Agreement between ASCI Graduate Students and their Advisors

This document outlines the expectations and responsibilities of students and advisors necessary for a positive and high-quality graduate student training experience. It serves both as a promise and a reminder to advisors and their graduate students that their conduct in fulfilling their commitments to one another should reflect the highest professional standards and mutual respect.

The student and advisor both agree:
- to ensure that a mutually agreed upon set of expectations are in place at the outset of the graduate student training period and are reviewed and revised periodically.
- to develop a research project that includes well-defined goals and timelines.
- to maintain a relationship that is based on trust and mutual respect.
- to complete the departmental evaluation form every six months and submit it to the graduate coordinator.
- that any graduate student’s program may be terminated without warning if he/she is found to fabricate data, plagiarize, and/or be in violation of other university codes of conduct.
- that a program can be terminated with warning if the graduate student continuingly fails to meet a minimal expectation or for continued bad behaviors as evaluated by his/her thesis committee and the department graduate committee.

The Mentor
Effective mentoring is critical for graduate student training. A good advisor builds a relationship with the graduate student characterized by mutual respect and understanding. Attributes of a good mentor include: being approachable and accessible, listening effectively, providing encouragement and constructive criticism, and offering expertise and guidance.

The mentor agrees to:
- be committed to the mentoring, education, and training of the graduate student as a future member of the scientific community.
- be committed to the research project of the graduate student.
- discuss course work with their graduate student that is meaningful to their thesis research and future work as an independent scientist.
- help to plan and direct the graduate student’s project, set reasonable and attainable goals, and establish a timeline for completion of the project.
- help the graduate student select a thesis/dissertation committee and to assure that this committee meets at least annually (or more frequently according to program guidelines) to review the graduate student’s progress.
- recognize the possibility of conflicts between the interests of externally funded research programs and those of the graduate student, and not let these interfere with the student’s pursuit of her/his thesis/dissertation research.
- be committed to meeting one-on-one with the student on a regular basis.
- be committed to providing financial resources for the graduate student as appropriate, or according to UVM’s guidelines, in order for her/him to conduct thesis/dissertation research.
- be knowledgeable of, and guide the graduate student through, the requirements and deadlines of his/her graduate program as well as those of UVM, including teaching requirements and forms/credits required by the Graduate College.
lead by example and facilitate the training of the graduate student in complementary skills needed to be a successful scientist, such as oral and written communication skills, grant writing, lab management, animal and human research policies, the ethical conduct of research, and scientific professionalism.

- encourage the student to seek opportunities in teaching.
- discuss authorship policies regarding papers with the graduate student and to acknowledge the graduate student’s scientific contributions to the work in the laboratory.
- work with the graduate student to publish his/her work in a timely manner, and when possible, prior to the student’s graduation.
- discuss intellectual policy issues with the student with regard to disclosure, patent rights and publishing research discoveries.
- encourage the graduate student to attend scientific/professional meetings and make an effort to secure and facilitate funding for such activities.
- provide honest letters of recommendation for his/her next phase of professional development.
- be accessible to give advice and feedback on career goals and to alert the student of employment opportunities following hers/his graduation.

The Graduate Student

The goal of the graduate student training period is for the student to acquire the skills necessary to become an independent scientist. Graduate students should be educated by the advisor to independently formulate meaningful hypotheses, design and conduct interpretable experiments, adhere to good laboratory practices, analyze results critically, understand the broad significance of their research findings, and uphold the highest ethical standards in research.

The graduate student agrees to:

- take primary responsibility for the successful completion of their degree.
- be committed to their graduate education by demonstrating high standards in both the classroom and the research laboratory.
- maintain a high level of professionalism, self-motivation, engagement, scientific curiosity, and ethical standards.
- meet regularly with their research advisor and provide her/him with updates on their progress and results of activities and experiments.
- develop a thesis/dissertation project, as well as establishing a timeline for each phase of their work.
- meet established deadlines.
- work with their research advisor to select a thesis/dissertation committee.
- commit to meeting with their committee at least annually (or more frequently, according to program guidelines).
- be responsive to the advice of and constructive criticism from their committee.
- be knowledgeable of the policies and requirements of their departmental graduate program (i.e. departmental semester evaluation), graduate school, and UVM, and to commit to meeting these requirements, including teaching responsibilities.
- to comply with all departmental and UVM policies, including academic program milestones.
- attend and participate in laboratory meetings, seminars and journal clubs that are part of their educational program.
- comply with all institutional policies, including academic program milestones.
- comply with both the letter and spirit of all institutional safe laboratory practices and animal-use and human-research policies at UVM.
- be a good lab citizen and agree to take part in shared laboratory responsibilities.
- use laboratory resources carefully and frugally.
- be respectful of, tolerant of, and work collegially with all laboratory personnel.
- maintain a detailed, organized, and accurate laboratory notebook.
- be aware that her/his original notebooks and all tangible research data are the property of UVM.
- discuss policies on work hours, sick leave and vacation with their research advisor.
- consult with their advisor and notify fellow lab members in advance of any planned absences.
- discuss policies on authorship and attendance at professional meetings with their research advisor.
- work with their advisor to submit all relevant research results for publication in a timely manner prior to, or soon after graduation.
- acknowledge that it is primarily her/his responsibility to develop their career following the completion of their graduate degree.
- accept responsibility to seek guidance from their research advisor, career counseling services, thesis/dissertation committee, other mentors, and any other resources available for advice on career plans.
- leave behind all original notebooks, computerized files, and tangible research materials so that other individuals can carry on related research after she/he graduates.

Both the graduate student and the advisor agree with the overall goals of this document.

*Sign and return to the Department of Animal and Veterinary Sciences*

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This document is based on the Compact between Graduate students and their research Advisors prepared by the Association of American Medical Colleges.