

# BYLAWS OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HEALTH, SAN ANTONIO

Approved by GFC on August 22, 2017; Last updated by GFC on July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022

## **Mission Statement**

The Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences provides an individualized, diverse and multidisciplinary learning environment for students to develop the knowledge, skills and creativity necessary to succeed in the evolving biomedical disciplines.

*Note. In 2011, the Basic Science Departments were moved from the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS) to the School of Medicine (SOM). Owing to this change in faculty reporting lines for the majority of the Graduate Faculty, and the accompanying changes in Health Science Center faculty governance, the role of the Graduate Faculty Assembly (GFA) is being reconsidered. Until the role of the GFA is resolved, all administrative aspects of the graduate programs that are reported to the GSBS Dean will go through the Graduate Faculty Council (GFC). All GFC members are strongly encouraged to seek wide input from their constituency within their programs including faculty, students, and staff, as appropriate.*

## **Article 1. Names**

The name of the main policy making and governing body constituted by this document shall be the Graduate Faculty Council (GFC) of The University of Texas Health (UT Health), San Antonio Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS). Individual graduate programs shall be administered by their Committee on Graduate Studies (COGS), as described in Article 4. The individual student Research Supervisory Committee (RSC) oversees the thesis/dissertation research project of the graduate student and is discussed in Article 5.

## **Article 2. Administration of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences**

### **Section 1. General**

The graduate dean, and the associate deans or assistant deans who may be appointed upon his/her recommendation shall conduct the administration of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS).

### **Section 2. Dean of the Graduate School Of Biomedical Sciences**

The graduate school dean shall be the chief executive and administrator of the graduate programs at the GSBS and shall chair all meetings of the graduate faculty council. The graduate dean is appointed by the president of The UT Health San

Antonio. During the absence of the dean, the Associate Dean will serve in his/her place.

## **Article 3. Purposes and Responsibilities of the Graduate Faculty Council**

### **Section I. Membership of the Council**

#### A. Ex Officio Members (non-voting except as specified)

1. Dean of the GSBS. Serves as Chair of the GFC and shall vote only in case of a split decision. The Dean shall designate a chair pro tem to serve in his/her absence.
2. Associate Dean(s) of the GSBS
3. Assistant Dean(s) of the GSBS
4. Assistant Vice President for Student Services
5. Registrar

#### B. Voting Members

1. The Chair of the COGS from each Ph.D. and MS program. Each will have one vote.

*In the absence of a voting GFC member, an eligible alternate with the right of vote (Graduate faculty and member of the particular program) may be appointed by the absent member.*

#### C. Non-Voting Members

1. One student representative elected by the Graduate Student Association (GSA), typically the President of the GSA.
2. One Elected faculty representative from each proposed graduate program in the GSBS. The program must have been approved by the GFC, but may still be awaiting Coordinating Board approval. (Disapproval of the proposed program by the Coordinating Board would terminate this position on the GFC.)

### **Section II. Faculty and Academic Issues**

The purpose and objectives of the Graduate Faculty Council (GFC) is to foster, support, and maintain excellence in all aspects of teaching and research at the GSBS through approved graduate programs. The GFC shall formulate, discuss, and make recommendations on issues concerning the responsibilities, rights, and privileges of the Graduate School Faculty.

### **Section III. Administrative Issues**

The GFC is formed in accordance with the Rules and Regulations of the Board of Regents of the University of Texas System and exercise their authority within those rules. The Council shall act as the principal policy-making body of the GSBS in relation to academic issues. The Dean of the GSBS, as chief administrative officer, shall be responsible for approval and implementation of all policy decisions, subject to the approval of the President of UT Health San Antonio.

### **Section IV. Function of the Council**

#### A. Legislative Responsibilities

The GFC is the designated legislative body of the GSBS with the responsibility to recommend all candidates for degrees and this authority derives from the Texas Board of Regents. The GFC will not limit its review to consideration of whether candidates have fulfilled all requirements of various committees of the Graduate School, but will in addition base its recommendations on its own evaluation of the quality of the work. Furthermore, the GFC will function in such a manner as to support and promote the stated mission of the GSBS.

#### B. Educational Responsibilities

It shall be the responsibility of the GFC to establish and maintain policies, rules and regulations in those matters concerning graduate education which are common to all programs administered by the GSBS. These matters shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. General academic requirements for admission to graduates study and degree candidacy, Compact and Milestone agreements, continuation of studies, and awarding of a degree.
2. Standards of student professional conduct.
3. Criteria for thesis or dissertation research, its supervision, and its defense.

4. Ensure that the graduate programs are assessing and updating, as appropriate, the effectiveness and quality of their curriculum.

#### C. Consideration of Course Proposals, Modifications, and Inactivation's of Graduate Courses

It shall be the responsibility of the GFC to review any proposal for a new graduate course or major changes to an existing graduate course, including changes in credit hours, scheduling, or request to inactivate a course from the catalogue. The GFC may reject the proposal, return it for modification, or transmit it to the Dean of the GSBS with recommendation for approval. The Dean of the GSBS may act on a proposal so transmitted by the GFC by rejecting it, returning it to the GFC for modification, or transmitting the proposal to the registrar for implementation.

#### D. Consideration of New Graduate Programs or Modifications of Existing Programs

It shall be the responsibility of the GFC to review any proposal for a new graduate program or substantial modification of an existing program. The GFC may reject the proposal, return it for modification, or transmit it to the Dean of the GSBS with recommendation for approval. The Dean of the GSBS may act on a proposal so transmitted by the GFC by rejecting it, returning it to the GFC for modification, or taking it to the UT Health Dean's Council for further consideration.

#### E. Periodic Review of Graduate Programs

As per the requirements of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), each accredited graduate program must be externally reviewed every six years. The final summary of the review must be presented at the GFC and approved, before transmittal to the GSBS Dean, the Vice-president for Academic, Faculty, and Student Affairs, and the finally to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

#### F. Biennial Programmatic Feedback

The biennial program feedback is designed to provide an opportunity for GSBS program leadership to receive feedback from programmatic faculty, staff and students. This is not intended to replace the programmatic reviews required by the THECB, but rather to provide a mechanism for stakeholders to have regular, and frequent, input into the evolution of the program. The feedback shall be obtained at a minimum of every two years.

The instrument for obtaining feedback will be a survey that will contain some

general questions that are common across all programs, with additional customized questions to be provided by the program directors. The survey will be distributed by GSBS Dean's Office. The GSBS Dean, or a designee of the dean, will discuss surveys results with the program director who will in turn communicate back out to the stakeholders.

*(Approved at GFC, December 14, 2018)*

#### G. Consideration of Recommendations Submitted by Program COGS

It shall be the responsibility of the GFC to review and act upon recommendations submitted by COGS of each program as listed below. The Council may reject the recommendation, return it for modification, or transmit it to the Dean of the GSBS with recommendation for approval. Recommendations which must be submitted by COGS shall include, but not be limited to, the following matters:

1. Admission to a graduate program of an applicant whose credentials do not meet minimum requirements established by the GFC (i.e., waivers).
2. Granting of all graduate degrees, with report on the final oral examination, when appropriate.
3. Proposal for new graduate courses or major changes to existing courses.

#### H. Compact and Milestone Agreements

The utilization of Compacts and Milestone Agreements are required in programs where students are directly mentored by faculty members. Both Master's and Doctoral programs should review progress of stated Milestones on an annual basis although programs can reviews it more frequently, if so desired. If milestones are not being adequately met, the outcomes of these reviews should be shared with the GSBS Dean's Office along with a proposed plan of action.

*(Approved by GFC, December 14, 2018)*

### **Section V. Meeting of the GFC**

#### A. Regular Meetings

Regular meetings of the GFC shall be held monthly throughout the year. Members of the GFC may submit items for the agenda to the Dean of the GSBS no later than 8 days prior to the next meeting. Written notice of the agenda of the regular GFC meeting shall be sent to the council members by the Dean of the GSBS no later than 1 week prior to the date of the meeting. In addition, the agenda shall be distributed by email to all members of the graduate faculty no later than 1 week

prior to the date of the meeting.

#### B. Special Meetings

A special meeting of the GFC may be called by the Chair, or upon the request of three voting members of the GFC. Written notice with the agenda of the special meeting shall be sent by the Chair to the GFC members no later than three days in advance of the meeting.

#### C. Quorum

A majority of the voting membership of the GFC shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of its business.

#### D. Minutes

Minutes are distributed for review with the agenda prior to the meeting and then voted on and approved at the following meeting. Once approved by GFC at its next meeting, the minutes are to be distributed by email within 3 days to all members of the graduate faculty. The original copy of the minutes shall be permanently filed in the office of the Dean of the GSBS.

#### E. Guests

The Dean of the GSBS or members of the GFC may invite any interested individual to attend a meeting as a guest. Guests shall have the privilege of the floor, but shall not have the right to vote.

### **Article 4. Purposes and Responsibilities of the Curriculum and Assessment Committee**

The Curriculum and Assessment Committee was created to maintain communication among and between the various programs within the graduate school. Membership consists of individuals from each program who are then tasked to update leadership of their respective programs of any updates, recommendations, or actions of the GSBS Curriculum and Assessment Committee. Membership will be for a term of two-years with the option of continuing on the committee. The functions of the committee include:

1. Create and implement a process for identifying and regularly updating marketable skills for all programs.
2. Discuss and create a standardized process for course evaluations within GSBS.

3. Discuss appropriate and NEW measures for student learning outcomes.
4. Discuss curriculum accreditation standards to ensure compliance.
5. Review course proposals and modifications for appropriate components, course descriptions, number of units, course type (elective/required), instructional objectives and to identify potential duplication/overlap with existing courses.
6. Review new program curricula to identify potential duplication/overlap with existing programs.
7. Review changes to programs' plans of study (only as the changes may affect other GSBS programs).
8. Make recommendations on how to implement new requirements as they happen. For example, SB 810 - open education resources and NIH Rigor and Reproducibility requirement.
9. Share individual program assessment tools (rubrics) and make changes to improve shared rubrics.
10. Provide a forum to discuss how to involve the GSBS in Inter-professional Education activities and play an active role in the university QEP.
11. Provide a forum to discuss changes within the teaching and learning field and other related topics (to ensure innovation within the GSBS).
12. Provide a forum to discuss the use of technology in teaching as well as online teaching.
13. Provide a forum to discuss program achievement measures and targets.
14. Create an Interprofessional Education (IPE) subcommittee to develop, modify, and coordinate the GSBS IPE plan as part of the institutional QEP.  
*(Approved at GFC, September 10, 2021)*

## **Article 5. Committee on Graduate Studies (COGS)**

### **Section I. Membership and Officers of COGS**

Each approved program shall have a COGS consisting of:

1. Chair.
2. A minimum of four additional members from the Graduate Faculty of the program.
3. A student representative from within the program. Under certain circumstances, such as when students are being specifically discussed, the student will not be present.

## **Section II. Functions of COGS**

### A. Responsibilities

The Committee on Graduate Studies of each graduate program shall have the primary responsibility for the conduct and administration of the program including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Appointment of the COGS Chair, the administrative head of the program. The COGS Chair is the voting representative of the program on the Graduate Faculty Council and serves as the liaison officer between the COGS and the Graduate School Dean's Office on all matters pertaining to applicant and student affairs. Once selected, the Graduate School Dean's Office must be notified of the decision within one week.  
*(Approved at GFC January 12, 2018)*
2. To ensure the smooth transition from a current to an incoming COGS Chair, a succession plan should be developed and documented by each program. The succession plan should involve at least a six month overlap in duties between the outgoing and incoming COGS chairs. Additionally, a list of duties and responsibilities of the COGS Chair should be maintained in the program handbook including information on the various forms and approvals for which the COGS Chair is responsible. Moreover, the COGS should identify an individual (e.g. Chair Elect, Vice Chair, Program Director) who can step into the role of COGS Chair if the current COGS Chair is not available to attend meetings. If the current COGS Chair resigns/ departs unexpectedly, this individual will also serve as interim COGS Chair until a new chair is identified.  
*(Approved at GFC September 10, 2021)*
3. Establishing specific requirements for admission, either in addition to, or more stringent, than the general requirements of the GSBS.
4. Establishing procedures for review of applications to the graduate programs.



5. Establishing academic curricula consistent with the approved program goals of the graduate program.
6. Reviewing research supervisory committee (RSC) reports on student progress towards the degree.
7. Reviewing thesis and dissertation research proposal and the composition of the RSC.
8. Assigning a member to attend the final oral presentation of each degree candidate and reviewing the recommendations of the student's RSC.
9. Reviewing and making recommendations to the Dean of the GSBS concerning the qualifications of potential new members of the Graduate Faculty.
10. Reviewing the roster of members of the Graduate Faculty for continuations and deletions. Each faculty member's credentials should be evaluated at a minimum of once every five years.  
*(Approved at GFC January 12, 2018)*
11. Establishing, maintaining, and distributing Program Guidelines/Handbooks to all students and faculty. COGS should review and revise the Program Guidelines/Handbook annually, prior to the start of each new academic year, to ensure the policies and procedures are consistent with the Graduate School policies and procedures outlined in the Catalog. Revised Handbooks must be submitted and reviewed by the GSBS Dean's office prior to being posted on the GSBS website.  
*(Approved at GFC December 11, 2020)*

#### B. Recommendations from COGS to the GFC

The COGS of each graduate program shall submit to the GFC, recommendations on matters which require approval by both the GFC and the Dean of the GSBS prior to implementation. Such matters include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Admission to a graduate program of an applicant whose credentials are below those minimum requirements established by GRC (waivers).
2. Dissertation research proposals and RSC composition.
3. Granting of all graduate degrees, with report on the final oral examination, when appropriate.

4. Proposals for new graduate courses or major changes to existing courses.
5. Review the UT Health SA Catalog entry for the individual programs and the overall description for the GSBS, prior to publication.

#### C. Recommendations to the Dean

The COGS of each graduate program shall submit to the Dean of the GSBS recommendations on matters which require approval of the Dean prior to implementation. Such matters include, but are not limited to:

1. Admission of students who meet the minimum criteria previously established by the GFC.
2. Rejecting an applicant to a graduate program.
3. Granting a leave of absence to a student in the program.
4. Granting membership to the Programmatic Graduate Faculty.
5. Admitting a student to candidacy for a degree.
6. Terminating student classification (withdrawals and dismissals) for an individual.
7. Revision of the guidelines of the graduate programs.

## **Article 6. Graduate Faculty**

### **Section I. Graduate Faculty**

Graduate Faculty are UT Health San Antonio faculty members who have been reviewed and approved by a program's COGS to serve as a graduate faculty member for that program.

#### A. Criteria for Graduate Faculty Nomination

In order to serve as a graduate faculty member in the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, faculty must meet the minimum criteria as follows. Each COGS may establish additional specific criteria for their program.

1. Hold a graduate or professional degree

2. Demonstrate significant contribution(s) towards the advancement of their field (as determined by publications, service, teaching, etc.)
3. Hold a Primary or Adjunct Appointment at the UT Health San Antonio

Any exceptions to the above criteria must be reviewed and approved by GFC.

Nomination forms are required to be entered by the Graduate Faculty Candidate in the GSBS electronic records system to initiate the approvals process. Graduate Faculty appointments are subject to review by program COGS a minimum of once every five years. COGS may request to remove Graduate Faculty from their roster at any time.

#### B. Subsequent Graduate Faculty Appointment

Faculty may serve as graduate faculty for more than one GSBS program, track, or discipline. A nomination form will not be required for additional graduate faculty appointments. (BME will require process listed in section A above.) The program COGS for the nominating program may submit a request in writing to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs requesting a subsequent graduate faculty appointment. Written documentation will be saved to the faculty member's file and the appointment will be added to the Graduate Faculty Profile in the GSBS electronic record system.

#### C. Responsibilities

Graduate Faculty members may serve as a Supervising Professor or internal Research Supervising Committee Member for students in the program or Track/Discipline with which they are appointed.

*(Approved at GFC, July 8, 2022)*

#### D. Graduate Faculty Assembly

The purpose and objectives of the Assembly are to promote collegiality, exchange of information and foster excellence in aspects of teaching, mentorship and research at the UT Health San Antonio, Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences.

The Assembly shall promote discussion in matters that, directly and indirectly, effect the ability of the Graduate Faculty to carry out with excellence their programs of teaching, mentorship, and research by agenda item submission to the Associate Dean.

The Faculty Assembly may submit recommendations for topics of discussion relevant to the interests of the GSBS to the Graduate Faculty Council.

Faculty Assembly will occur two times each semester with dates to be determined by the Graduate Faculty Council. Special topics will be discussed in addition to open forum discussion.

*(Approved at GFC, February 11, 2022)*

## **Article 7. Admissions Committee**

### **Section 1. Conflict of Interest**

Admissions committee members are obligated to disclose any potential conflicts of interests with applicants to the graduate program for which they are serving as a reviewer. Conflicts of interest include, but are not limited to:

1. Applicant currently or previously worked in the admissions committee member's laboratory
2. Applicant is related to the committee member
3. Admissions committee member is currently serving, or previously served, on the student's committee in another program
4. Admissions committee member recruited the applicant with specific skills well suited to the member's laboratory
5. Admissions committee member wrote a recommendation letter for the applicant

To ensure fairness and equity, members with conflict should recuse themselves from directly assessing the applicant's files. If the applicant is selected for interviews, the committee member with the conflict will not participate in interviews and/or the ranking process of the applicant.

The chair of the committee may direct specific questions raised by the committee to the member with the conflict of interest to help in determining the candidate's fit for the program.

In some cases, the chair of the committee may request that the member with the conflict "step out" of the room during the review/evaluation process.

In rare cases, and with the full knowledge of the committee, a member with a conflict may interview the applicant but will not be involved in the scoring or ranking of the applicant with whom the conflict exists.

*(Approved October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021)*

## **Article 8. Student Research Supervisory Committee (RSC)**

### **Section I. Membership and Officers of the RSC**

Each student pursuing an MS or PhD degree will have a Research Supervisory Committee comprised as described below. In either the case of the MS or PhD degrees, as described below, each program will decide if the Chair of the RSC is to be the Supervisor, or one of the other members selected from among the graduate faculty within the program.

#### A. Master of Science (MS)

1. The supervising professor, also a member of the program's graduate faculty, designated as Supervising Professor and Chair of the Supervising Committee.
2. Two members of the graduate faculty within the program.
3. One member outside of the program or discipline and with the appropriate scientific expertise

#### B. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

1. The supervising professor, who has a primary faculty appointment at UT Health San Antonio and is a member of the program's graduate faculty in which the student is enrolled, designated as Supervising Professor and Chair of the Supervising Committee;
2. Three members must be members of the graduate faculty of the program in which the student is enrolled (inside/inside);
3. One member must be from outside of UT Health San Antonio with no affiliation to the institution and should have expertise in or similar to the field of the proposed dissertation and/or provide a unique perspective or point of view on the proposed dissertation (outside/outside).

Additionally, under certain circumstances and at the discretion of the GSBS dean, a representative from the Dean's office may be appointed to serve in an ex officio capacity on Supervising Committees.

*(Approved at GFC, March 13, 2020)*

#### C. Adjunct Faculty Serving on Dissertation/Thesis Committees

Following approval of the research proposal by the Committee on Graduate Studies, the supervising professor and the candidate shall make recommendations to the Committee on Graduate Studies regarding the composition of the Supervising Committee for the dissertation or thesis research. Recommendations may include adjunct faculty members who have been approved as Graduate Faculty of a program at the UT Health San Antonio and are eligible to serve on a dissertation or thesis supervising committee.  
*(Approved at GFC, October 13, 2017)*

#### D. External Committee Member Criteria

The requirements for serving on a PhD supervising committee are that the External Member must:

1. Not be employed by UT Health San Antonio;
2. Not hold any affiliation with UT Health San Antonio;
3. Have expertise in or similar to the field of the proposed dissertation;  
and
4. Hold a graduate or professional degree

An External Member serving on a Master's supervising committee must be from outside of the respective program for which the degree is being awarded and must have the appropriate scientific expertise

External Committee Members may serve only in an external committee member role on Dissertation or Thesis committees. They may not serve as a committee chair, co-chair, or as a regular committee member.

*(Approved at GFC, March 12, 2021)*

## **Section II. Functions of the RSC**

### A. Responsibilities

The role of the RSC is to provide feedback and guidance to the student to ensure progression towards their degree in a timely manner. Specific responsibilities include:

1. Critique and approval/denial of research proposal.

2. Hold regular committee meetings, at least twice per year.
3. Attend the thesis/dissertation defense and approve/deny the degree to the program COGS.
4. All members of the supervising committee are expected to participate in the final oral examination.
  - a. *(Approved at GFC November 10, 2017)*
5. Members are also expected to provide feedback to the student on the dissertation.
6. Provide guidance to the student as needed and requested by the student and/or mentor.

#### B. Recommendations to COGS

1. Results of the defense of the student's research proposal.
2. If the proposal is successful, recommendation for admission to candidacy.
3. Successful defense of the thesis/dissertation and recommendation for the designated degree, if appropriate.

### **Article 9. Rules of Procedure**

Robert's Rules of Order (Newly Revised) shall govern the conduct of all meetings.

### **Article 10. Amendments**

These Bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the GFC present, provided that the proposed amendment is submitted in writing to all member of the Assembly at least thirty days prior to such a meeting. Amendments may be proposed by Council resolution or by two thirds majority.

### **Article 11. Approval of Bylaws**

The provisions of this instrument shall become effective upon its adoption by the majority vote of the current Graduate Faculty.