACTICE Committee Members attend the 2nd-year students' PRACTICE A-exam talk. Mentors may help students with format, logic, grammar, and presentation style. PRACTICE Committee Members should give feedback and ask questions during the talk. In most cases, PRACTICE Committee Members will be representing their PIs on the student's actual committee, and will try to reflect the potential comments/concerns of the faculty member.

### **PRACTICE Mentor (Committee Chair) responsibilities.**

In addition to the responsibilities of a PRACTICE Committee Member, the PRACTICE Mentor helps the assigned student prepare before their PRACTICE A-exam (ideally shortly after their BIOS 582 presentation) if desired by the 2nd-year student. Mentors are not making students' presentations for them, but should make suggestions for improvement. PRACTICE mentors may also read or look over the student's A-exam document before the PRACTICE A-exam talk. Mentors act as PRACTICE Committee Chair for the PRACTICE A-exam talk.

### **Teaching and mentorship.**

If a graduate student serves as a mentor or serves on 2 or more PRACTICE committees, doing so counts towards completion of the Biosciences Teaching and Mentoring Training Program.



## 37. FORMS AND RESOURCES APPENDIX

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When Should I Reference Something	A-30
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Texas Hotel Tax Exemption Form	A-32

\* Commonly used forms can be accessed online at the following URL: <https://tinyurl.com/BIOSgradforms>

## MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

### BIOCHEMISTRY & CELL BIOLOGY GRADUATE PROGRAM RICE UNIVERSITY

1. I have read and agreed to the Graduate Requirements for the Biochemistry & Cell Biology Graduate Program, including the GPA standards, course work requirements, and review processes.
2. I understand that I am responsible for meeting several key deadlines, including (1) the deadline at the end of 8 semesters to file for Ph.D. candidacy, which I am only eligible to do after I have passed the candidacy exam (A-Exam), (2) the deadline at the end of 16 semesters for defending my Ph.D. thesis, and (3) the deadline for submitting the final, corrected thesis to the office of graduate studies within 6 months of my thesis defense. I understand that I should turn in my first progress review by August 15 of my first year and my written candidacy exam by April 15 of my second year, unless I have received written notification that my deadlines have been extended.
3. I have read and agreed to the requirements for graduate students at Rice University listed in the Rice University General Announcements. I understand that graduate study in Biochemistry & Cell Biology is a full time endeavor in which I am expected to apply myself totally, and therefore it is not permitted to take outside employment for which financial compensation occurs or is anticipated, to assume outside responsibilities which require significant amounts of time commitment even if not compensated, or to take academic courses or programs in an area outside of those related to the training and degree programs of the Biosciences Department without prior permission from the department chair, the thesis advisor, and the progress review committee. If there are long term health, family or legal situations that prevent me from continuing my graduate education on a full time basis, the situation should be reported as soon as possible to the department chair, the thesis advisor, and the progress review committee.
4. I understand that I am responsible for attending training sessions on safety and ethics, for reading all materials provided on these topics and for following the guidelines and procedures described in the sessions and handouts during my entire graduate career at Rice.

By signing below, I am indicating that I understand and will abide by all of the requirements and responsibilities of the graduate program.

---

Signature

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Printed Name

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## ADVISING FOR 1<sup>ST</sup>-YEAR BCB GRADUATE STUDENTS

Most of the formal courses required in the Biochemistry & Cell Biology graduate program are completed in the first year of residence to allow students to commence thesis research at the end of their second semester. The Graduate Advisory Committee tailors the formal course program for all first-year graduate students. After a student selects a thesis advisor, the faculty advisor may require additional specialized courses. The faculty advisor must approve any optional coursework that the student wishes to complete after the first year. BCB graduate students are expected to attend all BCB-related departmental seminars (usually Mondays at noon) in all semesters of study.

Students are required to have training in Biochemistry and Cell Biology. If students are missing formal training in these subjects, they are required to take the equivalent background courses during their first year.

The following list includes the BIOS courses most commonly suggested for graduate students and is provided to help students prepare for the advising meeting.

### Fall Semester FIRST YEAR Courses (register for total of 14 to 17 hours)

#### COURSES THAT MAY BE NEEDED TO SATISFY PREREQUISITES:

BIOS 301 Full Term	BIOCHEMISTRY	11:00AM - 11:50AM MWF	3 credits
BIOS 341 Full Term	CELL BIOLOGY	09:25AM - 10:40AM TR	3 credits

#### REQUIRED COURSES IN THE FALL OF THE 1ST YEAR:

BIOS 575 1st Half	INTRO RESEARCH	during orientation	1 credit
BIOS 581 Full Term	GRAD SEM BCB	02:00PM - 03:15PM M	1 credit
BIOS 583 Full Term	MOL INTERACTIONS	02:00PM - 03:45PM WF	4 credits
UNIV 594 Full Term	RESPONS COND RES	12:15PM - 01:50PM W	1 credit
BIOS 701	GRAD LAB RESEARCH I	variable times	2 credits
BIOS 702	GRAD LAB RESEARCH II	variable times	2 credits

#### FALL COURSES THAT MEET GRADUATE ELECTIVE REQUIREMENTS:

BIOS 510 Stem Cell Biology	2:30PM - 3:45PM TR	3 credits
BIOS 520 Molecular Basis of Diseases	9:00AM - 9:50AM MWF	3 credits
BIOS 525 Plant Molecular Genetics	1:00 - 2:15 PM TR	3 credits
BIOS 551 Molecular and Cellular Biophysics	10:00AM - 10:50AM MWF	3 credits
BIOS 553 Microbiology: Infectious Diseases	9:25AM - 10:40AM TR	3 credits
BIOS 555 Molecular Membrane Biology	1:00PM - 2:15PM TR	3 credits
BOIE 508 Synthetic Biology	8:00AM - 9:15AM TR	3 credits

#### OPTIONAL SEMINARS (these are pass/fail, attendance required seminars):

BIOS 592 KECK SEMINAR (QUANT BIO)	4:00PM - 5:15PM F	1 credit
BIOS 593 PLANT SEMINAR	11:00 - 11:59AM T	1 credit

## **Spring Semester FIRST YEAR Courses (register for total 12 to 16 hours)**

### **REQUIRED COURSES IN THE SPRING OF THE 1ST YEAR:**

BIOS 582 Full Term GRAD SEM BCB	02:00PM - 03:15PM M	1 credit
BIOS 588 Full Term CELL INTERACTIONS	01:30PM - 03:30PM WF	4 credits

### **ONE OF THE FOLLOWING RESEARCH COURSE OPTIONS IS REQUIRED:**

BIOS 701 AND 702 GRAD LAB RESEARCH I & II	variable times	2 credits each
BIOS 800 GRADUATE RESEARCH*	variable times	5 credits

\*BIOS 800 enrollment is for students who are already assigned a thesis advisor at the start of spring. Students will register for 701 AND 702 during advanced registration but can switch to the section of BIOS 800 offered by their research advisor if they are placed into a thesis lab before January 1.

### **SPRING COURSES THAT MEET GRADUATE ELECTIVE REQUIREMENTS (CHECK COURSE SCHEDULES IN NOVEMBER, MORE MAY BE AVAILABLE):**

BIOS 505 Physical Biology (3 hr)  
BIOS 524 Microbiology & Biotechnology (3 hr)  
BIOS 543 Neurodevelopment (3 hr)  
BIOS 547 Experimental Biology and the Future of Medicine (3 hr)  
BIOS 550 Viruses and Infectious Diseases (3 hr)  
BIOS 552 Structural Biology (3 hr)  
BIOS 560 Cancer Biology (3 hr)

### **OPTIONAL SEMINARS (these are pass/fail, attendance required seminars):**

BIOS 537 CRYSTALLOGRAPHY SEM	TBA	1 credit
BIOS 592 KECK SEMINAR (QUANT BIO)	4:00PM - 5:15PM F	1 credit
BIOS 593 PLANT SEMINAR	TBA	1 credit

## **Summer Term FIRST YEAR Courses (total of 15 hours)**

### **REQUIRED COURSES IN THE FIRST SUMMER:**

BIOS 587 Full Term PROPOSAL WRITING	TBA	2 credits
BIOS 800 Full Term GRAD RESEARCH	variable times	13 credits

## SECOND YEAR

If your thesis advisor requires additional courses, add those courses and reduce the number of BIOS 800 hours to total 15 hours.

### REQUIRED COURSES IN FALL OF SECOND YEAR:

BIOS 581 Full Term GRAD SEM BCB	02:00PM - 03:15PM M	1 credit
BIOS 599 Full Term GRAD TEACHING	variable times	1 credit
BIOS 611 Full Term RESEARCH SEMINAR	variable times	1 credit
BIOS 800 Full Term GRAD LAB RESEARCH	variable times	12 credits

### REQUIRED COURSES IN SPRING OF SECOND YEAR:

BIOS 582 Full Term GRAD SEM BCB	02:00PM - 03:15PM M	1 credit
BIOS 599 Full Term GRAD TEACHING	variable times	1 credit
BIOS 611 Full Term RESEARCH SEMINAR	variable times	1 credit
BIOS 800 Full Term GRAD LAB RESEARCH	variable times	12 credits

## SUMMER OF SECOND YEAR AND BEYOND

### Summer Term Courses (total of 15 hours)

BIOS 800 Full Term GRAD LAB RESEARCH	variable times	15 credits
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## FALL AND SPRING OF THIRD YEAR AND BEYOND

If your thesis advisor requires additional courses, add those courses and reduce the number of BIOS 800 hours to reach a total 15 credit hours per semester.

<b>Fall Semester Courses (total of 15 hrs)</b>	variable times	1 credit
BIOS 611 Full Term RESEARCH SEMINAR		
BIOS 581 Full Term GRAD SEM BCB	02:00PM - 03:15PM M	1 credit
BIOS 800 Full Term GRAD LAB RESEARCH	variable times	13 credits

### Spring Semester Courses (total of 15 hours)

BIOS 611 Full Term RESEARCH SEMINAR	variable times	1 credit
BIOS 582 Full Term GRAD SEM BCB	02:00PM - 03:15PM M	1 credit
BIOS 800 Full Term GRAD LAB RESEARCH	variable times	13 credits

**Biochemistry & Cell Biology Graduate Advising Committee**  
**Course Requirements Checklist**

<b>Core Requirements met in undergraduate transcript?</b>		
BIOS 301	Biochemistry	11:00AM - 11:50AM MWF
BIOS 341	Cell Biology	09:25AM - 10:40AM TR

<b>First Year Courses recommended by the Advising Committee</b>			
<b>Fall of Year _____</b>	<b>Credits</b>	<b>Spring of Year _____</b>	<b>Credits</b>
BIOS 575 Intro to Research	1	BIOS 582 Grad Seminar BCB	1
BIOS 581 Grad Seminar BCB	1	BIOS 588 Cellular Interactions	4
BIOS 583 Mol Interactions	4	BIOS 701 Lab Rotation I	2
BIOS 701 Lab Rotation I	2	BIOS 702 Lab Rotation II	2
BIOS 702 Lab Rotation II	2	(BIOS 800 Grad Research*)	(5)
UNIV 594 Responsible Conduct of Research	1	Elective:**	3-7
Elective:**	3-6		
<b>TOTAL OF 14 – 17 HOURS</b>		<b>TOTAL OF 12 – 16 HOURS</b>	

\*Students should register for BIOS 701 AND 702 in advanced registration, but can change to BIOS 800 in January

\*\*Only 3-4 elective credit hours are recommended

<b>1st Year SUMMER Courses recommended (15 hrs total)</b>	
BIOS 587 Research Design, Proposal Writing, & Prof Dev	2 credits
BIOS 800 Graduate Research	13 credits

<b>Second Year Courses recommended by the Advising Committee (15 hrs total)</b>	
<b>Fall of Year _____</b>	<b>Spring of Year _____</b>
BIOS 581 Grad Seminar BCB	BIOS 582 Grad Seminar BCB
BIOS 599 Graduate Teaching	BIOS 599 Graduate Teaching
BIOS 800 Graduate Research	BIOS 800 Graduate Research
BIOS 611 Research Seminar	BIOS 611 Research Seminar



## Dos and Don'ts of Your Bios 581/582 Seminar Presentation

### Do

- Clearly indicate the significance of the work early in your talk; this will motivate your audience to care about your topic. Explain the big picture, potential applications, or impact on the field.
- Make sure your graphs are labeled correctly, including axis labels and units of measurement.
- Clearly distinguish data sets using distinct colors, shapes, fills, etc.; differences can be less dramatic when projected than when viewed on your computer.
- Maintain consistency in the way you represent data sets in your talk, so successive graphs can be easily compared.
- If you zoom in on data to show trends, explain this to your audience.
- Speak loudly. Speak to the people in the back of the room to help carry your voice there.
- Use a pointer.
- End your presentation with your conclusion, summary, or most important point, and a verbal cue that you are finished: “thank you” or “thank you for your attention.”

### Don't

- Change terminal values on the axes of similar graphs without bringing this difference to the audience's attention (or they may be confused when making comparisons).
- Represent a single variable with different colors/shapes in successive graphs—in other words, do not switch the color or shape used to symbolize a particular treatment or genotype.
- Repeatedly reach for a drink of water (or anything) during your presentation. It's okay to have water on hand for an urgent need, but drinking water throughout your seminar is distracting.
- Pull up a previous slide during Q&A unless it's absolutely necessary to answer the question or if the questioner specifically asks to see a slide; backtracking through slides wastes time. Just answer the question, and try to avoid unrelated tangents in your answer.
- End your prepared presentation with “I'll take questions now” because the flow will be broken when the audience applauds; invite questions *after* the applause.

## Research Progress Review Committee Guidelines

### Biochemistry & Cell Biology Graduate Program, Rice University

The following items should be covered during all Research Progress Reviews and summarized in the synopsis that the Chair of the Committee completes after the progress review. The student, the mentor, and the Graduate Administrator should each receive a written copy of the Chair's report.

- Has the student fulfilled the required coursework or is this coursework adequately in progress?
- Does the student have significant research results?
- Did the student give a clear, concise, and forceful rationale for the project?
- Is the student well motivated to do research?
- Are the student's lab skills developing appropriately?
- Are the student's writing skills developing?
- Is the notebook in order? Does it serve as adequate record-keeping as required by federal agencies?
- Is the student aware of the literature in the chosen field?
- Does the student attend department and/or other seminars?
- Is the student developing an appropriate sense of ethics in science?
- Are there concerns expressed by the research advisor?
- Is the thesis director paying sufficient attention to the needs of the student?

Insufficient overall performance is grounds for placing students on "research probation," and another review should be scheduled within six months. Failure to rectify the problems by that next meeting would be grounds for dismissal under the terms of the "satisfactory progress" rule in the graduate program handbook.



## SUMMARY OF RESEARCH PROGRESS REVIEW

**STUDENT:**

**DATE OF PROGRESS REVIEW:**

**REVIEW COMMITTEE CHAIR:**

**OTHER MEMBERS OF REVIEW COMMITTEE:**

**ADVISOR:**

**ACTION OR DISPOSITION:**

PASS

CONDITIONAL PASS

ADDITIONAL MEETING REQUIRED

**SUMMARY:**

**ACADEMIC MILESTONES TO BE MET BEFORE NEXT REVIEW:**

**ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS OR ASSIGNMENTS and DEADLINE(S):**

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CHAIR OF COMMITTEE

**Student Self-Evaluation**  
**Supplement A to the Graduate Student Progress Review Report**  
**(For students entering year 2-4)**

It is valuable to periodically evaluate how well you are expending your time and to make changes in your behavior that improve your productivity (even after you have your PhD). In addition, it is important to identify ways to effectively engage others in discussions that accelerate your research progress, extend your research skills, and expand your intellectual breadth. Finally, it is vital that you assess what steps you need to take to become an independent researcher who identifies hypotheses that are compelling, testable, and worthy of your valuable time and effort. To help you think about these issues as you proceed through graduate school, you should provide typed answers to the following questions for your advisor and committee prior to your annual progress reviews (no more than one page). You are encouraged to discuss these with your advisor and committee and to ask them for input on the changes you are planning for the upcoming year.

- 1) **How have you divided your time among the diverse activities that are part of your research training over the past year**, i.e., reading literature, attending seminars, designing experiments, performing experiments, analyzing data, preparing written and oral presentations, mentoring students, and other activities? Indicate the average number of hours per week that you work and estimate the percentage of time that you spend on these different activities. In addition, express whether you think changes in your time management would be useful for your productivity during the next year, and describe what changes you are planning.
- 2) **What mechanism(s) have you been using to engage others in discussions** about research hypotheses, experimental design, data interpretation, data presentation (oral and written), and learning new experimental methods? Indicate the people that you engage, the frequency of discussing these matters, and the mechanisms that have been most productive for you to improve your research progress. In addition, express whether you think there are changes in how you engage people over the next year that would accelerate your research progress.
- 3) **How has your research independence changed over the past year?** Indicate whether your research progress is less dependent on others than it was prior to your last progress review. Give examples that illustrate this point by commenting on your independence with respect to the following: designing experiments, solving technical problems, identifying new hypotheses, and writing manuscripts.

**Updated C.v.**  
**Supplement B to the Graduate Student Progress Review Report**  
**(For students in year 3 and beyond)**

Provide an updated copy of your C.v. along with your progress reviews beginning in year 3. This is an opportunity to receive feedback from your advisor and committee members on the format and content of your C.v., as well as an opportunity to discuss how your various activities might support your ultimate career goals. Use whatever C.v. format you like; below is an optional template.

---

**Name**  
email  
date

**Education**

Ph.D. student in Biochemistry and Cell Biology (BCB), Department of BioSciences, Rice University, Houston, TX (anticipated graduation, May 2018)  
B.S. in X, University of Y, City, State, Country

**Honors and Awards**

2014 IBB travel grant to attend the Cell Signaling Gordon Conference, Holderness, NH 2013  
Outstanding BCB Student seminar

**Publications** (most people use reverse chronological order)

Authors, date, title, journal, volume, page numbers (PMID)

**Manuscripts in preparation**

Authors, title (in preparation for submission in October, 2015)

**Presentations**

Presentation title, conference title, location, date (poster) Presentation title, conference title, location, date (talk)

**Teaching experience**

Instructor for BIOS 115, Freshman Seminar in Local Research, Rice University, spring 2015  
Teaching Assistant for BIOS 302, Biochemistry II, Rice University, spring 2014  
Teaching Assistant for BIOS 301, Biochemistry I, Rice University, fall 2013

**Leadership experience**

BCB Graduate Student Association Secretary, Rice University (2013-2014) Student Council Representative, Undergraduate University (2011-2012)

**Mentoring experience**

Mentored two Rice undergraduates in research projects, including one who is a co-author on my 2013 PNAS publication (August 2013-present; May 2012-May 2013)

**Plans for completion of experiments**  
**Supplement C to the Graduate Student Progress Review Report**  
**(For students entering year 5 and beyond)**

As you near completion of your PhD, your Progress Review Committee would like to help you focus your remaining time on completing your experiments, publishing your discoveries, and writing your thesis. Please work with your advisor prior to your upcoming committee meeting to provide the information requested below, and fill out and submit this document to your committee as a supplement to your Progress Review document. Although your progress review document should take its usual form, it will be useful to structure your presentation to the committee around questions 2 – 5 below; i.e., show your publication-ready data, show your first attempts at the in- progress experiments, and then outline your remaining experiments for each planned publication.

1. Please list the papers you have submitted, in press, or published. (Include full author list, title, journal, etc.):
2. For each additional manuscript that you plan to submit for publication prior to defending your thesis, please provide
  - a. Tentative title of paper and possible journal to which you plan to submit
  - b. Titles of figures that are completed and publication-ready:
  - c. Tentative titles of figures that have been completed but need to be repeated to obtain publication-ready data:
  - d. Tentative titles of figures for experiments that remain to be performed:
3. By what date do you estimate these experiments will be complete?
4. By what date do you estimate the manuscript(s) will be submitted?
5. By what date do you estimate you will defend your thesis?
6. Are you and your advisor in agreement on items 2 – 5 above?

## **BIOS 587 Progress Review Writing Guidelines**

### **Understanding Your Subject**

It is essential that you completely understand everything that you write. The process of writing a draft often helps in developing your understanding. Organizing a subject into words to explain it to someone else often results in the realization that there is an essential step in the reasoning that you have not considered. Before drafting the text, use an outlining strategy that identifies the main topics of paragraphs and major points that highlight the flow of information. Vaguely worded descriptions of aims, methods, or results do not disguise a lack of understanding.

### **Expressing yourself clearly**

Writing has meaning through the reader's interpretation. Your writing should be clear and concise to facilitate the reader's understanding. Consider whether you have selected the best word for your purpose. Evaluate your writing to identify topic sentences and the flow of information, from known to new.

Improper grammar and unconventional sentence structure make writing difficult to understand, so it is important to follow standard English rules. This can be challenging for those whose native language is not English, but it is important to work to overcome this difficulty. Use of incorrect English makes communication less effective, both because it is less easy to understand and because there is often a subconscious assumption that improperly expressed ideas are less likely to be valid. Take advantage of spell check and grammar check, which can catch some of your mistakes. The draft that you give to others to critique should be something that you have gone over repeatedly yourself, correcting the weaknesses that you recognize. You may schedule appointments with consultants at the Center Academic and Professional Communication to evaluate your writing style. All critiques should include corrections of mistakes in English usage.

### **Plagiarism**

It is forbidden to copy any portion of any written work (paper, thesis, grant proposal, web page, figure, etc.) in your proposal without referencing the written work. Copying is plagiarism, which is a serious offense, and students have been dismissed from the program for this reason. Please consult an instructor if you are uncertain of the definition of plagiarism.

### **Progress Review Sections**

#### **Specific Aims**

In a succinct, accessible format, you must gain the reader's interest in your field, convince the reader that your planned research offers something unique, and defend your research objectives and approach. The specific aims should show that you have a central, testable hypothesis with coordinated research objectives.

*This section is self-contained.* Every concept, technique, phenomenon, or molecule that you introduce in this section be defined so that your committee can understand you. We understand that this section is short, and you must be brief, but if your point is important enough to include in this section, it must be described in enough detail to be understood. If you don't have enough room to describe something sufficiently, consider whether you can leave it out; however, you may still include that

information in the background section. You should prioritize the topics you want to discuss and describe only the most important ones.

This section can be viewed as your proposal in condensed form. Generally, it begins with a paragraph or two (about 1/2 page) that defines and describes the experimental problem, the general question(s) to be asked, the methods to be employed, and how the anticipated results will move the field forward. The specific aims are then listed (as questions, or hypotheses to be tested), followed by two-three sentences of description. The following provides more information about the content of this section:

*Opening text:* Before you start writing, you need to know what your project is about and how it could be stated in one or two sentences. Then begin your first paragraph with a definition of the phenomenon you are studying, followed by the reasons why an understanding of the phenomenon is important for biology (or, if appropriate, a particular disease). Use the context of previous work to identify a gap in our knowledge or understanding. This gap represents a niche for your research. It is helpful to mention the data that supports your hypothesis.

*Developing your central hypothesis:* Your next paragraph should develop your hypothesis or model. Clearly state your hypothesis. Then write a sentence that might begin "However, it remains unclear if ..." Then write "To test this possibility," or "To distinguish between these possibilities, I propose to ..." Then "In particular, I will use my experimental approach to make my measurements, which will help determine if my hypothesis is correct." Finally, write that the successful completion of these experiments should improve our understanding of your phenomenon in whatever way you think. Finally, write "The following specific aims are proposed:" or another sentence that directly introduces the aims.

*Specific aims:* The Specific Aims themselves are given in a list format, usually with some additional explanation for each aim in the list. Successful proposals are usually limited to 2-4 specific aims, often arranged in order of increasing challenge. Title each aim with a statement of a task to perform or as a question to be answered. Then, identify an objective that is relevant to the research goal with a description of how the objective is accomplished and why it adds to the research plan. Two formats that help the author accomplish this are the "To X, we will Y" and the "Challenge, Approach, Impact" outlines for aims.

## **Background**

This is the section in which you describe the previous work related to your experiments. Remember, this is a persuasive document. This section is *not* meant to be a general review of the field. Rather, your job is to provide your committee with the information they need to assess the significance and feasibility of your experiments. You want to provide the information needed to appreciate the excellence and importance of your experiments. Therefore, it is your experiments themselves that will determine the material that must be included in this section.

*Define Your Subject:* Your first paragraph should be a definition and introduction of your phenomenon. In this paragraph, it is best to emphasize the part of your phenomenon that is most closely related to what your experiments will be testing.

*Establish Relevance:* The theme of your second paragraph should be why your phenomenon is important to biology, what unanswered questions remain, why it is important to answer these questions, and how your unique approach or hypothesis will enable novel and important information about your phenomenon to be generated. Tell the reader why the successful completion of your experiments will advance the field. Stay focused on your proposed experiments. If you are proposing to study the roles of potassium channels in learning and memory, then you should focus on the previous work on potassium channels on learning and memory, rather than digress into other

issues, no matter how interesting. Also, be as detailed as possible. It is not very impressive to write: "Potassium channels are important for neuronal function, and because neurons are important for learning and memory, potassium channels are important for learning and memory as well." It is better to write: "Potassium channels are important for learning and memory. For example, Kandel and colleagues (reference) showed that short-term synaptic plasticity of the gill and siphon-withdrawal reflex of the sea slug *Aplysia* occurred by the serotonin-induced, cAMP-dependent phosphorylation of the "S" type potassium channel, leading to its more rapid inactivation, which in turn caused increased action potential duration and increased synaptic strength." To write in such detail, you will have to understand your field thoroughly, which means much studying of the literature.

*Support Your Hypothesis:* Another paragraph should provide the evidence that your hypothesis might be correct. If your hypothesis is a good one, it will be based on some experimental data, rather than pulled out of thin air. Provide as much of this evidence as you can; something along the lines of "Smith and Jones (2001) previously showed ... raising the possibility that my hypothesis might be true." might be appropriate. But don't give the impression that the hypothesis is already proven. Therefore, also write what the previous researchers didn't test (what you propose to test), or other experiments that provide conflicting evidence, showing that the validity of your hypothesis remains an open question. It is helpful to tie what you are writing here to your own proposed experiments. A sentence such as "The experiments presented in aim #2 are designed to resolve these inconsistencies" helps the reader understand why you are writing this.

In all cases, think and write as deeply about the issues that you cover as you can. You might explain how your approach has been used successfully in the past. Cite examples from the literature, if possible. This way, the committee will be aware that what you are proposing is feasible because it is based on methods that have been successfully used by others. Try to think of as many objections and caveats as you can, and then try to think of ways in which these can be overcome. If possible, provide examples from the literature of how similar obstacles were overcome by others. This inclusion conveys to the reader that you have thought things through and will be able to deal with whatever complications or hurdles you might encounter during your experiments. In contrast, if you are superficial in your descriptions and conclusions, the reader might think that you will be equally superficial in the performance of your aims.

*End this Section:* Conclude with a paragraph tying together your anticipated results with what has been discovered previously in your field. This is your chance to display your vision of the field and how you intend to contribute to it. For this paragraph, imagine that all your aims have been carried out successfully. How do these new results and conclusions change our way of thinking about the field, or provide new mechanistic insights, etc.? How do these results open the way for future investigations?

## **Results**

The results section is critical because it allows you to detail your progress. It also presents the evidence that you will use to answer your research question. First, reorient your reader by identifying the aim associated with the reported result. Restate the rationale and how the data shown will allow you to address part of your aim. For each piece of information, make sure that the method used to collect the data is clearly indicated. You may need to fully describe methods that are novel.

Remember that showing data in a figure and/or table and describing the result must also be accompanied by a description of your interpretation. How did the data allow you to reach a specific conclusion? Does the way you collected or reported data limit your analysis? Did you make any assumptions in your reasoning that are not clear to a reader? How does this result relate to the progress of the aims? What do these results add to the context for this field? After the first progress



review, this section should be divided into “Previous Results” and “Progress since Previous Progress Review” and will constitute the bulk of these following progress reports.

## Future Plans

For your first progress review, much of your focus will be on your future work. The following outline matches the organization of this section to that of the A-exam; following this organization will help you compose a document that can be easily revised to meet the requirements of your written A-exam.

*Rationale:* Remind the reviewer in 1-2 sentences of the rationale for the aim (for example, to determine the molecular and cellular mechanisms underlying classical conditioning of the gill and siphon-withdrawal reflex in the sea slug *Aplysia*).

*Methods:* Describe the experimental steps that you will take to achieve this goal. How much experimental detail to include is always a judgment call, because it depends on knowing what you can reasonably assume that your committee knows. As an example, if you were proposing to analyze DNA prepared from yeast, you don't have to include a protocol for DNA preparation, because you can reasonably assume that anybody likely to review your document knows what a DNA prep is. Therefore, you can just state that you will prepare DNA from exponentially growing yeast according to published procedures. However, if you were proposing to perform a GST pull-down experiment, you can't reasonably assume that every reviewer would know exactly what that means and how one performs it; therefore, you would want to include a brief (2-3 sentence) description of the method accompanied by a few references.

*Expected outcome and interpretation:* Describe explicitly the anticipated result or possible results to the experiments. Describe explicitly what you would conclude if you observe any of the potential results that you list.

*Alternative methods:* It is helpful to include a "potential pitfalls" section, in which you describe the most important ways in which your experimental approach could fail. A pitfall could include a protein that won't express in *E. coli*, a double mutant that you wish to analyze that turns out to be inviable, or a protein that proves to be impossible to crystallize. If you include this section, be sure to include one or more steps that you will take to solve the problem. This solution could involve alternative approaches that would enable the pitfall to be bypassed, permitting your experiments to be performed. If you can do this, your committee will think that you are a thoughtful person, who has considered all possible outcomes of the experiments (even the negative ones), and has come up with contingency plans to address them.

Below is an example of how one specific aim might be described in this section. This example is a particularly simple set of experiments to test the hypothesis that a particular yeast protein (called Gal4) is a transcriptional activator of another yeast gene (called *GALI*).

### **Specific aim #1: Determine if the yeast Gal4 protein is a transcription initiation activator of *GALI*.**

Two pieces of evidence support the hypothesis that the yeast Gal4 protein is a transcriptional activator of the *GALI* gene. First, *GAL4* encodes a protein homologous to other known transcription factors (reference), and second, the enzyme encoded by *GALI* fails to accumulate in *gal4* mutants (reference). I propose several lines of experiments to test this hypothesis.

The inability of Gal1 protein to accumulate in a *gal4* mutant is consistent with the possibility that *GAL4* activates transcription of *GALI*. However, alternative possibilities exist. For example, Gal4 protein might be required to stabilize Gal1 protein from proteolytic degradation. I will distinguish these possibilities by comparing *GALI* RNA levels in *gal4* mutants versus wild type using Northern blot hybridization. This Northern blot will also be probed with DNA from the *URA3* gene,

which will serve as an internal loading control; *GALI* RNA levels in each strain will be normalized to the amount of *URA3* detected. I anticipate that *GALI* levels will be significantly greater in wild type than in the *gal4* mutant. If so, then I will conclude that Gal4 is required for transcription of *GALI*. However, if *GALI* transcripts are found in equal amounts between *gal4* mutants and wild type, then I will conclude that Gal4 protein is required for *GalI* production at a posttranscriptional stage.

Now, consider the questions a reader might have. What could your reader object to in your approach or conclusions? Although the reviewer might be convinced that you will be able to determine if *GALI* RNA is reduced in the *gal4* mutant, the reviewer might not be convinced that this reduction is due to loss of Gal4 protein instead of a second mutation present unnoticed in your *gal4* mutant stock. One way this possibility could be tested and ruled out is to introduce the *GAL4* DNA on a plasmid into the *gal4* mutant and show that this is sufficient to restore *GALI* RNA levels to wild-type levels. Therefore, you would include an additional sentence in the paragraph above:

"To demonstrate that this reduction in *GALI* RNA results from lack of Gal4 protein, rather than a second mutation present unnoticed in the *gal4* mutant stock, I will reintroduce the *GAL4* DNA on a plasmid into the *GAL4* mutant. I anticipate that this re-introduction will be sufficient to restore *GALI* RNA levels in the *gal4* mutant to normal. If so, then I will conclude that the lack of Gal4 is responsible for the reduction in *GALI* transcript levels."

The addition of these two sentences will show the reader that you are carefully considering every possible interpretation of results and can propose experiments to distinguish these various interpretations.

*Anything else?* The question in this aim was originally phrased "Determine if the yeast Gal4 protein is a transcription initiation activator of *GALI*." Your method to answer this question was a Northern blot. But the question as posed cannot be answered with this method alone because although one can measure differences in transcript amounts between strains with a Northern blot, one cannot determine if alterations in transcript levels result from altered transcription initiation or altered transcript stability. Therefore, your approach doesn't precisely answer the question. You can deal with this problem in either of two ways. First, you can re-phrase your question so that it can be answered by your method of choice. With this solution, you would write "to test the possibility that the yeast GAL4 protein regulates transcript levels," leaving the precise mechanism unexplored. You would probably state explicitly in the proposal that your approach cannot distinguish between a role for Gal4 in transcription initiation or transcript stability. A better solution would be to figure out and propose an experimental method that can distinguish between these possibilities. You could probably come up with several such methods, and the introduction of these additional experiments would greatly improve the description of your research design and the quality of your science.

## Admission to Candidacy Exam Evaluation

Biochemistry and Cell Biology Graduate Program, BioSciences Department, Rice University  
(This form is to be completed by all committee members and becomes part of the student's file;  
copies are provided to the student following the exam)

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of exam: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please review guidelines for evaluation on reverse and provide comments as needed

(comments are required for "unsatisfactory" components)

	<b>excellent</b>	<b>very good</b>	<b>satisfactory</b>	<b>unsatisfactory</b>
Specific Aims <i>Comments:</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Background and Significance <i>Comments:</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Preliminary Results <i>Comments:</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research Plan <i>Comments:</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Novelty <i>Comments:</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Document text <i>Comments:</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Presentation <i>Comments:</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Response to questions <i>Comments:</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Summary evaluation

I have read this exam, and recommend: ☐ pass A-exam

☐ conditional pass (see comments above and in summary document from committee chair)

☐ fail A-exam

Committee member: \_\_\_\_\_ signature \_\_\_\_\_

## Guidelines for Evaluation of BCB Graduate Program Admission to Candidacy Exam

<i>Specific Aims</i>	Excellent:	Each aim is a logical test of the hypothesis or has clear rationale at its foundation. Hypotheses are soundly based predictions of biological importance and address scientific concepts rather than experimental outcomes.
	Satisfactory:	Aims are clearly stated; a case is made for the work's rationale
	Unsatisfactory:	Aims are not clearly stated; little context or justification is provided
<i>Background and Significance</i>	Excellent:	Identifies all relevant results and techniques from the literature, and synthesizes them in a thoughtful discussion
	Satisfactory:	Discusses major previous works and places them in context for the present project
	Unsatisfactory:	Fails to cite or assimilate previous work
<i>Preliminary Results</i>	Excellent:	Extensive preliminary results with thoughtful discussion
	Satisfactory:	Some preliminary results that are adequately described
	Unsatisfactory:	Limited preliminary results or low quality of discussion
<i>Research Plan</i>	Excellent:	Research plan would be competitive for funding with clear rationales, experimental plans, controls, interpretation of expected results, and alternative approaches
	Satisfactory:	Research plan clear; experiments are technically sound and feasible
	Unsatisfactory:	Research plan unclear, lacks description of controls or rationale, or includes inappropriate level of detail
<i>Novelty</i>	Excellent:	Original research that demonstrates distinct creativity in the question or experimental design
	Satisfactory:	Describes a novel problem appropriate for a Ph.D.
	Unsatisfactory:	Incremental approach unlikely to yield publishable findings
<i>Document text</i>	Excellent:	Good organization, fluent prose, and few grammatical errors; full compliance with formatting guidelines
	Satisfactory:	Decent organization, coherent prose, and limited grammatical errors; full compliance with formatting guidelines
	Unsatisfactory:	Poor organization, incoherent prose, and/or numerous grammatical errors; not in compliance with formatting guidelines
<i>Presentation</i>	Excellent:	Engaging, highly polished presentation with well crafted slides that illustrate key results in the project and clearly describe future directions
	Satisfactory:	Professional presentation on par with a solid conference talk; includes a coherent project narrative and future plans
	Unsatisfactory:	Too much or too little detail; unclear about project goals and direction; incoherent or illegible slides; read from slides
<i>Replies to questions</i>	Excellent:	Complete answers that demonstrate a deep understanding of the discipline that extends beyond the contents of the document
	Satisfactory:	Competent answers that illustrate a facility with the issues and techniques immediately relevant to the thesis project
	Unsatisfactory:	Answers reveal a limited familiarity with the thesis project or its context



\* instructions specific to the Biochemistry & Cell Biology Graduate Program are in parentheses

## **PETITION FOR APPROVAL OF CANDIDACY FOR A DOCTORAL DEGREE (C-2)**

Candidacy for the Doctoral degree cannot be approved until the applicant has completed all course requirements, all qualifying or preliminary examinations or department equivalent, and any foreign language requirements.

1. Name of applicant \_\_\_\_\_  
(Last) (First) (M.I.)

2. Department/Graduate program \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID # \_\_\_\_\_

☐ **Attach** to this application a current transcript (printed from WebApps; see your graduate coordinator).

☐ **Attach** to this application a statement of all applicable departmental requirements for both course work and qualifying or preliminary examinations.

☐ **Attach** student's departmental checklist to candidacy to document how the student has fulfilled departmental requirements.

3. Proposed thesis topic (tentative title) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Thesis Committee, subject to the approval of the GPS. **(type or print)** Please see the General Announcements for rules regarding the composition of thesis committees.

(your BCB research advisor)

(a) Thesis Director \_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Chair within the department (if different) (BCB does not use this line - advisor chairs the thesis comm.) \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Member **within** the department \_\_\_\_\_ (your progress review comm. chair)

(c) Member **outside** the department \_\_\_\_\_ (Rice faculty from another dept.) Additional member(s) \_\_\_\_\_

\*Thesis committees may later be changed. See <http://graduate.rice.edu/thesis> for additional information.

5. Signatures:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Original signature of Department Chair  
or Director of Graduate Studies

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Graduate Coordinator Signature

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies

Date \_\_\_\_\_

RETURN TO GRAD ADMINISTRATOR

## **Graduate Student Travel Guidelines**

The Graduate Program Administrator is your resource for conference registration, booking flights, hotel reservations, departmental travel awards, travel award spending (BIOS, IBB, WiNS, etc.), reimbursements, and any other travel questions.

### **Pre-travel Authorization Form**

It is essential to communicate travel plans IN ADVANCE! Start by submitting a Pre-travel Authorization Form to the Graduate Administrator. Have your PI sign the form and provide the project number or fund that will cover your travel expenses (the project number or COA, not just a nickname). You will also need to submit a conference flyer, agenda, or website.

Once you submit the completed pre-travel form, the Graduate Administrator can use a Rice pcard to pay for the conference registration, abstract submission fee, airfare, domestic lodging, prepaid airport parking, etc.

Let the Graduate Administrator use a Rice pcard to make your travel plans in advance instead of using your personal credit card. If you make travel arrangements using your own card, you are responsible for those costs until AFTER the trip; reimbursements cannot be submitted until AFTER you return.

### **Departmental Travel Awards**

On the Pre-travel form, BCB and EEB students can mark whether they would like to be considered for a departmental travel award, which is support available for grad students presenting at conferences or workshops. Funds are limited each year, and a student can only be awarded one per academic year. Students are encouraged to seek additional travel funding (IBB, WiNS, conference-specific travel funds, etc.).

### **Cash Advance Request Form**

Cash advances are reserved for grad students traveling internationally who don't want to carry a large amount on their own credit cards for lodging, meals, local transportation, etc. and then wait for Rice to reimburse once they return. If students allow enough time for the process, they can request through BiosPurch a cash advance and use those funds to pay for lodging, local transportation, etc. when traveling internationally. BiosPurch needs 3-4 weeks to process a cash advance request. Please complete the Cash Advance Request form; email it to BiosPurch at [biospurch@rice.edu](mailto:biospurch@rice.edu), and copy Denise Torres at [dtorres@rice.edu](mailto:dtorres@rice.edu). You will need to reconcile your Cash Advance once you return by submitting the Expense Summary template for clearing Cash Advances spreadsheet. Please keep individual itemized receipts for your expenses that will be used to clear the open Cash Advance.

### **International Travel**

We usually can't prepay the hotel, so please be prepared to pay for the hotel on your personal card or allow enough time to request a cash advance.

If you have traveled internationally and need to be reimbursed, you will need to submit the itemized receipt and the pdf of the currency conversion; please ask the Graduate Administrator for details.

### **University Travel Policy**

Please read Policy 806 (<https://policy.rice.edu/806>) to understand what Rice will pay for and what is in compliance. Biosciences has additional policies and procedures related to student travel, and funding agencies have their own policies regarding whether and how grant funds can support student travel.

### **Airfare Policies**

Rice policy requires that you fly economy class, not first or business class. For personal travel before or after your business travel, please speak with the Graduate Administrator before you make flight arrangements. If traveling internationally, Rice has contracted with a travel management company and strongly encourages

students to use this company to facilitate booking international flights. International travel requires use of a U.S. airline if federal funds will pay for the ticket.

If you know you are extending your stay beyond the dates of the conference (going early and/or staying late), you will need to submit a cost comparison for your flight, submitting an itinerary for the conference only and submitting an itinerary for flying on the days before and/or after the conference. You must submit both itineraries. <https://controller.rice.edu/rca-travel>

### **Tax Exempt**

Rice University is a tax-exempt institution in the state of Texas (#74-1109620). Be sure no Texas sales tax or Texas hotel tax is charged. Rice is exempt from hotel tax in some other states as well; please ask a staff member for a list of states. If sales tax or hotel taxes are charged, the student is responsible for paying the tax. Tax exempt form can be obtained from the Graduate Administrator or other department staff.

### **Reimbursements**

Some expenses you incur may be reimbursed by available travel funds (awards or PI funds).

Reimbursements need to be submitted within 30 days of travel. The Graduate Administrator can submit the reimbursement report in iO for you by following these steps:

Please list all itemized receipts on an Excel spreadsheet. Save each itemized receipt (one per page) in a pdf by type (food, baggage fees, local transportation, airfare, etc.). The columns on the spreadsheet should be subtotaled for food, transportation, etc. You should submit to the Graduate Administrator the spreadsheet and however many pdfs you have based on your expenses. If you have to zip or compress the pdf file to email it, then it's too big, and it won't load into Rice's iO system; send it in pieces or a different way.

### **A Few Tips to Keep in Mind**

Keep all itemized receipts. These are not just credit card slips; each receipt needs to show what was purchased and the last four digits of the credit card.

Do not split a restaurant bill X number of ways and ask the waitstaff to charge your credit card for 1/Xth of the total. You must provide an itemized receipt for what was purchased.

Do not order room service or put any extra charges on your hotel room.

### **Alcohol**

Alcoholic beverages will not be reimbursed and must be paid for personally and on a separate receipt. Federal grant money cannot be used to cover alcoholic beverages or entertainment – only meals, lodging, and other typical travel expenses. Where travel and business meeting costs are charged to a sponsored agreement (grant or contract), any terms of the agreement that are more restrictive than Rice's policy will govern the payment.

### **Per Diem**

In general, students are not allowed to use per diem on travel. If a student's travel is funded by a research grant or fellowship that requires per diem travel, the student can request an exception to this rule before traveling.

### **Mileage**

Mileage reimbursement is allowed only when your personal vehicle is used for travel on Rice business. In this case, Rice uses a mileage rate published by central accounting and does not allow reimbursement on gasoline receipts.

### **Ground Transportation**

Use conference or free airport shuttles when possible. If not possible, you can be reimbursed for local transportation to/from local airports using shuttles or ride-share services. Please keep the full receipt (date, address, cost, map, etc.) to be submitted for reimbursement.

**Car Rentals**

Car rentals can be reserved with a Rice account at National or Enterprise. Rental vehicles may need to be purchased on a personal card and reimbursed because the credit card must be presented when picking up the vehicle. Rice's auto insurance policy covers students in rental car or Rice vehicles when rented with the Rice code (within the U.S. only). You must decline the additional auto insurance offered by the rental company or pay for it yourself. GPS service is not an allowable additional rental expense. Avoid high company fuel charges by refilling the tank before returning the vehicle; keep fuel receipts.

**Research Grants**

If your travel is being funded on a research grant, use [gsa.gov](http://gsa.gov) to determine the limits of what Rice will pay per day. This website provides per diem rates on lodging and meals/incidentals based on date and location, and Rice uses these rates for travel charged to a research grant. If your lodging and meals/incidentals are over the amounts, the faculty member will have to cover the remainder with faculty funds, or you will have to pay the remainder.





## Biosciences Graduate Student Pre-travel Authorization Form

If you are planning any travel for a Rice or Biosciences related reason, you should talk to the Graduate Program Administrator and complete the following form before making travel plans.

**Student Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **ID Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Do you want to be considered for a Biosciences travel award\*?**

Yes ☐

No

☐

\*To apply for a travel award, you must be in the BCB or EEB program and presenting a poster or paper at the conference. You're only eligible for one travel award per academic year.

**Have you applied for other sources of conference funding?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

### **Emergency Contact Information** (partner/parent/family member/friend):

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone #:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **What is the best way to reach you during this travel, if essential/emergency?**

\_\_\_\_\_ (Provide phone and/or email.)

**Name of Conference:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Dates of Conference and Dates of Travel:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location of Conference:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Will you request an international travel advance? Will you request reimbursements?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

Yes ☐ No ☐

#### **Reimbursements**

- Check with the Graduate Administrator before using personal funds on travel; Biosciences may be able to pay up-front, minimizing reimbursement.
- If seeking reimbursements, submit PDF of itemized receipts, funding source, and the reason for the reimbursement via email to the Graduate Administrator.
- NOTE: Bank statement information or a credit card slip are not sufficient documentation for the incurred expense.
- You may have to ask the vendor to provide an **itemized receipt**.
- **Reimbursement deadline is 30 days after travel ends.**
- Rice is a tax-exempt institution in the state of Texas. We cannot reimburse Texas sales tax or Texas hotel taxes. Please review your receipts prior to leaving the establishment to ensure no sales taxes have been charged. See Biosciences staff for the Rice University Tax Exemption Certificate that you can have with you while traveling.

**Has your Thesis Advisor approved all of the travel listed here?** Yes ☐ No ☐

All Expenses, including reimbursements, to be covered by (complete at least one of the following choices):

**Project #** \_\_\_\_\_ **COA:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Advisor Printed Name & Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

This completed pre-travel authorization form is important for safety and reimbursement purposes. Failure to complete this form in advance and secure appropriate expense documentation may result in lack of reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses.

**Biosciences Department  
Cash Advance Request for International Travel only**

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Requestor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student Id #: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Do you have Direct Deposit set up in Esther \_\_\_\_Y \_\_\_\_N

Home Mailing Address:

--	--

Travel Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

Travel Destination (include City and Country): \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose of Trip:

--	--

Funding Source (include Project Number or COA: \_\_\_\_\_)

*(Attach PDF of signed Grad Student Travel Authorization)*

**Breakdown of expected use of Cash Advance**

Item	Explanation of Use	Cost (USD)
Baggage		
Supplies		
Local Transportation		
Lodging/Hotel		
Meals		
Site Fees		

Total Amount of Cash Advance needed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## Examples of Plagiarizing and Paraphrasing

Modified from Janice L. Hewitt, PhD, Brown School of Engineering, 2015

### The original text

“The times people choose for writing are often vestiges of old habits and time constraints. Undergraduates tend to write in the evening or late at night because they have classes and other responsibilities during the day. But habits of nocturnal writing often persist, unexamined, long after the writer’s circumstances have changed, among people who really function best in the morning. The majority of professional writers prefer to work during the day. Regardless of your preferences, this needs to be a matter of choice, to the extent that you can choose times for writing. After all, you probably schedule other activities at appropriate times, according to your needs. I imagine that you cook or buy meals when you are likely to be hungry, that you sleep when you are tired, and that you run or play tennis when you have some energy, not when you are completely exhausted. Yet a surprising number of people try to write when they are least rested and alert, or most likely to be distracted.”

Hjortshoj, Keith (2001). *Understanding Writing Blocks*. New York: Oxford University Press, 108-9.

(The term “writing blocks” refers to those situations in which a writer is unable to make writing progress; in other words, a graduate student, for various possible reasons, is unable to write and may instead focus time and energy on other tasks, such as reading an almost endless list of background papers or running another iteration.)

Read the following examples and decide if each is paraphrasing or plagiarism. Underline any plagiarism.

1. The times graduate students choose for writing are often based on old habits and time limitations. If as an undergraduate you wrote at night, you need to look at how your circumstances have changed to see if you are one of those people who really function best in the morning. Most professional writers work during the day. But your decision needs to be a matter of choice, to the extent that you are able to choose times for writing. After all, you choose when to eat and when to sleep. Don’t try to write when you are least rested and alert, or likely to be distracted (Hjortshoj 2001).
2. If you are in the habit of doing your dissertation writing late at night, examine your motivation for writing then. You might simply be continuing old undergraduate habits instead of choosing to do your writing during the day when you are not too tired to think clearly.
3. Hjortshoj suggests that students should decide when to schedule their time for writing based on actual conditions rather than on habit. Whereas an undergraduate may need to write at night, a graduate student might be more alert and productive during the day (2001).
4. Keith Hjortshoi (2001) points out that students often choose times to write based on old habits and time constraints of undergraduate days when students tended to write in the evening or late at night. He recommends writing during the day rather than when you are least rested and alert, or more likely to be distracted.

## Analysis of the four responses

1. The times graduate students choose for writing are often based on old habits and time limitations. If as an undergraduate you wrote at night, you need to look at how your circumstances have changed to see if you are one of those people who really function best in the morning. Most professional writers work during the day. But your decision needs to be a matter of choice, to the extent that you are able to choose times for writing. After all, you choose when to eat and when to sleep. Don't try to write when you are least rested and alert, or likely to be distracted (Hjortshoj 2001).

The underlined portions are not sufficiently changed. Although some words are changed, “people” to “graduate students” in the first sentence and “majority of professional writers” to “most professional writers,” much of the paraphrase is taken word for word from the source. Even though the source is cited, this is clearly **PLAGIARISM**. Another problem: the attempted paraphrase is too long and summarizes unimportant points such as choosing when you eat or sleep.

2. This may look like a good paraphrase, but because the source is not cited, it is **PLAGIARISM**.

3. This is an acceptable **PARAPHRASE**. It summarizes the major points about choosing writing times based on current circumstances rather than on undergraduate habits. It suggests choosing to write during the day, but with the use of “may” and “might,” it also recognizes that a single approach won't work for all.

4. Keith Hjortshoi (2001) points out that students often choose times to write based on old habits and time constraints of undergraduate days when students tended to write in the evening or late at night. He recommends writing during the day rather than when you are least rested and alert, or more likely to be distracted. **PLAGIARISM**. Even though the source is cited, the underlined portions are all taken word for word. Changing the verb tense of “tend” to the past tense of “tended” is not sufficient change. And notice that the author's name is not spelled correctly.

## Frequently asked questions

### 1. When don't I have to cite the source for information?

You don't have to cite basic knowledge that is found in two or more textbooks. But neither can you use it word for word—you must paraphrase. The exception would be something like a common formula or algorithm; those you would have to use as they appear in the source. Just because 2000 people have read it on Wikipedia, that doesn't make it “basic knowledge.” It's basic if it is found in multiple reputable sources.

### 2. What if I'm using a common method that's difficult to reword? Do I have to cite the source?

If you use it word for word rather than paraphrasing it, you must cite the source. Many authors simply refer the reader to a paper that contains a clear explanation of the method instead of copying the method.

### 3. How do I cite a source that I read about in a different article, a review article, for example?

You will have to cite the source as well as the review article. However, as a scholar, you should read the original article instead of relying on what someone else says about it. Reviewers are not equally

good, and even a good reviewer may be focusing on different aspects of the article than you need. The exception would be an article originally published in a language you can't read or an article that is no longer available. In such cases, you must make clear that it is the reviewer's interpretation that you are citing.

#### **4. What do I put in the Bibliography or Works Cited?**

Everything you cited and nothing that you did not cite.

#### **5. What should I do if I have an important quotation or a really relevant figure, but I can't remember where I found it?**

See if you can track it down via the Internet. If you can't find it, you can't use it.

#### **6. Can I cite my own previously published paper in my thesis or cite my thesis in a paper I'm submitting for publication?**

Of course, but ask the journal for permission, unless your contract with the journal already gives you permission to use the article in your thesis. You don't need to ask the other authors for permission because every author listed on a published paper has equal copyright ownership, but you should acknowledge their contributions. If you were first author and are now using essentially the entire paper as a chapter in your Master's or PhD thesis, make clear at the outset of the chapter that it comes from your paper (cite it clearly!).

Then several times in the chapter, cite it again. If you use any figures or tables from the published paper, cite those as well at the end of the caption.

Your advisor can request that your thesis be "embargoed" (meaning that Rice will not put it in open electronic source form for 6 – 12 months) so that you can write and submit a journal paper.

#### **7. Can I cite or publish something of mine that I have already posted on the Internet?**

Anything you have posted on any portion of the Internet is already copyrighted and therefore published. You can use that material in your thesis, but most journals will not accept anything that has already been "published" on the Internet. Once your paper has been published, though, you can put a link to it on your personal website.

#### **8. When do I have to get permission to quote or paraphrase someone else's work?**

In the academic world, this is sometimes a gray area. You usually don't have to get permission for use if you are writing a paper for a class, a Master's thesis, or a PhD dissertation, though you must cite the source. Because a journal usually owns the copyright of a published paper; you must ask the journal for permission to cite a written portion or a visual for anything you are submitting for publication (including your thesis or dissertation). If your paper comes out of funded research, you may need permission to publish what might be considered the intellectual property of the funding agency.

## Template for Taking Notes on Research Articles

Modified from Janice L. Hewitt, PhD, Brown School of Engineering, 2014

Use the following format (or something similar—from LaTeX or Endnote, for example) to make an electronic record of your notes for later easy access. You may think you'll remember everything you read, but details will slip away. The time spent filling out the form will help you understand the reading and will save you hours of rereading when you write a Background, Related Work, or a Literature Review section. Put quotation marks around any exact wording, including imported blocks of text, that you include so that you can avoid accidental plagiarism when you later cite the article.

**Complete citation.** Author(s), Date of publication, Title (book or article), publisher, Journal, Volume #, Issue #, pages. How you use this information will vary by journal Style Sheet requirements, class requirements, or thesis advisor/departamental requirements. Put everything down initially so you'll have what you later need. Check key journals in your field for Style requirements; use the Web to access detailed examples of Chicago or APA styles. You can also find examples in a recent edition of a writer's handbook such as Diana Hacker's *The Bedford Handbook*. Always be consistent within a document!

**If electronic source:** URL (may be required by your advisor or professional journal); DOI (digital object identifier) if available or name of database or document number; date retrieved. **PUT QUOTATION MARKS AROUND ANY IMPORTED BLOCK OF TEXT** so that you won't later think it is your wording.

**Key Words** (Be precise, not general):

**Specific subject:**

**Authors' Hypothesis or Claim** (What do they say they are presenting that is new?):

**Method(s):**

**Result(s):**

**Evidence:**

**Summary of key points** ( Use quotation marks around any exact wording):

**Context and relationships** (How does this article relate to YOUR work and to other research? Needed for a lit review):

**Important Figures and/or Tables** (brief description; page number):

**Cited References to follow up on** (Cite those obviously related to your topic AND any papers frequently cited by others because those works may well prove to be important as you develop your own work):

**Your evaluative comments on the work:** For example, does the paper clearly identify its contribution to the field? Is the method used an appropriate one? Do the results match the claim? Is the evidence sufficient and convincing? What flaws do you see in the paper? What strengths? How can this paper be helpful to your own research and/or writing?

## **When should I reference something?**

Give a reference if

- It's someone else's idea
- It's someone else's technique
- It's someone else's observation

For example:

Disruption of xxx blocks the yyy pathway in Arabidopsis (Smith and Jones, 2023). Because of their similarity to xxx, the ABC kinases may be part of the yyy pathway (Doe, 2025). To test this hypothesis, I will use homologous recombination (Jones and Smith, 2021) to disrupt ABC1 and determine if this disruption blocks the yyy pathway.

You could leave the reference off the second sentence only if this is completely your idea and was not published by someone else or told to you by someone else. If Doe mentioned this idea to you but never published it, you would write:

Because of their similarity to xxx, the abc kinases may be part of the yyy pathway (Doe, personal communication).

A good rule of thumb is that each sentence in an introduction needs a reference; sometimes, a sentence clearly continues the description of the work in a previously referenced sentence and then doesn't need a reference.

## **How do I reference material from a review article?**

Sometimes you get a review article (Epsilon, 2008) that reads something like

The ABC kinases were first discovered by Alpher (Alpher, 1982). There are 15 ABC kinases (Beta, 2007). There are two types of ABC kinases, type I and type II (Gamow, 2006). The type I but not the type II ABC kinases are present in plants but not in animals or fungi (Delter, 2008).

If you paraphrase the above section without reading the four articles, and/or without referencing the review article, you will be in trouble. If you didn't read the 4 original papers, you should only reference the review article:

Two types of ABC kinases have been described (see Epsilon, 2008 for review).

If you read the 4 original papers, and in your writing, you follow the general outline or format of the review paper (or any other document), you need to reference the review paper or document.

A recent review (Epsilon, 2008) describes how Alpher first identified ABC kinases (Alpher, 1982), and that are 7 type I and 8 type II ABC kinases (Gamow, 2006; Beta, 2007).....

# Texas Sales and Use Tax Exemption Certification

*This certificate does not require a number to be valid.*

Name of purchaser, firm or agency William Marsh Rice University	
Address (Street & number, P.O. Box or Route number) 6100 Main St	Phone (Area code and number) 713-348-0000
City, State, ZIP code Houston, TX 77005	

I, the purchaser named above, claim an exemption from payment of sales and use taxes (for the purchase of taxable items described below or on the attached order or invoice) from:

Seller: \_\_\_\_\_

Street address: \_\_\_\_\_ City, State, ZIP code: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of items to be purchased or on the attached order or invoice:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_


Purchaser claims this exemption for the following reason:

William Marsh Rice University (or "Rice") is a Section 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization and is exempt from Texas sales and use tax for purchases related to Rice's exempt purpose.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I understand that I will be liable for payment of all state and local sales or use taxes which may become due for failure to comply with the provisions of the Tax Code and/or all applicable law.

*I understand that it is a criminal offense to give an exemption certificate to the seller for taxable items that I know, at the time of purchase, will be used in a manner other than that expressed in this certificate, and depending on the amount of tax evaded, the offense may range from a Class C misdemeanor to a felony of the second degree.*

Purchaser <b>sign here</b> 	Title Associate VP and University Controller	Date
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NOTE: This certificate cannot be issued for the purchase, lease, or rental of a motor vehicle.

**THIS CERTIFICATE DOES NOT REQUIRE A NUMBER TO BE VALID.**

Sales and Use Tax "Exemption Numbers" or "Tax Exempt" Numbers do not exist.

**This certificate should be furnished to the supplier.  
Do not send the completed certificate to the Comptroller of Public Accounts.**



## Texas Hotel Occupancy Tax Exemption Certificate

Provide completed certificate to hotel to claim exemption from hotel tax. Hotel operators should request a photo ID, business card or other document to verify a guest's affiliation with the exempt entity. Employees of exempt entities traveling on official business can pay in any manner. For non-employees to be exempt, the exempt entity must provide a complete certificate and pay the hotel with its funds (e.g., exempt entity check, credit card or direct billing). This certificate does not need a number to be valid.

Name of exempt entity <b>William Marsh Rice University</b>	Exempt entity status (Religious, charitable, educational, governmental) <b>Educational 501 (c) (3)</b>
Address of exempt organization (Street and number) <b>6100 Main Street MS-70</b>	
City, State, ZIP code <b>Houston, TX 77005</b>	

**Guest certification:** I declare that I am an occupant of this hotel on official business sanctioned by the exempt organization named above and that all information shown on this document is true and correct. I further understand that it is a criminal offense to issue an exemption certificate to a hotel that I know will be used in a manner that does not qualify for the exemptions found in the hotel occupancy tax and other laws. The offense may range from a Class C misdemeanor to a felony of the second degree.

Guest name (Type or print)	Hotel name	
Guest signature <b>sign here</b>		Date

### Exemption claimed

Check the box for the exemption claimed. See Rule 3.161: Definitions, Exemptions, and Exemption Certificate.

- ☐ **United States Federal Agencies or Foreign Diplomats.** Details of this exemption category are on back of form. This category is exempt from state and local hotel tax.
- ☐ **Texas State Government Officials and Employees.** (An individual must present a Hotel Tax Exemption Photo ID Card). Details of this exemption category are on back of form. This limited category is exempt from state and local hotel tax. Note: State agencies and city, county or other local government entities and officials or employees are not exempt from state or local hotel tax, even when traveling on official business.
- ☐ **Charitable Entities.** (Comptroller-issued letter of exemption required.) Details of this exemption category are on back of form. This category is exempt from state hotel tax, but not local hotel tax.
- ☒ **Educational Entities.** Details of this exemption category are on back of form. This category is exempt from state hotel tax, but not local hotel tax.
- ☐ **Religious Entities.** (Comptroller-issued letter of exemption required.) Details of this exemption category are on back of form. This category is exempt from state hotel tax, but not local hotel tax.
- ☐ **Exempt by Other Federal or State Law.** Details of this exemption category are on back of form. This category is exempt from state and local hotel tax.

**Permanent Resident Exemption (30 consecutive days):** An exemption certificate is not required for the permanent resident exemption. A permanent resident is exempt the day the guest has given written notice or reserves a room for at least 30 consecutive days and the guest stays for 30 consecutive days, beginning on the reservation date. Otherwise, a permanent resident is exempt on the 31st consecutive day of the stay and is not entitled to a tax refund on the first 30 days. Any interruption in the resident's right to occupy a room voids the exemption. A permanent resident is exempt from state and local hotel tax.

Hotels should keep all records, including completed exemption certificates, for four years.

**Do NOT send this form to the Comptroller of Public Accounts.**