



## **THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES POLICY ON PHD ADVISORS AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES**

Dated: 1-26-2022

Supersedes: Ph.D. Advisory Committee Policy, dated February 2020

Last review: 1-26-2022

### **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for the establishment of Advisors and Advisory Committees for Ph.D. students enrolled in the Graduate School of Basic Medical Sciences (GSBMS) at the New York Medical College (NYMC) doctorate programs and describe major roles of Advisors and Committee Members.

### **II. POLICY**

The Academic and Dissertation Advisors and Advisory Committees monitor the progress of the Ph.D. student, provide guidance, offer frequent formative assessment and valuable constructive feedback, and assure successful completion of the program requirements in a timely manner. They prepare progress reports, which form part of the documentary basis for decisions of retention or dismissal from the program. The Advisory Committee should serve as a mediator in case of disagreements between the student and their Dissertation Advisor. Students are also encouraged to seek additional advice from other faculty on a one-on-one basis, as applicable to their scientific and professional goals.

### **III. SCOPE**

This policy applies to all Ph.D. students, Academic, Dissertation and Rotation Advisors, Program Directors of the Ph.D. programs offered by the GSBMS, as well as members of Academic Advisory Committees.

### **IV. PROCEDURE**

- A. First-year Advisors for the Integrated Ph.D. Program (IPP) students:

1. **The IPP Steering Committee** is comprised of Ph.D. Program Directors, M.D./Ph.D. Program Director, Assistant Dean for Ph.D. Programs, and the Dean of GSBMS. Program Directors are appointed by the Department Chair in consultation with and the approval of the Dean.
  2. The **first-year Academic Advisor**, who is a member of IPP steering committee, is assigned by the Dean of GSBMS to each student entering the Ph.D. program. The major responsibilities of the first-year Academic Advisor are to:
    - a. Provide guidance to the student regarding GSBMS regulations and procedures.
    - b. Advise the student on course and rotation selection.
    - c. Monitor the student's performance and progress in the program.
  3. The first-year Academic Advisor shall meet with the student three times during the first year: (1) before the beginning of the academic year in August, (2) before the beginning of Spring semester in December, and (3) upon the completion of the student's last rotation in August. Additional meetings can be scheduled as needed. After each meeting, the first-year Academic Advisor prepares and submits to the GSBMS Dean's office a written progress report (see Appendix I). This report should consist of an evaluation of the student's academic performance and potential for continued success in the program based on:
    - a. Rotation evaluation forms completed by the Rotation Advisors (see PhD Research Rotation Policy).
    - b. Evaluation of the student's academic performance in the courses.
    - c. Other factors pertaining to the student's performance in the first year.
  4. The **Rotation Advisor** is a faculty member hosting a rotating student in their laboratory for the period of that rotation. The Rotation Advisor should guide the student's research activities and reading of relevant research literature. The first-year Academic Advisor should avoid becoming a Rotation Advisor to the extent possible.
- B. Advisors and the Advisory Committee for the second-year IPP students, and for first-year M.D./Ph.D. or Ph.D. students in Advanced Standing (AS):
1. Once the student has declared a program, the Principal Investigator of the research laboratory the student has entered becomes the student's **Dissertation Advisor**. Dissertation

Advisor must be a member of NYMC Graduate Faculty with mentor status. In case the student has not yet selected a Dissertation Advisor, the first-year Academic Advisor continues to serve on a temporary basis until the student finds a Dissertation Advisor. It is the responsibility of Dissertation Advisor to (see Literature Reviews and Theses Preparation Guidelines: Unabridged Version):

- a. Be aware of the GSBMS regulations, policies and procedures.
  - b. Help the student select and develop a research topic and guide the student in establishing a research methodology for the project.
  - c. Critically review research-in-progress and the student's progress in the program.
  - d. Provide guidance to the student with regard to preparation of the dissertation, critically review and provide constructive comments on drafts, supervise the completion of any final revisions recommended by the Dissertation Committee, or the Academic Standards Committee.
2. The Program Director for the specific program the student has entered becomes the **Academic Advisor**, with special emphasis on course selection and guidance related to GSBMS program requirements and procedures. This may be the same person as the first-year Academic Advisor.
  3. Within one month of the student joining the lab, the Dissertation Advisor and the student establish the **Academic Advisory Committee** in consultation with the Program Director. The Academic Advisory Committee should consist of three or four members of the NYMC Graduate Faculty. The Dissertation Advisor is not a member of the committee, but should be present at all meetings of the committee. The list of the committee members should be submitted to the GSBMS Dean's Office. Members of the Academic Advisory Committee can be also members of the Qualifying Examination committee (see the Graduate School of Basic Medical Sciences Policy on Qualifying Examination).
  4. The Academic Advisory Committee shall meet with the student at least once a year, and can be assembled at any time, if needed, to resolve any conflict or issues that arise during program completion by the student, and should serve as a mediator in case of disagreements between the student and the Dissertation Advisor. Thus, the Dissertation Advisor cannot be a member of this committee.

- a. At the first meeting, the Academic Advisory Committee shall elect a chair and review the report of the first-year Academic Advisor.
- b. During each meeting, the student shall present planned coursework, as well as a research plan and project progress.
- c. The Dissertation Advisor provides input to the committee about the student's accomplishments and areas that need strengthening or further development.
- d. Any issues, concerns or disputes raised by the student or the Dissertation Advisor should be submitted to the Academic Advisory Committee in writing in advance of the meeting.
- e. During each meeting, the Advisory Committee should ask the student to briefly exit the room to provide a forum to discuss the student's performance and any other issue with the Dissertation Advisor. Then, the committee should ask the Dissertation Advisor to briefly exit the room to discuss the performance of the Dissertation Advisor or any other issue.
- f. At the end of each meeting, the Academic Advisory Committee shall recommend actions for the next period and set a date for the next meeting. The committee can make recommendations to the IPP Steering Committee, the Academic Standards Committee and the Dean, regarding acceleration or delay of the Qualifying Exam, suggest additional coursework, provide guidance for the experimental work, and indicate when the student is ready to begin writing the dissertation.
- g. The chair of the committee shall prepare a written report (see Appendix I), which should be signed by all committee members. Copies of this report should be forwarded to the student, their Dissertation Advisor, and GSBMS Dean's office within a week after the meeting.

C. The Dissertation Advisory Committee:

1. Once the student is ready to present a dissertation proposal (usually at the end of year 3), the student and their Dissertation Advisor, in consultation with the Program Director, can modify the Academic Advisory Committee to form the **Dissertation Advisory Committee**. The Dissertation Advisory Committee should consist of 4-5 graduate NYMC faculty members from different programs/departments who

are selected based on their scientific expertise, which must be relevant to the student's dissertation project, rather than department/program affiliation. One external member who is not a part of NYMC or GSBMS faculty can be a member of the Dissertation Committee upon approval of the Dissertation Advisor and the Program Director. The updated list of the committee members should be submitted to the GSBMS Dean's Office. Role of the Dissertation Committee member (see Literature Reviews and Theses Preparation Guidelines: Unabridged Version) is to:

- a. Provide guidance to the student with regard to the proposed dissertation research project.
  - b. Approve the dissertation research proposal, when it is satisfactory, and any subsequent modifications.
  - c. Authorize the candidate to proceed with writing the dissertation.
  - d. Critically review the written dissertation and offer suggestions for improvement, if necessary.
  - e. Examine the candidate in an oral defense-of-dissertation exercise.
  - f. If necessary, serve as an advisory committee to the Dean on the candidate's progress.
2. The Dissertation Advisory Committee should meet at least two times per year (once in every semester) to ensure timely defense and graduation of the student. The committee should assess research progress and readiness of the student for dissertation writing and thesis defense. Periodic progress assessment reports are still required from the committee chair. The Dissertation Advisor should attend all meetings, receive all deliverables, but cannot be a voting member of the committee to avoid any potential conflict of interest. Once the student is ready to defend their dissertation, the Dissertation Advisory Committee will be the recipient of the student's final thesis.

## Policy Summary

Advisor/ Committee	When assigned	Assigned by	Membership	Meetings	Duties
<b>First-year Academic Advisor</b>	Prior to student's arrival	Dean in consultation with the IPP Steering Committee	Program Director or Member of Ph.D. Admissions Committee	3 times (August, December, August)	Course selection and rotation advisement; student evaluation; promotion to year 2
<b>Rotation Advisor</b>	Upon student's arrival	First-year Academic Advisor with approval of the Dean	Faculty members hosting a rotating student	Continuous during one rotation period	Set the goals of rotation; Supervise rotation activities in the lab; rotation evaluation
<b>Dissertation Advisor</b>	Beginning of year 2 (IPP); entry into program (AS, M.D./Ph.D.)	Decision of the student and Dissertation Advisor with approval of the Dean	Principal Investigator of the laboratory the student joins for dissertation research	Continuous until student's graduation	Supervise dissertation research and thesis preparation
<b>Advisory Committee</b>	September 1st year 2 (IPP); September 1st year 1 (advance standing, M.D./Ph.D.)	Proposed by student and the Dissertation Advisor with approval of the Program Director and the Dean	3-4 graduate faculty, excluding Dissertation Advisor	1 time annually (Fall or Spring)	General advisement, assessment of student progress, readiness for qualifying exam, thesis (fellowship) proposal, research forum
<b>Dissertation Advisory Committee</b>	When dissertation proposal is ready (usually end of year 3)	Proposed by student and the Dissertation Advisor with approval of the Dean	4-5 graduate faculty members, 1 external (non-NYMC) member (optional)	2 times annually (Fall, Spring or Summer)	Assess research progress, readiness for dissertation writing and defense

### V. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy is effective immediately.

### VI. POLICY MANAGEMENT

Executive Stakeholder: Dean, Graduate School of Basic Medical Sciences, and Assistant Dean for Ph.D. Programs

Oversight Office: Office of the Graduate School of Basic Medical Sciences, and Ph.D. Program Directors

APPENDIX I



**NEW YORK MEDICAL COLLEGE**

A MEMBER OF THE Touro College and University System

**Graduate School of Basic Medical Sciences**

**Ph.D. Student Advisory Committee Report**

Student Name:

Entry Cohort: 20

Category:  IPP  Adv. Stand.  M.D./Ph.D.

Program:  IPP First-year  
 Biochemistry  Cell Biology  Microbiology  
 Pathology  Pharmacology  Physiology

Date of report:

Advisory Committee (with signatures):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Invited participants:

Name Role (Rotation Advisor, Program Director, etc.)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

**I. Student performance for the prior period**

Please rate the student's performance for the prior period, providing narrative analysis and recommendations (if any) in the following sections. Explanations for "unsatisfactory" ratings and specific suggestions for "needs improvement" *must* be provided in Report Sections II A and B below.

Academic performance:  Satisfactory  Needs improvement  Unsatisfactory

Laboratory performance:  Satisfactory  Needs improvement  Unsatisfactory

**II. Performance in prior period (Narrative).**

A. *Academic performance in prior period.* Note any milestones achieved (qualifying exam, dissertation proposal, external fellowships, awards, etc.). Evaluate any noteworthy grades, presentations (journal clubs, in-class presentations, etc.), or examinations during this period – either positive or negative. Recommend any specific content areas or skills that the student needs to improve. Explain the basis of any "unsatisfactory" rating.

B. *Laboratory or research performance in prior period.* Evaluate the student's research rotation (first-year student) or pre-dissertation or dissertation research progress against the goals set for the rotation by the advisor or set for the period by the advisor and the committee. Recommend

any specific areas or skills that the student needs to improve. Explain the basis of any “unsatisfactory” rating.

C. *Other factors.* Discuss any other factors that should be considered in assessing the student’s progress.

**III. Goals for the upcoming period, specifying the period in question.**

A. *Academic goals.* Note any special coursework goals, such as repeating specific courses, achieving a specific GPA to rectify an academic deficiency, etc.). Note any milestones that should be achieved within the next period, such as attempting the qualifying exam, etc.

B. *Research goals.* Set goals for the upcoming period, in consultation with the Rotation Advisor or Dissertation Advisor. For rotations, the Rotation Advisor will generally set the goals (e.g., “the student should demonstrate that he/she can follow a mini-project through to a reasonable end-point”). Following rotations, period goals may be rather general but will likely become more specific as the dissertation project progresses towards completion. Goals such as “produce a thesis proposal” or “produce a draft of the dissertation” are legitimate period goals for the committee to set at the appropriate time.

C. Additional comments.

D. Planned date of next meeting.