

**MSP**  
**STUDENT & FACULTY**  
**HANDBOOK**  
*2025-2026*

**Revised 9/17/25**

**MSP STUDENT & FACULTY HANDBOOK**

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**MSP forms and information resources are posted on the MSP web site, as follows:**

**Student Forms and Resources**

- MSP Rotation Selection Procedure and Forms
- MSP Rotation Advisor Selection Agreement Form
- MSP First-Year Councilor Selection/Meeting Form
- MSP Assignment of Faculty Advisor Form
- GDBBS Academic Plan and Exploratory Rotation Agreement for Changing Advisors
- GDBBS Advisor-Advisee Agreement Form (DocuSign)
- Student Mentoring Guide (LGS)
- Dissertation Committee Instructions and Forms (LGS)
- MSP Dissertation Committee Meeting Form
- Application for Admission to Candidacy (LGS)
- Preparing Dissertation and Scheduling Defense in MSP
- MSP Provisional Dissertation Approval Form
- GDBBS Committee Approval of the Oral Defense Examination
- GDBBS Defense Flyer Template
- GDBBS Defense Program Template
- Application for Degree (LGS)
- Instructions for Submitting Your Thesis or Dissertation (LGS)
- Dissertation Submission Deadline Extension Form (LGS)
- Report of Completion of Requirements for Doctoral Degree (LGS)
- Registering for International Travel
- Wellness and Support Resources
- Academic Support Resources
- Emory University Student Hardship Fund
- Emergency Loan Application Form (LGS)
- Withdrawal, Leave of Absence, and Parental Accommodation Forms (LGS)

**Faculty Resources**

- MSP Requirements for Faculty Membership
- MSP Application for Faculty Membership
- MSP Faculty Annual Survey
- MSP Lab Rotation Evaluation Form

**IMPORTANT**

MSP students are accountable for compliance with the policies and requirements of the Laney Graduate School (LGS), the Graduate Division of Biological and Biomedical Sciences (GDBBS), and the MSP Program. The [LGS Handbook](#) defines minimal requirements for all of its students. The GDBBS Handbook may have additional or more stringent requirements, and the MSP Program Handbook may have additional or more stringent requirements. Students must comply with the most stringent version. In case of confusion or ambiguity, students should contact the program administrator or GDBBS for clarification and resolution.

## 1. Goals

The program in Molecular and Systems Pharmacology (MSP) prepares students for careers in biomedical research and scholarship. Students learn currently accepted facts and theories; plan, conduct and evaluate research; make an original contribution to knowledge; become skilled in oral and written communication; develop teaching skills; and become self-sufficient in education. The program also prepares students to teach in professional and graduate schools. Students are trained in the broad area of Pharmacology, but they can also select elective coursework and research projects for specialization in other areas of Biological and Biomedical Sciences.

Graduate training is unlike other types of school, with less formal course work and more self-motivated learning. Much of graduate education occurs through individual interactions between students and their advisors in joint research. Graduate students do many of the same things that occupy professional scientists – reading scientific literature; planning, conducting, and analyzing research; and publishing papers. Scientific research can sometimes be discouraging, but the rewards include a sense of accomplishment and discovery, as well as entry into a rewarding and exciting profession.

## 2. Executive Committee

The program is coordinated by an Executive Committee. This committee consists of the Program Director and nine faculty members, elected by the MSP faculty; and two student representatives elected by the MSP student body. In addition, the Principal Investigator of the Pharmacological Sciences training grant holds an *ex officio* appointment on the committee. Faculty members are elected for three-year terms, with staggered exit dates; student representatives are elected for two-year staggered terms. At least one of the student representatives will have passed the qualifying exams.

### **Program Director, Junior Student Director of Graduate Studies (DGS)(JSD), and Senior Student DGS (SSD)**

The Program Director, Junior Student Director of Graduate Studies (DGS)(JSD), and Senior Student DGS (SSD) are elected directly by the membership; the Program Director is also approved by the Dean of the Laney Graduate School.

The **Program Director** serves as the chair of the Executive Committee and acts as the liaison between the Program and the Graduate Division of Biological and Biomedical Sciences (GDBBS).

The **JSD** acts as a temporary advisor for new students until the end of their second year, monitors student performance, and oversees selection of laboratory rotations, and selection of research Advisors.

The **SSD** oversees the selection of dissertation committees, documentation of dissertation committee meetings, admission to candidacy, and progress towards degree.

Additional positions on the Executive Committee are appointed by the committee and include the **Recruitment Chair, Curriculum Chair, Qualifying Exam Chair, Communications Chair, and Faculty Membership Chair**. Elections for open positions are conducted yearly in

April or May, and the term begins on September 1 of that year. If any Executive Committee member leaves the Committee before the end of the elected term, the Committee shall appoint a qualified MSP member to serve the remainder of that term.

**A. Executive Committee Contact Information**

**Director:** Nael McCarty, PhD | namccar@emory.edu | 404-727-3654

**Director of Graduate Studies for Junior Students:** Sunil Raikar, MD | sraikar@emory.edu

**Director of Graduate Studies for Senior Students:** John Calvert, PhD | jcalver@emory.edu

**Recruitment:** Tyler Beyett, PhD | tbeyett@emory.edu

**Curriculum:** Zhiyong Lin, PhD | zhiyong.lin@emory.edu

**Qualifying Exams:** Joshua Chandler, PhD | joshua.chandler@emory.edu

**Communications:** Stefan Sarafianos, PhD | stefanos.sarafianos@emory.edu

**Faculty Membership:** Vivien Sheehan, PhD, MD | vivien.sheehan@emory.edu

**MSP Student Support and Community Committee:** Laura Hansen, PhD | laura.hansen2@emory.edu

**3. Laboratory Research Rotations**

The course MSP 597R Laboratory Rotations is required for all MSP students, except students who have already joined a lab when they enter the Program, such as MD/ PhD students or transfer students. It consists of three rotations over multiple academic terms; the final grade will be the average of the three rotations, and this grade will be applied to each applicable term. Rotations are performed according to the program's rotation schedule, and exceptions must be approved by the DGS.

- a) The first rotation should be advised by an MSP faculty member. Subsequent rotations may be advised by any full faculty member of the GDBBS.
- b) Students may request to do a fourth rotation during the summer after their first year. Only the first three rotations will count toward the Rotations course grade.
- c) If a student is struggling to maintain satisfactory academic performance early in the first semester, the student may be advised to discontinue the Fall rotation in order to focus on academic work. This option should only be exercised when the student's academic progress is in jeopardy, and it must be approved by both the DGS and the rotation Advisor. The student may be allowed to complete a later rotation in the same laboratory, but Advisors are not obligated to reserve a rotation place for a student who drops out of their lab during a previous rotation.
- d) Unless there are extenuating circumstances (e.g. laboratory or campus closure, change of mentor) MSP students may not do more than five rotations. Students must have an Advisor by the beginning of Fall Term in year 2, in order to continue in the MSP Program.

The yearly schedule of rotations and associated deadlines will be established by the DGS. For each rotation, students must indicate their preferred rotation Advisors by submitting the MSP Rotation Advisor Selection Agreement form (available on the MSP web site) to the MSP Program Administrator. Deadlines for submission will be established by the Director of Graduate Studies. Rotation choices are subject to MSP Executive Committee approval.

Laboratory rotations expose students to different research approaches and techniques of modern science. They help define a student's research interests and make it easier to select an Advisor. The choice of Advisor is not limited to those faculty members with whom the student has done a

rotation, however. Rotations also allow faculty to observe and evaluate the aptitude of first-year students for research. Expectations for time spent in the laboratory should be clearly established between the faculty member and the student before beginning each rotation. In general, students are expected to be working on their projects when not attending class or studying.

A written report of the rotation must be submitted to the Advisor and to the Director of Graduate Studies within one week of the completion of the rotation. The report should be in the format of a short manuscript, containing a Summary, Introduction, Experimental Methods, Results, Discussion and References. Students should include name, date, and page number on each page; a header or footer may be used for this purpose. The length of the report will vary depending on the project but should be between three and seven double-spaced pages (not including figures and tables). The Advisor is expected to read the report and to give the student feedback on the quality of organization, grammar and writing style (using 'track changes' in Microsoft Word is preferred). Student responses to this feedback should be evident from subsequent modifications (preferably recorded via 'track changes'. Laboratory rotations are graded S/U and are evaluated in a report by the rotation Advisor to the Executive Committee. The evaluation form is sent to MSP rotation Advisors at the end of each rotation period and can also be found on the MSP web site.

#### 4. Courses

##### A. Course Credit Requirements

All students must meet the requirements of the Laney Graduate School, the GDBBS and the MSP Program regarding total credit hours of course work.

All students must complete at least 54 credit hours of coursework at the 500 level or above, with a grade of B- or better. A student receiving a grade of B- or less will be required to retake the course and earn at least a B-.

##### B. Core Courses

The training program consists of a basic core curriculum, followed by more specialized courses. The following courses or their equivalents are required of all MSP students except as noted (credit hours subject to change):

Course #	Course Title	Credit Hours
IBS 531	Principles in Pharmacology	8
IBS 532	Principles in Pharmacology II	5
IBS 537	MSP Grant Writing	2
IBS 519	Introduction to Data Analysis	3
JPE 600	Scholarly Integrity Core Class	0
MSP 501	Ethical Issues in Pharmacology*	1/YR (2 YRS)
MSP 570r	Introductory Graduate Seminar	2 (4 semesters)
MSP 597r	Laboratory Rotations	(S/U) Variable
MSP 790r	Advanced Graduate Seminar	1 (2 semesters)
MSP 717	Principles of Therapeutic Discovery**	3

\* 1 credit for two semesters of class, recorded in Fall Term

\*\* Optional core course, not required; counts as elective if taken

### C. Sample Curriculum

Below is a sample course curriculum for typical students. Students are required by the Graduate School to maintain a minimum of 9 credit hours/semester. In year 2 until candidacy, the balance of hours not spent in coursework is brought up to 9 with Advanced Graduate Research (IBS 699r, MSP section). After attaining candidacy, students usually are engaged in full-time research and take 9 hours of Dissertation Research (MSP 799r) only, unless they choose to take additional elective courses to enhance their training.

#### Typical Student Course Curriculum

Fall Year 1		Credit Hrs.	Spring Year 1		Credit Hrs.
IBS 531	Introduction to Molecular and Systems Pharmacology I	0	IBS 532	Introduction to Molecular and Systems Pharmacology II	5
JPE 600 *	Scholarly Integrity Core	8	MSP 570r	Intro Grad Seminar	2
MSP 570r	Intro Grad Seminar	2	MSP 597r	Lab Rotations	2
MSP 597r	Lab Rotations	1	MSP 501	Ethical Issues in Pharmacology	1
MSP 501	Ethical Issues in Pharmacology	1			
<b>Fall Year 2</b>			<b>Spring Year 2</b>		
MSP 570r	Intro Grad Seminar	2	MSP 570r	Intro Grad Seminar	2
IBS 537	MSP Grant Writing	2	MSP 699r	Advanced Grad Research	7
MSP 699r	Advanced Grad Research	5	MSP 501	Ethical Issues in Pharmacology	1
MSP 501	Ethical Issues in Pharmacology	1			
IBS 519	Introduction to Data Analysis	3			
<b>Fall Year 3</b>			<b>Spring Year 3</b>		
MSP 790r	Advanced Grad Seminar	1	MSP 790r	Advanced Grad Seminar	1
MSP 799r	Dissertation Research	8	MSP 799r	Dissertation Research	8
<b>Fall Year 4 and above</b>			<b>Spring Year 4 and above</b>		
MSP 799r	Dissertation Research	9	MSP 799r	Dissertation Research	9

\* Ethics/JPE 600 is a one-day course given in late August before the start of Fall Term in Year 1.

Over the summer, students will register for 9 credits of research. Pre-candidacy students should register for Advanced Graduate Research, MSP 699r. Post-candidacy students should register for Dissertation Research, MSP 799r.

### D. Electives

While not required for degree completion, students are encouraged to complete electives that may benefit their career development.

*Students interested in molecular therapeutics might select from:*

IBS 701 Cell Surface Receptors 2

IBS 702 Molecular Mechanisms of Signal Transduction 3



IBS 704 Molecular Mechanisms of Ion Channel Regulation 3  
IBS 750 Molecular Neurobiology 4  
IBS 566 Drug Development: From Proposal to Prescriptions 4

*Students interested in behavioral aspects of pharmacology might select from:*

IBS 701 Cell Surface Receptors 2  
IBS 717 Neuropharmacology 3  
IBS 506 Basic Mechanisms of Neurological Disease 2  
IBS 570 Essentials of Animal Experimentation 1  
IBS 535 Behavioral Neuroendocrinology 3

**E. MSP Ethics Course**

The MSP Program places a high priority on raising and maintaining the awareness of ethical issues in students and faculty. MSP 501 is required for students in their first and second years, and students in the third year and beyond must attend at least one session of MSP 501, in each academic year. Faculty members are strongly encouraged to attend.

**F. Exemptions from requirements.**

Required courses may be waived for students who have passed equivalent courses with a grade of B or better. Students may be advised not to waive certain required courses, in order to prepare them for success in passing the Qualifying Exams. These decisions will be made on an individual basis by consultations between the student, the DGS, and the Program Director.

## **5. Grades**

Grades in the Graduate School range from A (4.0) to C (2.0) and F (0); there is no D grade. Some courses are taken on a Satisfactory/ Unsatisfactory (S/U) basis. Students must maintain an average of B (3.0) or better. A student with a semester GPA below 3.0 will be put on academic probation. Graduate Division of Biological and Biomedical Sciences (GDBBS) policy dictates that a grade of U or F in any course, or a semester GPA below 3.0 in any two semesters, will result in dismissal.

Students who are pursuing a special program or certification or a second degree, such as the MS in Clinical Research, are expected to keep up with their primary dissertation research and hold regular meetings with their dissertation committees as required. Students must carefully consider the requirements for their dissertation research before deciding to commit to extra academic endeavors. Students should discuss their goals with the SSD. Approval for these activities will be considered for students who have passed the MSP qualifying exams and are in good standing.

## **6. Selection of Research Advisor**

Students are expected to select a research advisor and begin their dissertation research at the end of their third rotation. Requests for an additional rotation should be addressed to the DGS.

Before deciding on a research advisor, students should discuss possible research projects with each of the program faculty whose work may be of interest to them. Once a choice has been made, the student and prospective advisor must complete the Request for Assignment of Faculty

Advisor form (available on the MSP website) and the GDBBS Advisor Assignment Agreement form (DocuSign) and submit them to the DGS. The advisor is responsible for getting his or her Departmental Chairperson to sign the GDBBS form. The advisor must establish that he or she will most likely be able to provide sufficient funding to support the student's stipend and dissertation research to a successful completion. The DGS and Executive Committee will then evaluate the request, making every effort to accommodate the student's wishes. To ensure that the quality of advising and training is maintained, the Committee will normally approve the assignment of a maximum of two MSP students from any single matriculating class to any single Advisor. If adequate justification can be presented, the Committee may waive this rule under exceptional circumstances.

Students must select an Advisor by the beginning of the Fall semester of the second year in order to take the required MSP Grants course. **Students who have not finalized their selection of research Advisor by this point may not continue in the program.**

#### **A. Changing Advisors**

On rare occasions, it may become advisable for a student to request an Advisor change. In such a situation, the student and Advisor should immediately contact the DGS, PA, and the GDBBS Assistant Director for guidance on their options and to form a plan of action. The DGS, PA, and GDBBS Assistant Director of Student Affairs will attempt to balance the wishes and concerns of all parties and decide on the best course of action. Since a student may lose substantial time when changing laboratories and research projects, the assignment of a different Advisor should be viewed as a relatively extreme step. Students should be aware that the Department Chair signs a form that commits funding for the student in the event that the PI loses funding. If the PI is without funding for an extended time, then there would be no funding to support the science which would hinder training and progress so switching labs may be recommended.

#### **B. Advisor Leaving Emory**

If an Advisor decides to leave Emory, a student has options regarding the completion of the Ph.D. degree. For example, the student might have the option of moving with the Advisor while continuing to be enrolled at Emory; or of staying at Emory and working with a faculty collaborator. In every case, it is imperative for the student to notify the Program Director and the Program Administrator, who will ensure that GDBBS is consulted. GDBBS must be involved, in order to ensure that the student's resources, such as funding, health insurance, and academic support are uninterrupted.

### **7. Teaching Experience**

The Teaching Assistant Training and Teaching Opportunity Program (TATTO) provides teacher training and experience for students in the GDBBS. Completion of the TATTO program is required for all Ph.D. students. The GDBBS Assistant Director of Student Affairs organizes all GDBBS student participation in TATTO 600 and 605 and will contact students the summer prior to the academic year in which they will participate. You can find additional information about TATTO on the [GDBBS website](#). The TATTO program involves four stages as outlined below:

**A. Summer Teaching Workshop (TATT 600)**

Also known as “TATTO Training”, this multi-day required summer course takes place in mid-August. In most cases, students attend in the summer following their first year of graduate study; however, the timing may be adjusted in special circumstances.

**B. Teaching Experience in a Division Program**

At the core of the training program are the graduate seminar courses offered by each Program. For MSP students, the Introductory and Advanced Seminar courses in years 1 – 3 fulfill this stage. Students present seminars to their peers under the supervision of the Program’s faculty, thereby acquiring skill in lecturing, communicating research data, managing discussions, evaluating their peers, and using audiovisual equipment.

**C. Teaching Assistantship (TATT 605)**

All students in the GDBBS are required to serve as a Teaching Assistant for one semester, usually during the year following participation in the summer workshop. This service is often referred to as the “TA experience”. Teaching Assistants typically serve as laboratory instructors or discussion leaders for small groups. Teaching Assistants also assist students with problems during scheduled office hours, help prepare handouts and/or laboratory material, and help administer. Students assigned to laboratory courses assist in setting up laboratory exercises and help students understand the theoretical and practical aspects of the exercise. Supervising faculty submit an evaluation of the student’s teaching performance to the Director of Graduate Studies.

**D. Teaching Associateship (TATT 610)**

The final stage of TATTO is not a general requirement. Rather, it is tailored to the needs of individual students in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies and the research advisor. Students in the program typically fulfill this requirement by Advising, coaching or teaching first-year MSP students, advising an undergraduate or a first-year graduate student in a research laboratory, presenting their research at national meetings, or lecturing in undergraduate, graduate or professional courses. Some students may view it as an enhancement to their chosen career plan.

**8. Qualifying Examination**

**A. Purpose of the Exam**

Students are required to demonstrate mastery of their field by passing a general qualifying examination before being admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D. The qualifying exam serves valuable purposes for both students and faculty.

Students: 1) This is usually the last opportunity to engage in a broad-based review of the large body of information they have encountered before becoming highly focused on a particular research area. 2) In order to write and orally defend a research proposal, students must familiarize themselves with the literature in their area and give careful consideration to the design and interpretation of experiments that may form a central part of their doctoral research project. Thus, the examination serves as an early catalyst to launch students into a research project.

Faculty: 1) The exam allows the faculty to judge whether students have mastered the fundamental information they should have learned during the first two years and, equally important, whether they can use that information appropriately. 2) The exam provides a logical mechanism for terminating students with a history of marginal performance.

The qualifying exam should be conducted on or before May 1<sup>st</sup> of the second year, and consists of a comprehensive oral exam contextualized by the student's research proposal. To be eligible to take the qualifying exam, the student must have a grade point average of at least "B" (i.e., 3.0) for all courses taken during the first year and a half of coursework (i.e., the first year and fall of the second year). MD/PhD students or transfer students may request approval by the Executive Committee to take the qualifying exam early, without prejudice, and will be tested on the same material as other students.

The examination shall be an oral defense in two parts, totaling 2 hours. The first 55-minute session shall be a defense of a written proposal for an original research project. This first half should test the students' abilities to present and defend a scientifically sound and compelling research proposal. After a 5-minute break, the second 60-minute session shall begin. This shall be a broader examination, where any topics covered in IBS 531/532 would be considered appropriate. This will test students' general knowledge, but it is expected that many of the questions asked will be related to the field(s) of study relevant to the student's proposal.

#### **B. Exam Committee**

The Qualifying Exam Committee Chair will identify two members of the Executive Committee to join each student's examination committee. One Executive Committee member per exam committee must also agree to be the chair for that student's exam. Students working in consultation with their advisor must also select two "ad hoc" examiners, who must also be MSP faculty in good standing, but not part of the Executive Committee. All members of the examination committee will be instructed to review this section of the handbook to prepare for the exam. In addition, all examiners will be given a copy of the IBS 531/532 curriculum relevant to the student under examination, allowing them to review the list of covered topics and instructors.

#### **C. Notification**

No later than February 1st of the 2nd Year, the Qualifying Exam Committee Chair will meet with students to go over the format of the exam and set the dates of the exam. After the meeting, the chair will send a written summary of the meeting to the students and their advisors. The summary will describe the procedures to be followed, and the required performance standards which are identical for all students, which are the same procedures and standards described in this Handbook. At this meeting, students are also provided with a guide of how to best prepare for the exam. During the meeting the chair will go over the format and ask the students to begin the process of scheduling the exams.

Students shall be required to establish their exam date by March 1st, and are required to schedule at least 4 weeks to prepare for the exam. To formally establish their exam date, the student must include a Qualifying Exam Proposal Form signed by both the student and the mentor, which states the title of the proposal and affirms that both the student and the mentor have discussed and agreed upon the final proposal.

#### **D. Preparation**

Students should prepare carefully for the qualifying exam. Such preparation should include a review of relevant course work (namely IBS 531/532) as well as practice in oral communication. Senior students who have taken the exam can advise on specific exercises which might be helpful. It may be useful to practice by holding chalk talks about the students' proposal and to describe basic concepts clearly. Faculty and other students are usually willing to participate in such practice sessions, and multiple students could practice together to mutually strengthen conceptual knowledge. Since many students will not previously have experienced an oral examination, a mock oral defense of the written proposal before other students can sometimes be very helpful. Faculty and other students are usually willing to help prepare for this important exam.

#### **E. Part 1: Research Proposal**

The oral exam will begin with an oral defense of a written proposal. The proposal should follow the most current format and guidelines for the Research Training Plan of an F31 individual National Research Service Award (NRSA) application to the National Institutes of Health. The F31 format is comparable to that of many other training grants. However, for NRSA-ineligible students, a deviation from the F31 format is permissible if they identify an alternative funding mechanism of comparable stature, for which they are eligible, and to which they and their mentor indicate the earnest desire to submit a proposal.

Generally, the defense will cover the proposal developed by the student during the IBS 537 grant-writing course, currently scheduled for the Fall semester of the second year. It is expected that the research advisor may help to formulate the project, provide guidance, and be available to the student for discussion and verbal critique. Advisors should direct students to take the lead in writing and editing the actual text of their proposals before it is expected that the advisor shall become an active partner in revising and refining the final version. Under some circumstances, the students will be allowed to use a different proposal for their exam. Prior approval from the Qualifying Exam Committee Chair and research advisor will be required to use the different proposal.

A summary of the proposal (i.e. Specific Aims page) must be submitted to the Qualifying Exam Committee Chair approximately two weeks after the meeting notifying students about the exam schedule. Students should include name, date, and page number on each page; a header or footer may be used for this purpose. This summary must state the working hypothesis and goals of the proposed research and include the proposed Specific Aims. Note that the aims as stated in the abstract may be modified in the full proposal. The topic of the proposal may be the same as or similar to the project which may ultimately form the student's Ph.D. dissertation, and should be written with direct involvement of the student, working closely with their advisor, as described in the preceding paragraph. It is important, however, that the actual writing of the proposal used for the exam is from the student and not the advisor. The advisor will most likely contribute specific edits to the proposal later, if the student plans to submit it for extramural funding. The students will send their full proposal to all members of their committee at least two weeks prior to the exam.

This phase of the exam should last no longer than 55 minutes, starting with a brief (10 minutes) oral presentation of an overview of the proposal, followed by questions from the faculty. Each examiner should be allowed 10 minutes of protected time for questioning the student. The purpose of this phase of the exam is to test the student's ability to formulate and

defend a worthwhile research project and to test their knowledge and understanding of the subject area of the proposal, pertinent literature and methodological issues, as well as poise and creativity in the oral defense of ideas. The proposal defense should be viewed only as a qualifying examination and is not intended to determine the suitability of the project for the student's doctoral dissertation. The student will be questioned on specific aspects of the proposed studies as well as on more general aspects of the subject area.

#### **F. Part 2: General Exam**

The second half of the oral exam will last 60 minutes and should be comprised of general topics and can typically be an extension of questions and ideas raised in the first half. However, it is expected that questions in this phase will cover foundational concepts and basic principles taught in IBS 531/532, and this may include material that is not immediately suggested by the contents of the student's written proposal. Each examiner will be given 10 minutes of protected time for questioning the student, after which other examiners may have 5 minutes to ask follow-up questions.

#### **G. Grading**

After the conclusion of Parts 1 and 2 of the oral exam, the student and advisor will be dismissed. Examiners may discuss the student's performance but should not assign a grade yet. After discussion, each examiner should write down a grade for the student ranging from 1.0 to 4.0, using increments of 0.1, according to the following rubric, which students will be given advance access to via this Handbook. The level of knowledge demonstrated in each category should be judged **at least as good** as described in the table for each category for a student to earn the corresponding score:

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Proposal</b>	<b>General Topics</b>
4.0	Outstanding	Very Good
3.0	Very Good	Satisfactory
2.0	Satisfactory	Marginal
1.0	Marginal	Marginal

For example, a student who demonstrates excellent knowledge of their own project and excellent knowledge of MSP topics may earn an average score of 3.5.

The grades supplied by the committee members should be kept secret and given to the exam chair. The chair will average the results. If the average result is 3.0 or better, the student has passed. Otherwise, the student has failed the exam. The exam committee chair is responsible for emailing the result to the student and their advisor, copying the other examiners and the Program Director. In addition to the result, the committee chair should include information about what led to the result and any areas the student should focus on improving in going forward (regardless of pass/fail).

#### **H. Retaking the Exam**

A student who fails their first attempt at the Qualifying Exam may petition the Executive Committee to retake the exam by submitting a Qualifying Exam Retake Petition, signed by both the student and their mentor. The written petition must present compelling reasons why better performance can be expected on a repeat exam. The petition must include details about what specific deficiencies the student will address during this time, the approach they will

take to studying, and how they and their mentor will work together to prepare for the retake. The student may also petition to change the members of their examination committee for the retake, following the normal rules of examination committee membership. If reexamination is approved (with or without examination committee reassignments), it will take place within 30 days unless there is a compelling reason to give the re-take at a different time. A repeat exam may require submission of a revised or rewritten proposal.

## **9. Dissertation Committee**

In consultation with the Advisor, each student must select a dissertation committee to assist in formulating and evaluating the student's research project. The composition of the committee must be approved by the Program Director or SSD and LGS. It must contain at least four members in good standing of the GDBBS faculty, including the research Advisor, who chairs the committee. At least three of these four committee members must be MSP Program Faculty. If additional expertise and insight is deemed necessary, the student and Advisor can elect to include additional committee members who can be of any academic affiliation. Requests for approval of an outside affiliate committee member must be submitted to the LGS Dean, as outlined in the LGS Handbook. The initial meeting of the committee must be by the end of February of the third year. In order to meet this deadline, students must form the committee and obtain approval according to procedures established by the LGS, prior to scheduling the first meeting. It is important to note that the committee is not official until it is approved; sufficient time must be allowed for this process.

The dissertation committee is the primary body responsible for reading and evaluating the doctoral dissertation and examining the student in the final public oral defense. The student documents the formation of the committee using the Laney Graduate School's Dissertation Committee Signature Form which is available on MSP website in the link for "LGS Dissertation Committee Instructions and Forms" Each member confirms agreement to serve on the committee by signing the form.

Students must meet with their dissertation committee at least once every six months; students in the sixth year and beyond must meet every four months. At least two weeks prior to each meeting, the student must inform the SSD in writing as to the date, time and place of the meeting. At least two weeks prior to the first meeting, the students will submit a formal written update research proposal to the committee, based on pilot experiments and discussions with the advisor, that will orient the dissertation committee to the project. Preliminary data should be included to support the feasibility of the project. The format for the written proposal should be the same as that for the qualifying exam. If appropriate, the qualifying examination proposal can be used as the foundation for the dissertation proposal, which will be the basis for discussion at the meeting. Reports must also be submitted to the committee at least one week before each subsequent meeting and should briefly (no more than two pages) summarize the progress made since the last meeting and note any significant changes in research direction. They should be accompanied by figures and figure legends summarizing new data collected to date. Any member(s) of the Executive Committee can attend these meetings to monitor the student's progress. During the week after each meeting, the student must submit a completed MSP Dissertation Committee Meeting Form (available on the MSP website), as well as a written summary of the meeting, to members of the dissertation committee, the SSD, and the Program Administrator. Students should include name, date, and page number on each page; a header or footer may be used for this purpose. If a majority of the signing members of the Committee finds that progress has been unsatisfactory, or other issues need to be addressed, the advisor should notify the SSD in writing. The Advisor shall have the tie-breaking vote in all such decisions.

Students who are reassigned to a different advisor before completing Part II of the qualifying exam should make every reasonable effort to base the qualifying exam proposal on studies that will be completed in their new lab. If this is not possible due to time constraints, students are expected to complete a new formal written research proposal by the first committee meeting, following the format and guidelines for the Research Training Plan of an F31 Individual National Research Service application of the National Institutes of Health:

<https://grants.nih.gov/funding/activity-codes/F31> as outlined above. Students who are reassigned to a different advisor after completing Part II of the qualifying exam are expected to establish a dissertation committee and produce a two-to-three-page written proposal that includes Specific Aims, Background and any Preliminary Data. This proposal should be presented to the dissertation committee within 3 months of joining the new laboratory and it is expected that students will develop a complete written proposal by their second dissertation committee meeting, although the precise structure of this proposal is at the discretion of the advisor and dissertation committee. All questions concerning this transition should be directed to the SSD.

## **10. Admission to PhD Candidacy**

Students are expected to apply to the Laney Graduate School to become a Candidate for the Ph.D. degree as soon as they are eligible. In most cases students are eligible following completion of Parts I and II of their qualifying examinations. Admission to candidacy presupposes that all course and qualifying examination requirements have been met and that a plan of study and research covering the entire course of advanced study, including the designation of the Advisor, dissertation committee, and the title of the dissertation, has been approved. Application forms for Ph.D. candidacy are obtained from the MSP website: MSP Candidacy Requirements Checklist and the LGS Candidacy Signature Form found in the link for “LGS Application for Admission to Candidacy”. Completed forms along with supporting transcripts of completed coursework (obtained from OPUS) must be submitted to the SSD and Program Administrator and filed at <https://www.applyweb.com/emorypst/index.ftl> no later than the semester preceding the semester in which the Ph.D. degree is expected to be awarded. It is expected that MSP students will submit candidacy paperwork by the end of Spring Term in year 3. The absolute deadline for declaring candidacy is September 15 of the fourth year, per LGS policy. Students who do not meet this deadline will be placed on academic probation, will not be eligible for PDS funds, and may forfeit financial support. These sanctions are lifted when the student enters candidacy. The student will be required to develop a remedial plan in consultation with the SSD.

## **Dissertation Completion**

All Ph.D. candidates must submit an MSP Annual Student Report on or before May 31 each year to the SSD and Program Administrator or the student will not be eligible for PDS funds. Students are expected to complete their dissertations and apply for their degrees within six years. Once students begin the sixth year, it is important to review the LGS Handbook for current policies and procedures regarding the timeline for completion, including penalties for non-compliance.

## **11. Submission of Ph.D. Dissertation**

When the candidate and Advisor agree that the dissertation project is nearing completion, a meeting of the dissertation committee is held to discuss the acceptability of the completed



research. If the committee agrees that the body of work is acceptable, the student may then begin to write the dissertation. It is expected that the student must have published (or have accepted for publication) an original research manuscript in a refereed journal as primary author and completed enough research for their dissertation to support the development of one more paper. In rare cases, if the dissertation committee members judge that the quality and content of the body of work equals that of multiple publications, the work represents a significant contribution to the field and submission of at least one primary author manuscript is in process or imminent they may petition the MSP Executive Committee to waive the publication requirement.

Directions for preparation of the dissertation are provided in the Resources section of the MSP website: “Preparing Dissertation & Scheduling Defense in MSP”. The dissertation may be in one of two formats. The classic format includes the following sections: Abstract, Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion and References. Each section can encompass one or more chapters as appropriate. In the alternative format, the work may be presented as a series of manuscripts (published or unpublished), each of which has its own Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion Sections. In that case, each method must be fully described in the first chapter in which it is used. References should be collated and presented in a separate section. The alternative format should contain a general Introduction section and a general Discussion section. The dissertation committee should approve the format of the dissertation unanimously before it is written. Figures and other illustrations must be of publication quality.

After the dissertation has been read and approved by the dissertation advisor, the student must give a copy to all members of the dissertation committee. The dissertation must be complete at this time, including figures and references. A thesis defense should not be scheduled to be held any sooner than 1 month after the thesis is distributed. Committee members have two weeks after distribution of the dissertation, to certify that the student has a dissertation of high quality. This can be accomplished by obtaining the signature of each committee member on the Provisional Dissertation Approval Form (available on the MSP website) or having the committee members email the SSD stating that the thesis is acceptable for defense. The two-week period should give committee members enough time to read the dissertation thoroughly. If minor revisions are needed, the Advisor must verify that the required revisions have been made before the oral defense. In all other cases, the candidate must revise the dissertation to the committee’s satisfaction before written provisional approval is granted. If there is substantial disagreement among committee members, a meeting of the committee should be called to obtain a resolution.

Once unanimous provisional approval has been given, the oral defense can be scheduled and announced. The cost of preparation of the dissertation is borne by the student.

## **12. Public Oral Defense of PhD Dissertation**

As a final requirement, the candidate must orally defend the dissertation before the dissertation committee and other interested members of the University. The oral defense must be scheduled at least two weeks after provisional approval is obtained from all members of their dissertation committee. The candidate must identify an appropriate date and time and notify the dissertation committee, the SSD, and the Program Administrator in writing. The defense should be scheduled at a time when the Examining Committee can attend, and should not conflict with any classes, MSP events, or scientific meetings attended by large numbers of program faculty or students. At least two weeks before the defense, the student must submit a completed flyer for the announcement of the defense to the Program Administrator; a template is available on the MSP

website: “GDBBS Defense Flyer Template”. The flyer will be used to notify the MSP Program membership through its email listserv, and it will be forwarded to GDBBS for inclusion in the division event announcements. Although most dissertation defenses require two hours or less, three hours should be scheduled to ensure sufficient time. A final copy of the revised dissertation should be available for interested program faculty and should be submitted electronically to the Program Administrator at the time of notification.

In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to schedule the defense in the absence of a committee member, or a member may be absent due to an emergency or unforeseen circumstance. In such cases, the oral defense can proceed if: 1) a minimum of three committee members are present, including the dissertation Advisor and 2) approval of the Program Director or the SSD is obtained. If a student has dual Advisors, either of them can fulfill the role of Advisor at the oral defense.

The dissertation Advisor will chair the dissertation defense. The public dissertation defense is a formal scientific seminar, and care should be taken to preserve the formality of the occasion. A GDBBS Defense Program (template can be found on the MSP website) may be generated by the student to be distributed to the audience at the dissertation defense. The atmosphere should be one that encourages critical questioning so that the student can demonstrate expertise in an open forum. At no time should the student or members of the audience be led to believe that a pass is automatic. The Advisor will outline the format of the defense and introduce the student and research in a manner similar to other seminars. The Advisor and the student should avoid personal comments as well as mention of subsequent parties at this time. Personal comments, congratulations and acknowledgements are more appropriate for the party following successful completion of the oral defense. The defense begins with a 30-45-minute public oral presentation by the candidate. After the presentation, members of the audience that are not on the dissertation committee may question the candidate on matters related to the dissertation research, to assess the thoroughness of the candidate’s knowledge and the quality of the work.

Following the public oral examination, the dissertation committee will continue the examination in private. The candidate is expected to be an authority in his or her research area, and successful defense of the dissertation requires the oral demonstration of that expertise. The success of the defense will be assessed by the committee. At no time should the Advisor answer questions posed to the student, although the Advisor may ask questions during this session. After the student has been dismissed, the student’s performance will be discussed and evaluated by the committee. If the committee decides that the student has not met the criteria for a successful defense, the committee has discretion to decide on how to proceed. In most cases, all revisions to the dissertation are made prior to the defense. However, if additional revisions are required following the defense, final approval of the dissertation will be delayed until such revisions are approved.

Unanimous approval of the dissertation committee members who attended the oral defense must be obtained prior to submission of the dissertation to the Graduate School. The appropriate form is available on the MSP website: GDBBS Committee Approval of the Oral Defense Examination (DocuSign). The student is responsible for providing the committee with the form. Committee members who are unable to attend the oral defense can sign the form (approve / disapprove) based on their assessment of the written document. If the committee is not unanimous, the acceptability of the dissertation project will be determined by the Executive Committee.

Students should follow Laney Graduate School guidelines for dissertation submission as outlined in the LGS Instructions for Submitting Your Thesis or Dissertation (on the MSP website). Students are required to submit an electronic copy of their dissertation to MSP. The dissertation will be available to MSP students and faculty, just as the bound copies were in the past, but the MSP Program will not make the dissertation publicly available until the embargo is lifted.

### **13. Awarding of Degree**

The Laney Graduate School has several deadlines which must be met during the semester in which the degree is to be awarded. These deadlines include: 1) last day to file application for degree; 2) last day for receipt of Degree Clearance Reports for master's and Doctoral candidates (note: theses and dissertations must have final approval and must be defended prior to this date); 3) degree candidates' theses and dissertations due in the Graduate School Office. These deadlines are published in the Academic Calendar of the Graduate School Bulletin.

When a student has completed all course requirements and has submitted and successfully defended their Ph.D. dissertation, the GDBBS Director will submit the appropriate forms to the Dean of the Graduate School. Formal application for a degree must also be made by the student at the beginning of the semester in which the degree is to be conferred. The student must be registered during this semester.

### **14. Expectations of Performance**

- A. **Expectations of Faculty for Students.** Students are expected to perform satisfactorily in required and elective course work, and to participate actively in classroom and seminar discussions. Students should continually develop their scientific independence and creativity by active pursuit of the current scientific literature and vigorous laboratory research. It is expected that each student will acquire and develop excellent written and oral communication skills, and his or her research results will be published in quality peer-reviewed journals.

Students are also expected to make continuing progress through the program. This includes selection of an advisor and dissertation committee in a timely fashion, holding regular dissertation committee meetings as required, submission of the annual report, and submission and defense of the dissertation soon after completion of laboratory research.

It is anticipated that most students will complete the graduate program in approximately five years. However, development as a scientist is usually not attained in a regular 40-hour work week. Students are encouraged to show dedication and enthusiasm for their research projects, and to continue to strive for the excellence and discipline that will make them highly competitive in science. Students should be familiar with the regulations governing University/Student Relationships, and with the Graduate School Honor and Conduct Codes as published by the Graduate School.

- B. **Expectations of Students for Faculty.** Students may expect the faculty to give their time and expertise enthusiastically. This is done by presenting well-prepared and current courses and by providing individual instruction and consultation in the laboratory. The faculty provides laboratory space, equipment, and supplies for the student's research. For students in their third and subsequent years, stipends are normally provided by faculty

research grants. Faculty should serve as professional role models and encourage and advise students to fully develop their scientific talents. Faculty should also counsel students in determining the direction of their postdoctoral careers. Faculty are also expected to provide reasonable and clear guidelines for the graduate program and to administer Graduate School requirements at the program level.

- C. **Poor Performance.** The Executive Committee will review the progress of students at the end of each academic year. All students must meet the Graduate School's definitions of good standing and due progress to remain in the program. The student's research project must also be progressing satisfactorily, as judged by the Advisor and dissertation committee. Students who experience difficulties are encouraged to seek assistance as soon as possible from the Program Director, DGS, SSD, their Advisors, or other faculty. Every effort will be made to assist students in meeting the required performance standards. A student who does not maintain adequate progress will be placed on probation, and financial support may be withdrawn. The student will be informed in writing of the conditions of probation, and a timetable for elimination of probation established. A student who fails to meet the conditions of probation will be Recommended for Dismissal from the program. Such decisions may be appealed to the Laney Graduate School.

## **15. Student – Faculty Communication**

Students usually have questions and suggestions about many aspects of the graduate program that can help the faculty to maintain a high-quality training program. Student feedback about all aspects of the program, and particularly about courses, is very important in helping the faculty recognize strengths and weaknesses. Student/faculty communication is strongly encouraged, and students are urged to make their views known to the faculty. Although faculty try to request feedback, they will often assume that there are no problems in the current program when they do not hear from students.

Many of the problems (academic and otherwise) that students encounter occur early in graduate school. The DGS has responsibility as the formal academic advisor to first-year students until they have selected a dissertation Advisor. The MSP program provides students with an additional confidential, comfortable and informal forum in which they have the opportunity to discuss their progress, problems or concerns in the early stages of graduate school: a faculty counselor. In September of their first-year, students select their counselor who will be a member of the MSP Program. While counselors should be available for meetings (with suitable notice) at any time, students and counselors must meet by mutual arrangement by October and again by February of the first year.

In later years, the student's dissertation Advisor or members of his or her dissertation committee are usually in the best position to discuss research or personal problems. The Program Director, the SSD, members of the MSP Executive Committee, and the Program Administrator are obvious resources concerning procedure and policy questions. All faculty attempt to be readily available to meet with students. If a faculty member cannot see a student immediately, he or she will make an appointment at the earliest available time. Students are encouraged to use the faculty as a resource.

## 16. Counseling Services

Graduate school can be a stressful time on your body and mind. Be sure you are taking care of yourself. The Student Health Services is located at 1525 Clifton Rd. on the 2nd floor. They can be reached at (404) 727-7551 (press 1).

Emory University provides free personal counseling services under strict rules of confidentiality for all registered students. The counseling center staff is comprised of medical doctors, registered psychologists and social workers. To make a counseling appointment, please call the Counseling Center at 727-7450. The office is located in the same building as the GDBBS offices, 1462 Clifton Road, Suite 235. You can also call the Emory HELPLINE at (404) 727-4357. It is open every night during the school year from 8:30pm-1:00am.

The Emory Law School also provides a free legal service help line for students. You can reach them at 727-6516. You can also find a variety of student support services available to you by visiting this GDBBS resource and this LGS resource.

Additional information on Wellness and Support Resources can be found on the MSP website.

## 17. Leaving the Program

### A. Leaving the Program Voluntarily

Students may decide that they would like to leave the MSP program in pursuit of a different career path at any time. Depending on the program stage, this decision should be made after consultation with the DGS, thesis advisor and thesis committee. If termination of the program is desired, then the Program Administrator and Assistant Director of Student Affairs in the GDBBS should be notified to proceed. The student should complete the LGS withdrawal signature form after consulting the LGS policies on withdrawing. The LGS online action form should be completed, and the signature form uploaded. It is recommended that the student meets one more time with Directors/DGSs to confirm completion of this process. If these steps are not followed, the record will show that the student abandoned their studies and were removed from the program, something that could negatively impact future applications to graduate school.

### B. Leaving with a Terminal Master's Degree

Under certain circumstances, students may be permitted to work towards a terminal M.S. degree. A student who fails the Qualifying Examination, or who chooses not to complete the doctoral program, may petition the Executive Committee for permission to complete an M.S. If approved, the student must form a thesis committee consisting of a faculty advisor and at least two additional program faculty. A written thesis must be orally defended to this committee. The Executive Committee should be invited to the defense but shall not be voting members of the examining committee. The format for writing and submission of the M.S. thesis are the same as those for doctoral dissertations, although less significant research contributions are expected for the M.S. degree.

### C. Transfers to Another Graduate Program at Emory

Students admitted to GDBBS Programs are supported by the LGS/GDBBS in the first 21 months of graduate school. After their first rotation with a MSP faculty member, they

may choose to do rotations or dissertation research with any of the Graduate Training Faculty of the Division regardless of their program affiliation. Thus, a student could be a member of one GDBBS program and their advisor could be a member of a different graduate program. In such a case, the dissertation research committee must be selected according to the guidelines established by the student's program and not the program where their advisor resides.

**D. Transfers Within GDBBS**

A student in good academic standing can transfer to the graduate program where their proposed advisor holds a training appointment. This can result in changes in required coursework or exam scheduling to meet the requirements of the new program. The following is required:

- A letter of intent requesting the transfer should be sent to the student's current program, to the intended program, and to the GDBBS Director. The current program will acknowledge the program change request, and the new program must approve the transfer.
- The program the student will be transferring to should also provide the student with written documentation of any program-specific requirements that the student will need to complete.
- The student must also complete the LGS Program Transfer Request form, and the Dean of the LGS will provide final approval of the transfer.

**E. Transfers to Another LGS Program**

If a student would like to transfer to a non-GDBBS program, the student needs to discuss this with both programs and then complete the LGS Program Transfer Request form, which will be reviewed and approved by the Dean of the LGS.

MD/PhD students need to complete this transfer process once they have started their G1 year in the fall.

**F. Advisor Leaving Emory**

If an advisor decides to leave Emory, a student may have to make decisions regarding the completion of the Ph.D. degree. For example, the student might have the option of moving with the advisor while continuing to be enrolled at Emory or of staying at Emory and working with a faculty collaborator. In every case, it is imperative for the student to notify the Program Director and/or DGS and the Program Administrator, who will assure that GDBBS is notified. GDBBS must be involved, in order to ensure that the student's resources, such as funding, health insurance, and academic support are uninterrupted.

Official LGS policy regarding faculty who relocate to another institution may be found in the LGS Handbook.

**G. Financial Support and Approved Time-off/Personal Time**

Stipends and tuition fellowships, awarded to students on the basis of academic merit, are intended to cover basic living expenses and tuition. With the exception of special awards, such as the Woodruff Fellowship, stipend levels are set by the GDBBS based upon the availability of funds from Laney Graduate School and university sources. The faculty also encourages and assists students in obtaining individual stipend support from

extramural sources, such as federal agencies and private foundations. Students are supported by the GDBBS for an initial period of training. Additional support will be provided by research Advisors, training grants, or other sources. Financial support is normally provided only to full-time students working toward the Ph.D. degree.

#### **H. Employment**

Stipends and tuition fellowships are awarded to allow students to devote full time to the graduate program and complete the requirements for the Ph.D. degree in as short a time as is consistent with adequate training and research progress. Employment outside the University is strongly discouraged. Such employment inevitably causes a serious distraction from the educational process. Graduate education and research are by necessity largely self-motivated processes, and the distractions of employment can interfere with the ability of students to prepare satisfactorily for their future professional careers. If additional income is absolutely necessary, students are encouraged to consider the possibility of low-interest student loans and should consult with the financial aid office. If a student feels strongly that employment is necessary while in the graduate program, the student **must** discuss the need with his or her advisor and the Program Director. If employment is approved, the student must not allow it to interfere with high standards of performance in academic courses and in research.

#### **I. Time Expectations for Graduate Students**

Graduate study is a full-time endeavor. Students receive a stipend and are expected to be actively attending classes or conducting research and working toward the degree year-round, whether classes are in session or not. The time between terms (including Fall and Spring Break) is considered an active part of the training period and is not considered an approved time-off or holiday. Students will continue to receive stipends during approved time-off and official University holidays. Students on training grants and fellowships may receive leave and holidays available to individuals in comparable training positions at Emory. Unauthorized absences may result in an unsatisfactory research grade for the term (i.e., in fall, spring, or summer) and could thereby lead to probation. Students on training grants and fellowships may receive leave for the same approved time-off and holidays available to individuals in comparable training positions at Emory. Students who wish to take approved time-off must let the advisors know of their plans at least two weeks before the planned absence. Students who wish to take additional time off must get approval from the DGS and their advisors. See also the policies on Leaves of Absence and Parental Leave, described below.

#### **J. Leaves of Absence**

Student requests for an unpaid leave of absence must adhere to Laney Graduate School policy; refer to the LGS Handbook for current details. Leaves must be approved by the DGS or SSD, and then forwarded to the GDBBS Office for the Director's approval. The Dean of the LGS must give final approval for any leave. For more information, please see the LGS Handbook:

[https://biomed.emory.edu/PROGRAM\\_SITES/MSP/resources/](https://biomed.emory.edu/PROGRAM_SITES/MSP/resources/)

#### **K. Parental Leave**

The LGS Parental Accommodation Policy is for students with substantial parenting responsibility as a result of childbirth, care of a newborn, or a newly adopted child. This

policy guarantees Ph.D. students a minimal level of accommodation during the transition to parenthood. For more information on the policy, eligibility requirements, and application procedure, please see the LGS handbook:

[https://biomed.emory.edu/PROGRAM\\_SITES/MSP/resources/](https://biomed.emory.edu/PROGRAM_SITES/MSP/resources/)

## **18. Career Development**

The question of what direction a student's career will take following completion of the Ph.D. should arise early and become increasingly important as training progresses. It is never too early to consider career options. Students receiving a Ph.D. usually take a postdoctoral research position to acquire additional techniques and expertise to further prepare for an independent research career. Such postdoctoral training is usually essential for a career in academic research. Some students take permanent positions in industrial or government laboratories immediately after receiving the Ph.D. degree, while others enter additional advanced degree programs such as medical school, law school or business school. Career objectives can best be realized through careful planning. All members of the faculty stand ready to advise students on career options, and students are encouraged to seek this advice at any time during their training. GDBBS holds forums on career choices and also has other resources for career development. For information see the GDBBS website.

## **19. Appeals, Student Honor Code and Conduct Code, and Grievance Policy**

### **Appeals**

Students who believe that an assigned grade is incorrect should first discuss the assigned grade with the course instructor. After discussion, students who do not think the problem has been resolved in this manner should address their concern to the Program Director or DGS, who will seek to resolve the matter with the instructor and the student. Consistent with principles of academic freedom, responsibility for evaluation of a student's course performance rests with the course instructor. Use of this procedure for resolution of a grade dispute will not prejudice in any way a student's rights under their Program, GDBBS, Laney Graduate School, or University student grievance procedures.

### **Student Honor Code and Conduct Code**

All students should familiarize themselves with and adhere to the Laney Graduate School Honor Code and the Laney Graduate School Conduct Code as outlined in the [Graduate Student Handbook](#). This deals with the professional standards and conduct demanded of all graduate students, as well as the procedures for reporting and adjudicating any violations. The process of reporting may start with a conversation with the Advisor or another trusted faculty member, and serious violations of the conduct code will be reported to the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs. Students may also submit a report online at [https://emory-advocate.symplicity.com/public\\_report/index.php/pid370789?rep\\_type=1003](https://emory-advocate.symplicity.com/public_report/index.php/pid370789?rep_type=1003). Continuance of stipend support is predicated upon satisfactory progress by the student toward a degree and adherence to the Honor and Conduct Codes.

### **Grievance Policy**

Students who have a potential grievance related to some aspect of their Program may discuss it with their DGS, PA, the GDBBS Assistant Director of Student Affairs and/or the LGS Assistant Dean of Student Affairs for consultation before taking action, if desired. If the student decides



they want to file an official grievance, they should notify their DGS or SSD by providing a letter addressed to the DGS or SSD that describes the grievance and relevant details. **If the grievance is related to an academic component or milestone, the student should submit their grievance letter within 30 days of the date the outcome was conveyed (i.e.; notice of qualifying exam result or posting of grade to transcript).** The DGS or SSD may try, if possible and deemed appropriate, to resolve the grievance informally in conversation with the student and relevant parties. If this is not successful or not appropriate, the DGS or SSD will inform the Division Director and Assistant Director of Student Affairs for GDBBS that the student is moving forward with a formal grievance process. Next, the DGS or SSD will convene a meeting of the Program Executive Committee, which will review the grievance and provide an appropriate response. The DGS or SSD may gather additional relevant information and will provide all information and the student's grievance letter to the Committee. The Committee will meet face-to-face to discuss the grievance and review relevant materials. A majority of the EC must be present and only those present may vote on the outcome. Votes will be taken via electronic ballot to ensure confidentiality. In all cases grievance decisions are confidential and should not be shared outside of the grievance meeting. The DGS or SSD will notify the Division Director and Assistant Director of Student Affairs for GDBBS of the outcome. Finally, the DGS or SSD will provide a letter to the student via email notifying them of the outcome and options for next steps.

If the grievance concerns the DGS or SSD, the student should review the GDBBS Grievance Policy found in the [GDBBS Handbook](#) for guidance.

If the grievance concerns the GDBBS Director, the student should bypass the Program and Division and follow the LGS Grievance Procedure found in the LGS Handbook under Honor, Conduct, and Grievance, Section 4.

Finally, if the student does not feel their situation is resolved at the conclusion of the Program Grievance process, they can refer to the GDBBS Grievance policy for guidance on additional options for seeking resolution.

## **20. University Requirements**

Every effort has been made to make this document as accurate and complete as possible. Formal University requirements are detailed in the current Laney Graduate School Handbook and the Graduate Division (GDBBS) Handbook and are in addition to those detailed in this document. Policies are subject to change without notice. Students should be aware that the LGS and GDBBS handbooks reflect minimum requirements for students, and programs may have additional or more stringent requirements. MSP students must comply with all policies and regulations, and therefore must be familiar with all three handbooks. Current versions of the handbooks are available on the [MSP web site](#).

### **Equal Opportunity Employer Statement**

Emory is an equal opportunity employer, and qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, protected veteran status or other characteristics protected by state or federal law. Emory University does not discriminate in admissions, educational programs, or employment, including recruitment, hiring, promotions, transfers, discipline, terminations, wage and salary administration, benefits, and training. Students, faculty, and staff are assured of participation in university programs and

in the use of facilities without such discrimination. Emory University complies with Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Vietnam Era Veteran's Readjustment Assistance Act, and applicable executive orders, federal and state regulations regarding nondiscrimination, equal opportunity, and affirmative action (for protected veterans and individuals with disabilities). Inquiries regarding this policy should be directed to the Emory University Department of Equity and Civil Rights Compliance, 201 Dowman Drive, Administration Building, Atlanta, GA 30322. Telephone: 404-727-9867 (V) | 404-712-2049 (TDD).