Vision Science Graduate Program Handbook

2017 - 2018
Vision Science is a multidisciplinary field where basic scientists and clinicians focus on the discovery of new knowledge that will further our understanding of the eye and vision. This discovery includes virtually every scientific discipline where advances come from biologists, neuroscientists, optical engineers, epidemiologists, psychologists, optometrists, physicians and others.

The Vision Science Graduate Program at the University of Alabama at Birmingham provides comprehensive training for the next generation of leaders in vision science. Your decision to pursue graduate training in this program will place you at the center of one of the nations top biomedical research institutions and will immerse you in collaborative multidisciplinary research environment that is today's model for biomedical research leadership. Moreover, our training environment will present opportunities for creative career paths such as dual degree programs with business, law and public health that will allow you to position yourself for a career as unique as your individual talents and interests.

This student handbook is designed to be a key resource for program information that you should find useful throughout your graduate training. Please read this handbook carefully and if you have any questions or concerns, please let us know. Welcome to the Vision Science Graduate Program. Get ready to position yourself among the very best!

Michael Twa, OD, PhD
Director, Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies

Stefanie B. Varghese, PhD
Program Manager
# Table of Contents

Vision Science Graduate Program Welcome .............................................................................................. i

Vision Science Graduate Program Description and Procedures ................................................................. 1
  Graduate Student Advisors ......................................................................................................................... 1
  Courses ......................................................................................................................................................... 1
  Laboratory Rotations .................................................................................................................................. 2
  Non-Dissertation and Dissertation Research Credit ................................................................................... 2
  Annual Progress Assessments .................................................................................................................. 2
  Teaching Experience ..................................................................................................................................... 3
  Travel Funding Policy .................................................................................................................................. 3
  Dissertation (PhD) and Thesis (MS) Committees ....................................................................................... 3
  Requirements for Admission to Candidacy for VSGP PhD Students ....................................................... 4
  The Research Proposal ............................................................................................................................... 4
  Oral Qualifying Examination ..................................................................................................................... 5
  Dissertation and Thesis Requirements ....................................................................................................... 5
  PhD Student Financial Support ................................................................................................................ 7
  Disputes and Conflict Resolution ........................................................................................................... 7

The UAB Graduate School .......................................................................................................................... 9
  Responsibilities of the Graduate Assistant and Trainee .............................................................................. 9

Requirements for the Master’s Degree ........................................................................................................ 10
  Plan I or Plan II ........................................................................................................................................... 10
  Steps Toward Earning the Master’s Degree ............................................................................................... 10
  Admission Into Degree Candidacy (Plan I Only) ...................................................................................... 11
  IRB and IACUC Approval ........................................................................................................................... 11

Requirements for the Doctoral Degree ...................................................................................................... 11
  General Statement ..................................................................................................................................... 11
  Steps Toward Earning the Doctoral Degree ............................................................................................... 12
  Minimum Course Credit Requirements .................................................................................................... 12
  IRB and IACUC Approval .......................................................................................................................... 13
  Graduate Student Exit Survey ................................................................................................................ 13
  Academic Ethics and Conduct .................................................................................................................. 14
Vision Science Graduate Program Description and Procedures

The following program description establishes the program guidelines for graduate training in the Vision Science Graduate Program (VSGP) at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. These guidelines define the required program content and help insure that every student receives the best possible education and training. Nevertheless, it is recognized that each student is unique and that circumstances may require variances and individual accommodations to achieve the most effective education and training. Written requests for variance must be presented to the Program Manager and approved by the Program Director.

Graduate Student Advisors

The VSGP Director serves as the de facto advisor for new students and any current students not assigned to a Primary Advisor concerning course registration, requirements, electives, rotations and any other issues. Students should select a Primary Advisor with whom they wish to carry out their dissertation/thesis research by late spring or early summer of the first year. In exceptional circumstances, students who remain uncommitted to a Primary Advisor following three rotations may request permission from the VSGP director for a fourth rotation. Primary Advisors are selected by mutual consent of the student, prospective advisor, and VSGP program director. Primary Advisor appointments will consider research objectives, educational opportunities, and funding support.

Courses

Full-time enrollment for PhD and MS students is 9 hours. Part-time enrollment for students pursuing a Masters degree is 6 hours. All PhD students are expected to take and pass three GBS core courses (GBS 707 and 708) and all core Vision Science courses. All MS students are expected to take the core VS courses (VIS 743, 744, 745, and 756). Course and faculty evaluations will be distributed for each VS course and students are expected to provide their feedback within 48 hours of receipt of evaluation. Grades will be withheld if completed evaluations are not submitted. PhD Students are further required to take three upper level (700) graduate elective courses plus a course in statistics and ethics. Upper level courses are selected at the discretion of the student and their Primary Advisor. Courses offered by other graduate programs at UAB may be substituted for the upper level elective courses, if approved in advance by the Primary Advisor and Vision Science Program Director. Additional, elective courses should be discussed with the Primary Advisor and the Program Director.

To remain in good standing, students must maintain a B (3.0) or better grade point average and make satisfactory progress toward the degree, as described in the current VSGP handbook. Students who do not progress or fail to meet program standards will be reviewed by the Vision Science Graduate Program Committee.
Laboratory Rotations

In their first year, students will generally complete 3 laboratory rotations, each lasting approximately 10 weeks, before formally selecting a Primary Advisor. PhD students may select their Primary Advisor after completing 2 rotations; MS students may select an advisor after 1 complete rotation. During rotations, students are expected to work at least 20 hours a week in lab. Unless approved in advance, rotations must be in the laboratory of a faculty member of the Vision Science Graduate Program. Rotations are classified as non-dissertation/non-thesis research and will be graded as pass/fail courses. At the end of each rotation, the student and the faculty supervisor are required to submit a brief written evaluation for that rotation to the VSGP office. The faculty member and the student should discuss the evaluation and a written copy should be given to the student and to the VSGP office.

Non-Dissertation and Dissertation Research Credit

Students assigned to a Primary Advisor will register each semester for non-dissertation research until they are advanced to candidacy. The number of registered research credit hours each semester will be determined by agreement between the student and the advisor and will take into consideration the student’s current semester course load as well as the student’s research goals. Both dissertation and non-dissertation research hours will be graded pass/fail in the student's first year, and will be assigned in the second and subsequent years until the student reaches candidacy status. For full details concerning the VSGP policy regarding specific degree credit hour requirements, consult the current UAB Graduate School Handbook. The current UAB Graduate School Handbook is available here: http://www.uab.edu/graduate/images/acrobat/publications/UAB_Grad_Handbook.pdf

Annual Progress Assessments

Vision Science Graduate Program student progress will be reviewed two times per year. A summer meeting will be scheduled prior to Fall semester registration. This meeting will be focused on annual review of individual development plans prepared by the student and their Primary Advisor. Late in the Fall semester (preceding the Spring semester registration), VSGP student meetings will focus on completion of VSGP benchmarks and student accomplishments (e.g. awards, publications, etc.). If necessary, the Vision Science Graduate Program Committee will evaluate the progress of first year and uncommitted students. Progress assessment meetings for 2nd year and beyond students should include input from the student, Primary Advisor, Dissertation Committee (see Section 7) and the Graduate Program Director.
Teaching Experience

Teaching experience is an important component of graduate education and is a requirement for PhD students and optional, but encouraged for MS students. Before advancing to candidacy, each student is required to actively participate in teaching. This will generally involve assisting in lecture or laboratory courses offered by Vision Science faculty in graduate or professional programs. Students should work with the VSGP administrators for advice regarding specific teaching opportunities and their suitability for meeting program requirements. A list of teaching opportunities will be kept in the Vision Science Graduate Program office. After determining what opportunities are available, students will be responsible for contacting faculty members and asking to assist in a specific course. Some especially time-intensive or effort-intensive courses may require two assistants. The faculty member for whom the student serves as an assistant will notify the Program Manager upon the successful completion of the responsibilities as an assistant.

Travel Funding Policy

Listed below are the guidelines and general principles/priorities for graduate student travel to scientific meetings.

1. All VSGP students should apply for the UAB Graduate Student Government (GSG) travel grant (max award of $400/year). The application process opens every semester. Visit http://www.uab.edu/gsg/travel-grants for the GSG’s guidelines and procedures for applying for this travel grant.
2. Students are eligible for a number of competitive travel awards from many professional societies and organizations who are happy to recognize talent students. Students should work with their advisors and Vision Science Graduate Program office to identify possible travel awards that not only provide needed funds, but make a nice addition to the CV.
3. Students should speak with their advisors about travel support that they can provide as well as help identifying suitable travel fellowships.
4. VSGP support will be limited to $750 for poster or paper presentations for one meeting per year (e.g. SFN/ARVO, but not both). If the student travel fund allowance has been used for the fiscal year, other sources of support, e.g. the GSG, travel fellowships or advisor support should be sought.
5. If you, the student, have exhausted other possible sources of support and require assistance, contact the Vision Science Graduate Program office to discuss further options.

Dissertation (PhD) and Thesis (MS) Committees

The Dissertation/Thesis Committee should be formed as early as possible after the selection of a Primary Advisor and the identification of the research project. The PhD Committee will consist of the Primary
Advisor and four or five other faculty members, at least one of who should be from outside the School of Optometry. Committees for MS students will consist of the Primary Advisor and at least 2 other faculty members, one from outside the School of Optometry. Potential external committee members who do not hold current UAB graduate school faculty appointments, e.g. faculty from other institutions, must be approved before they can be appointed to a students committee. Requests for ad hoc appointments should be initiated through the VSGP Program Administrator. The student and the Primary Advisor will consult with the Program Director prior to seeking formal approval of proposed committee members. The student will submit a formal request for committee members to the Program Manager. A Chairman of the Committee, who is not the Primary Advisor, may be selected by the student and Primary Advisor to preside over committee meetings.

Requirements for Admission to Candidacy for VSGP PhD Students

The procedure for admission to candidacy for PhD students in the Vision Science Graduate Program (VSGP) is listed below. It consists of two parts: (1) completion of a written research proposal and (2) an oral qualifying exam in which the student must demonstrate a satisfactory level of general scientific knowledge and understanding of the research proposal topic. Students are expected to demonstrate their ability to write, think, design, and defend a solid research proposal in the area related to their research interests.

The Research Proposal

The student must choose between an NIH-style research proposal (R01 or K-award) or a fellowship proposal (described below). The student’s choice requires verification of approval from both the student’s Primary Advisor and the director of the Vision Science Graduate Program.

Written research proposal format options:

1. An NIH R01 or K-style research proposal in current NIH grant format (e.g. 12 pages, 1/2 inch margins, single spaced 11 pt Arial font, etc.), on the topic of the student’s intended dissertation research project.

   OR

2. A written National Research Service Award (NRSA)-style fellowship or equivalent research application on the topic of the student’s intended dissertation research project. This should be done after consultation with the student’s Primary Advisor to determine the appropriate fellowship format for the student and lab. The student’s Primary Advisor is strongly encouraged to contact the appropriate funding agency to review eligibility prior to approving the choice of a fellowship application. Students writing a fellowship application are encouraged to submit the application to NIH or other funding organizations for consideration for an independent fellowship award. The UAB Graduate School provides incentives to fellowship applicants and supplements the stipend of each successful awardee.
Note: The Primary Advisor is not required to have an active NIH grant in order for a student to apply for an NRSA pre-doctoral fellowship. The Primary Advisor should have a track record of prior successful graduate training, track record of prior funding, and a solid publication record. In the absence of an active grant, evidence of adequate internal funding and pending grants may be all that is needed.

**Oral Qualifying Examination**

The written research proposal must be distributed to the student’s PhD committee at least 10 business days before the Qualifying Exam.

The oral qualifying exam should be scheduled for no less than 2 hours. The student will orally summarize the research proposal and the committee will ask the student questions about the proposal, about his/her research area to determine if the student has achieved an appropriate level of general scientific knowledge, competence within their specific discipline and command of relevant background literature needed to proceed with the dissertation research.

The qualifying exam should be completed by August at the beginning of the third year to enable Fall-term admission to candidacy; consult the UAB Graduate School website for administrative deadline dates for the current term. In extenuating circumstances, the research proposal can be completed by December of the third year for Spring-term admission to candidacy.

**Dissertation and Thesis Requirements**

In consultation with the Primary Advisor and the members of the Dissertation Committee, students will prepare a dissertation (PhD) or thesis (MS) at the conclusion of their research training. The dissertation or thesis will conform to the format approved by the UAB Graduate School. Instructions for preparing the dissertation are available from the program office, the UAB Graduate School, or the Graduate School website at [http://www.uab.edu/graduate/images/acrobat/forms/theses/FormatManual.pdf](http://www.uab.edu/graduate/images/acrobat/forms/theses/FormatManual.pdf). Effective for the entering class of 2013, all enrolled Ph.D. students are required to have at least one accepted peer-reviewed scientific publication related to the dissertation research prior to graduation.

Students are expected to complete and successfully defend their dissertation in a timely fashion, which in general will be by the end of the fifth year. Students in their second year or beyond of enrollment in an accredited graduate program at UAB or at another university and who transfer to the Vision Science Graduate Program in order to work with a specific Primary Advisor may, with the agreement of the Primary Advisor, request a variance from the above guidelines.

**Scheduling the Defense:** When the dissertation has been completed, the student will request that the Graduate Program Administrator schedule the Dissertation Defense to be conducted on a day and time agreed to by the Dissertation Committee. There is a series of actions that must be completed before the
dissertation defense can be scheduled and a list of the current requirements is attached to this document.

**Dissertation/ Thesis Review and Defense Postponement:** The student will deliver copies of the dissertation or thesis to the Committee members no less than two weeks (14 calendar days) before the defense. Members of the Committee may request changes in the dissertation or Thesis and the student will, if possible, incorporate those changes into the document before the date of the scheduled defense. If a simple majority of the Committee identifies significant faults or inadequacies in the document, the Committee may send a written recommendation to the Program Director that the defense be postponed. In the event that the Committee is deadlocked concerning the advisability of a postponement, the Program Director will meet with the student and the Committee before making a final decision. The student, the Dissertation or Thesis Committee members, and the Program Director will meet four weeks after this determination to re-evaluate the status and make further recommendations.

**Defense Procedures:** The dissertation or thesis defense will include an oral presentation of the student’s research to the Committee, the Program Director, and any other students, faculty, staff, or members of the general public who choose to attend. Immediately following the oral presentation, the student will meet with the Committee and the Program Director, if he or she chooses to attend, in private session. In this meeting, the student will respond orally to questions posed by the Committee and the Program Director. At the end of the meeting, the student will be asked to leave the room and the Committee and the Program Director will discuss the student’s written and oral presentation and reach a consensus concerning the student’s dissertation/thesis, presentation, and satisfaction of the program’s research conduct requirements. The student will then be called back into the room and informed of the Committee’s evaluation. The Committee’s decision will be recorded in writing and forwarded by the committee chair to the Program Director’s office.

**No Consensus to Pass:** If one or two committee members choose not to approve the dissertation/thesis the Committee Chair will follow the process described in the UAB Graduate School Handbook. In such cases, the Primary Advisor should notify the Program Director, discuss the Committee decision with the Program Director and discuss any recommended alternatives that may include additional research, document revisions, specific remediation, alternative terminal degree plans, etc.

**Approval:** The committee may approve the dissertation/thesis without changes. This decision is most common when the student and Primary Advisor have actively engaged the Committee members throughout the student’s research activities.

It is the student’s responsibility to be aware of the schedule established by the Graduate School for submission of the completed dissertation/thesis to the Graduate School Office. The student will be responsible for making any changes or corrections required by the Committee and the Graduate School. Once the Graduate School has accepted the dissertation/thesis, the student will provide copies to the Program Director and each Committee member.
PhD Student Financial Support

The Vision Science Graduate Program will provide financial support (stipend, tuition and fees, hospital insurance coverage) for students during their first year, unless students have access to funding from other sources. In the absence of alternative means of support, the Primary Advisor is expected to provide this financial support once the student has joined the laboratory.

Students who qualify are encouraged to submit applications for extramural pre-doctoral fellowships. In addition, students and their Primary Advisors are encouraged to apply for fellowships that may be available through training grants or the Program. The Program Director will assist students and their advisors in identifying, and applying for, alternative sources of support.

If a student is unable or unwilling to continue to train in a particular laboratory, or if a Primary Advisor is no longer willing to train or support a particular student, the Primary Advisor will be expected to continue to support the student until the student is able to identify another Primary Advisor. This period of continued support will last no more than 1 semester following written notification of the situation to the Program Director. If, by the end of that semester, the student is unable to identify a Primary Advisor who is willing or able to mentor the student, the Director and the Vision Science Graduate Program Committee will review the situation. In such cases, the Program may assume support for the student while the student continues to try to identify a new Primary Advisor. Alternatively, this situation may serve as cause for the loss of financial support.

Disputes and Conflict Resolution

Although rare, disagreements can arise that may affect a student’s progress towards the completion of the degree. The parties involved in such a dispute should make a good faith effort to discuss and resolve the disagreement. The following guidelines may be helpful.

Step 1. Identify the problem; clearly define what happened and what you perceive is needed to resolve the issue.

Step 2. Approach the other person or group involved with the dispute one-on-one. Set up a mutually agreeable time to talk; listen and ask to be listened to; use "I" statements when speaking; avoid assigning blame or leveling accusations.

Step 3. If these steps do not culminate in a resolution, the parties involved with the dispute should agree to approach an impartial third party, a mediator, who will respect confidentiality and with whom the situation can be discussed. The Program Director will suggest such a third party if asked. The mediator may be able to help the parties involved reach a resolution.
If notified and requested in writing, the Director and the Vision Science Graduate Committee will meet to consider and discuss any problems within 14 calendar days following receipt of the written request. In the event that a quorum of the Committee is not available within this time period, the Committee will meet as soon thereafter as a quorum can be gathered. The Committee may also ask the parties in the dispute to appear before the committee to provide additional information.

The result of the Committee’s deliberations will be communicated in writing to the parties involved in the dispute within seven (7) calendar days after the meeting.

If a party involved in the dispute is not satisfied with the outcome of the arbitration process, an appeal may be submitted to the Graduate School Appeals Board. Please see Graduate School website for specific information about the appeals process.
The UAB Graduate School

*From the Graduate School Handbook:* “The Graduate School administers doctoral programs in 38 areas, post-masters education specialist programs in 8 areas, and master’s level programs in 50 areas, with additional programs planned for the future. A particular strength of the school is its many programs that unite different disciplines by crossing departmental and school lines.”

The UAB Graduate School Handbook is the governing document for students in the Vision Science Graduate Program. The VSGP standards may exceed standards documented in the UAB Graduate School Handbook, but may not be lower than these documented standards. Wherever explicit standards for the VSGP program are not specified, students should refer to the relevant section of the UAB Graduate School Handbook for guidance, e.g. *Minimum Course Credit Requirements.*

Several other university-wide policies apply to graduate students and are included in the UAB Graduate School handbook. These include additional policies concerning health care for international students and visiting international scholars, AIDS and AIDS-related conditions, a drug-free workplace, alcoholic beverage use, smoking, electronic data processing security, and computer software use. Copies of these policies are available in the Graduate School office, and on the UAB Policies and Procedures Library Web site (http://sppublic.ad.uab.edu/policies/Pages/policylistname.aspx?pAN=A).

The following sections from the UAB Graduate School Handbook are for convenient reference and any questions or concerns should be addressed by consulting the full document: [http://www.uab.edu/graduate/images/acrobat/publications/UAB_Grad_Handbook.pdf](http://www.uab.edu/graduate/images/acrobat/publications/UAB_Grad_Handbook.pdf) as well as the VSGP program administrators.

**Responsibilities of the Graduate Assistant and Trainee**

A fundamental responsibility of the graduate assistant is to work closely with the faculty supervisor in carrying out research or teaching activities, while at the same time making good progress toward the completion of the degree program. If the student’s assistantship responsibilities and academic program are properly coordinated, these responsibilities will be compatible. The assistant should articulate his or her goals early in the term of appointment and work with the supervisor to achieve them. The graduate assistant is obligated at all times to maintain high ethical standards in academic and nonacademic activities, and to report violations of these to the faculty supervisor. The graduate assistant should stay well informed of departmental, school, and institutional regulations, and follow them consistently. If problems arise in the assistantship assignments, the graduate assistant should seek help first from the faculty supervisor. If problems cannot be resolved, the student should consult the Program Director.

In general, graduate assistants are expected to be available in the periods between academic terms. Graduate assistants are entitled to the following short-term leaves:

- A maximum of 15 calendar days (one-half month) paid leave of absence (vacation) per calendar year,
• 3 calendar days paid sick leave of absence per calendar year, and
• Parental leave of absence (with pay) of 30 consecutive days per calendar year upon the birth or adoption of a child. Either or both parents are eligible for parental leave.

These leaves (vacation, sick, parental) do not accrue. All leaves must be requested and require approval by the mentor and graduate program director. With the agreement of the mentor and graduate program director, extended, unpaid, non-emergency absences from campus for periods up to a month may be approved. Extended absences (without pay) for non-academic purposes should be limited. Program policies regarding leaves of absence must apply equitably to all full time students in good standing in the program. Students should consult the Graduate School Policies and Procedures concerning leaves of academic absence. In emergencies, graduate assistants should inform their mentors or program directors as soon as possible about the need for a leave of academic absence.

NOTE: Graduate students (Trainees and Assistants) are not eligible for FMLA.

Requirements for the Master’s Degree

Plan I or Plan II
The Graduate School recognizes two principal paths, known as Plan I and Plan II, that lead to the master’s degree. One or the other of these plans may be appropriate in particular circumstances, and in some programs a choice is available. [The Plan II Master’s degree is not an option in the VSGP].

Plan I requires the completion, in good academic standing, of at least 24 semester hours of appropriate graduate work and 6 semester hours of thesis research, with the presentation of an acceptable thesis embodying the results of original research work.

Steps Toward Earning the Master’s Degree
• Admission to master’s degree program
• Selection of faculty advisor
• Maintenance of good standing
• Appointment of graduate study committee—Plan I (Thesis) only
• IRB and/or IACUC approvals obtained and renewed annually
• Admission to candidacy—at least one semester before graduation is expected—Plan I (Thesis) only
• Application for Degree—See http://www.uab.edu/graduate/deadline-dates for each semester’s deadline
• Production of preliminary version of thesis (Plan I only)
• Defense of thesis (for Plan I only) (see http://www.uab.edu/graduate/deadline-dates)
• One PDF of the defended committee-approved thesis (Plan I only) submitted online no later than 2 weeks (10 business days) after the published public defense deadline
• Recommendation for degree
• Conferring of degree
Admission Into Degree Candidacy (Plan I Only)
Admission to candidacy is a formal step recommended by the student’s graduate study committee and approved by the graduate program director and the Graduate School Dean, acknowledging that the student has been performing well and is likely to complete the degree. For Plan I students, admission should occur when the student has obtained an adequate background (although not all coursework needs to be complete) and has provided the committee with an acceptable proposal for thesis research. Students must be in good academic standing to be eligible for admission to candidacy, and admission must take place no later than one semester before the expected graduation. Before being admitted to candidacy, students must complete a Research Compliance Verification form and attach photocopies of the appropriate assurance letters and/or forms. Students must be admitted to candidacy before they can register for thesis research hours (i.e., 699). Forms are available online at http://www.uab.edu/graduate/online-forms.

IRB and IACUC Approval
If the research involves human or animal subjects, approval from the IRB or IACUC must be documented before admission to candidacy can be approved and IRB/IACUC approvals must be kept current until the research is completed. For ways in which students can be added to a protocol, refer to the Tip Sheet for Students Involved in Research Involving Human or Animal Subjects located on pages 54 and 55 of this Handbook. The IACUC form must display the appropriate research protocol number.

Requirements for the Doctoral Degree

General Statement
The doctoral degree is granted in recognition of (1) scholarly proficiency and (2) distinctive achievement in a specific field of an academic discipline. The first component is demonstrated by successful completion of advanced coursework (of both a didactic and an unstructured nature) and by adequate performance on the comprehensive examination. Traditionally, the student demonstrates the second component by independently performing original research. In certain doctoral programs, performing a major project may be acceptable even though it may not consist of traditional research. However, in all programs, with the exception of DPT and DNP, a dissertation presenting the results of the student’s independent study is required.

The Graduate School also recognizes professional doctorates awarded in preparation for the autonomous practice of a profession. Professional doctorates are accredited programs of study usually designed to prepare students for the delivery of clinical services or to assume specific types of administrative responsibilities. Students in professional doctorate programs must demonstrate competence in clinical practice and/or scholarship but are not required to conduct and defend original independent research. In lieu of a dissertation, students in programs designated as professional doctorate programs are required to demonstrate that they are capable of evaluating existing research, applying it to their professional practice, and expanding the body of knowledge on which their
professional practice is based. This requirement is often met by the design and completion of a research or scholarly project submitted in writing and presented formally before the faculty in the program.

Steps Toward Earning the Doctoral Degree
- Admission to doctoral degree program
- Selection of faculty advisor
- Maintenance of good standing
- Appointment of graduate study committee
- Passing of comprehensive examination
- IRB and/or IACUC approvals obtained and renewed annually
- Admission to candidacy—no later than two semesters before expected graduation
- Application for degree—See http://www.uab.edu/graduate/deadline-dates for each semester’s deadline
- Draft of preliminary version of dissertation
- Review of the draft by committee members
- Revisions made to dissertation in response to committee feedback
- Defense of dissertation (see http://www.uab.edu/graduate/deadline-dates)
- A PDF of the defended committee-approved dissertation to UAB/ProQuest submission website—no later than 2 weeks (10 business days) following the published deadline date for the public defense
- Recommendation for degree
- Conferring of the doctoral degree

Minimum Course Credit Requirements
The Graduate School has minimum course credit requirements for students in doctoral programs. Program requirements for course work may exceed the Graduate School minimums. Graduate School minimum requirements are as follows:

1. If entering with a baccalaureate degree:
   a. Completion of 48 credit hours of course work prior to candidacy
   b. Up to 16 credits of the 48 can be as non-dissertation research credits
   c. Up to 10 credits can be as lab rotation, seminar, or directed study credits
   d. Doctoral students must satisfy one of the following:
      • Must complete at least two semesters in candidacy and accumulate at least 24 semester credit hours in 799 dissertation research. OR
      • Must complete at least two semesters as a student in candidacy and have accumulated at least 12 semester credit hours in 799 dissertation research, AND, either during or before candidacy, 12 semester credit hours in other appropriate research-based coursework, which has been approved by the graduate student’s program. Courses
which have been previously applied toward meeting the requirements of another degree are not eligible to satisfy the research credit requirement. The student’s graduate department or program should provide a course planning curriculum worksheet detailing the courses taken which are intended to be used toward meeting degree requirements along with the student’s application for degree.

2. If entering with a previous Masters degree appropriate to the doctoral degree field (Also applies to previously earned M.S., D.V.M., D.M.D., D.D.S., etc.):

   a. Completion of 27 credit hours of course work prior to candidacy

   b. Up to 6 credits of the 27 can be as non-dissertation research credits

   c. Up to 6 credits can be as lab rotation, seminar, or directed study credits

   d. Doctoral students must satisfy one of the following:

      • Must complete at least two semesters in candidacy and accumulate at least 24 semester credit hours in 799 dissertation research. OR

      • Must complete at least two semesters as a student in candidacy and have accumulated at least 12 semester credit hours in 799 dissertation research, AND, either during or before candidacy, 12 semester credit hours in other appropriate research-based coursework, which has been approved by the graduate student’s program. Courses which have been previously applied toward meeting the requirements of another degree are not eligible to satisfy the research credit requirement. The student’s graduate department/program should provide a course planning curriculum worksheet detailing the courses taken which are intended to be used toward meeting degree requirements along with the student’s application for degree.

Up to 12 credits of course work that have not been applied toward meeting the requirements for an earned degree taken at UAB or other institutions may be used to satisfy these course credit requirements upon approval of the graduate program director and the Graduate School Dean.

**IRB and IACUC Approval**

If the research involves human or animal subjects, approval from IRB or IACUC must be documented before admission to candidacy can be approved and IRB/IACUC approvals must be kept current until the research is completed. For ways in which students can be added to a protocol, refer to the Tip Sheet for Students Involved in Research Involving Human or Animal Subjects located on pages 54 and 55 of this Handbook. The IACUC form must display the appropriate research protocol number.

**Graduate Student Exit Survey**

Doctoral graduates are required to take the Graduate School Exit Survey as part of graduation requirements. Collecting important information and feedback from graduate students will help to
improve the quality of graduate program offerings. After submission of the revised version of the student’s final dissertation, he/she will be contacted via email and provided the secure link to take the electronic survey.

**Academic Ethics and Conduct**

As a graduate student at UAB, you have joined a distinguished academic community that is guided by a conviction in the worth of knowledge and its pursuit. By virtue of your membership in this community, you accrue many benefits—among them, access to the ideas and materials of others. Graduate students not only learn from others but also engage in the pursuit of new knowledge and, in some instances, teach or provide service to others. Being a member of an academic community and functioning in multiple roles in the community carries with it certain responsibilities. For this reason, we provide guidance here in the forms of both general standards of conduct and university policies.

As members of an academic community, students, faculty, and administrators share a responsibility to seek truths and communicate them to others. As we pursue knowledge and encourage learning, we acknowledge the need for a free exchange of ideas and recognize the importance of listening to and maintaining respect for the views of others. We must always aspire to learn, apply, and communicate to others the best scholarly standards of the disciplines in which we are involved. High scholarly standards demand high ethical standards. We must commit to learning and communicating the best ethical standards and their application to our disciplines. In interactions with others, we must demonstrate respect for them as individuals, give credit for significant academic or scholarly assistance, and respect the confidential nature of some exchanges. We must adhere to the highest standards of academic conduct, avoiding those acts of misconduct and dishonesty that undermine the purposes of the academic community.

All UAB students are expected to be familiar with the UAB Academic Honor Code as well as any honor codes that are specific to their schools or disciplines. The code represents a commitment to integrity in the academic community and a respect for an individual’s educational endeavors:

> I have read and, by choosing to become a member of the UAB academic community, accept the UAB Honor Code. I understand that violation of this code will result in penalties as severe as expulsion from the university. I promise and confirm that I will not, at any time and under any circumstances, involve myself with abetting, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, or misrepresentation while enrolled as a student at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

**Academic Integrity — Honor Code**

The University of Alabama at Birmingham expects all members of its academic community to function according to the highest ethical and professional standards. Students, faculty, and administration of the institution must be involved to ensure this quality of academic conduct.
Academic misconduct undermines the purpose of education. Such behavior is a serious violation of the trust that must exist among faculty and students for a university to nurture intellectual growth and development. Academic misconduct can generally be defined as all acts of dishonesty in an academic or related matter. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following categories of behavior:

ABETTING: helping another student commit an act of academic dishonesty. Allowing others to copy your quiz answers, or use your work as their own are examples of abetting.

CHEATING: use or attempted use of unauthorized materials, information, study aids, the answers of others, or computer-related information.

PLAGIARISM: claiming as your own the ideas, words, data, computer programs, creative compositions, artwork, etc., done by someone else. Examples include improper citation of referenced works, use of commercially available scholarly papers, failure to cite sources, and copying others’ ideas.

FABRICATION: presenting as genuine falsified data, citations, or quotations.

MISREPRESENTATION: falsification, alteration or misstatement of the contents of documents, academic work, or other materials related to academic matters, including representing work substantially done for one class as work done for another without receiving prior approval from the instructor. Misrepresentation also includes misrepresenting schedules, prerequisites, transcripts, or other academic records.

A student who commits an act of academic misconduct within the context of meeting course requirements will be given the grade of F in the course or on the assignment at the discretion of the department or program in which the misconduct occurred. Academic misconduct can occur in other contexts as well, such as when taking comprehensive examinations, performing research, preparing manuscripts or generally during the performance of other activities related to the process of satisfying degree requirements. Under Graduate School policy the program in which the student is enrolled may choose to expel the student from the university on the first offense. If, as determined by the records of the Graduate School or the department or program, the act of academic misconduct is a second offense, the student will be expelled from the university. The transcript of a student expelled for committing academic misconduct will bear the statement “Expelled for Academic Misconduct.” Withdrawal from a course while a possible violation of the Academic Honor Code is under review will not preclude the assignment of a course grade that appropriately reflects the student’s performance prior to withdrawal if the violation is substantiated.

Procedure for Reporting a Suspected Violation
When a faculty member or another student sees cause to charge a student with academic misconduct, within 7 days of noting the incident that individual will communicate the charge to the department chair or program director of the department or program in which the accused student is enrolled. The department chair or program director to whom the charge is presented will notify the student of the charge and provide the student with an opportunity to respond. If the student can respond in a way that, in the opinion of the program director and the department chair, either dispels the charge or
provides the opportunity to resolve the issue informally, an informal resolution can be prescribed. If the student cannot refute the charge effectively, the department chair or program director will expeditiously notify the student of the administrative action to be taken. The notice shall also inform the student of the right to appeal and the steps involved in that process. Copies of any such communication will be provided to the academic dean of the school in which the student is enrolled.

If the school or department in which the student is enrolled has its own honor code, then the procedures of that honor code must be followed, including any prescribed appeals process. For dual degree students whose academic misconduct occurs in one of their two schools, the honor code of the school in which the infraction occurred should prevail.

However, if no local honor code exists, the following procedure must be followed.

Right to Appeal and Formation of an Honor Council
If a student is the subject of an administrative action as the result of an academic misconduct violation and wishes to contest that administrative action, he/she may appeal in writing to the dean of the school in which the student is enrolled. The dean will then convene an Honor Council consisting of five students and three faculty members from various departments within the school. All of the students chosen to serve must be in good academic standing.

The Honor Council shall elect a chairperson from among the eight members. The Chair may be either a student or faculty member. The duties of the Chair include convening the Honor Council, presiding over hearings and communicating with the administration of their school on behalf of the Honor Council. In all matters, the members of the Honor Council are instructed to treat the information put forward to them with the strictest confidence. Breaches of confidentiality are themselves violations of the Student Honor Code and will be treated as such.

Initial Procedures
After being informed of the charges and the failure to reach an informal resolution, the Academic Dean may also attempt to informally resolve the impasse between the student and the faculty member(s). In the event this attempt is unsuccessful, the Academic Dean shall refer the allegation(s) to the Honor Council. The Academic Dean will provide the Honor Council with a statement of the allegation(s) against the accused student, a description of the evidence and supporting documents (if available). The Honor Council shall convene to review the charge and all evidence supporting it. After review, the Council may either dismiss the allegation(s) on the grounds that insufficient substantiating evidence exists, or support the charges, also based on the evidence. The Honor Council shall provide notice of the specific charge or of the dismissal of the alleged violation to the accused student by certified mail, return receipt requested, or by hand delivery, and to the Academic Dean. If substantiated, the statement of the charge shall include a brief summary of the alleged violation and the evidence presented in support of the charge, in enough detail as to allow the accused the opportunity to rebut the charge, and shall provide notification to the accused student of his/her right to a hearing. The accused student must respond to the charge within five days, unless excused by the Honor Council. In his/her written response to the
Honor Council, the accused student must admit or deny the charge and must formally request or waive his/her right to a hearing before the Honor Council.

Once notice of the specific charge has been provided to the accused student and to the Academic Dean, the Honor Council shall decide on a time for the hearing and any preliminary deadline(s) for the submission of supporting documents and the names of proposed witnesses. Granting a request from the accused, or from the School, to reschedule the hearing is within the discretion of the Honor Council, but shall not be unreasonably denied. The Honor Council shall provide written notice to the accused student of the time and place for the hearing, and if witnesses are to be called in his/her defense, ask the student to provide their names along with a statement describing the testimony of each witness. The Honor Council shall review any documentary evidence provided by the student in advance of the hearing.

The Hearing
The process shall generally include the following: (1) call to order by the Chair; (2) introduction of those present; (3) statement of the Charge and possible penalties if the charge is proven; (4) statement of the evidence and testimony in support of the charge, and questioning of witnesses; (5) statement of evidence and testimony in opposition to the charge (rebuttal), and questioning of witnesses; (6) closing statement. All questioning of witnesses shall be by the Honor Council unless the Honor Council shall decide otherwise.

A hearing before the Honor Council shall not be bound by formal rules of evidence or judicial rules of procedure. The Honor Council may hear any testimony or receive any supporting evidence that it deems to be pertinent to the charge. Both the accused and a representative of the School may be present throughout the hearing. The accused student shall be afforded a reasonable opportunity to be heard, to question witnesses indirectly through the Honor Council, to rebut adverse evidence, and to make a brief closing statement. Members of the Honor Council may ask any questions at any time during the hearing and may elect to disallow or to curtail testimony that the Honor Council determines to be unnecessarily redundant or not relevant to the issue(s) being heard. Throughout the hearing, all persons present shall conduct themselves in an orderly manner.

The accused may be accompanied at the hearing by an advisor of his/her choosing, however, the advisor may not participate in the hearing. The Honor Council shall be responsible for the conduct of the hearing at all times and shall keep a record of the proceedings in a format it chooses. Hearings before the Honor Council are confidential proceedings and only those persons determined by the Honor Council to have a need to be present shall be included. Except for the accused (and an advisor if invited by the accused) and the representative of the School, all other witnesses shall be excluded from the hearing room, except when testifying. No more than one witness shall be called to testify at a time. The School or the Honor Council may elect to invite UAB Security to be present at an Honor Council hearing.

As soon as practicable following the conclusion of the hearing, the Honor Council shall meet in private session to consider all of the evidence presented, and shall decide on one of two outcomes. The decision
of the Honor Council shall be that the charge is either (1) proven by a preponderance of the evidence or (2) not proven by a preponderance of the evidence. A vote of six of the eight members shall be required for the charge against the accused to be proven. Following the vote, the Honor Council shall record the vote and shall provide a brief narrative statement explaining the rationale for their finding(s). The written decision and rationale of the Honor Council shall be transmitted to the Academic Dean, by internal communication, upon the conclusion of the Honor Council's deliberations. The Honor Council shall notify the accused of the outcome by certified mail, return receipt requested, or by hand delivery. A decision of the Honor Council in favor of the accused student shall conclude the case.

**Penalties for Violation of the Honor Code**

Generally, a first violation of the Honor Code shall result in the assignment of a failing grade in the assignment or in the course in which the violation occurred, at the discretion of the instructor. A notation on the student’s permanent academic record may also be made to indicate that a reduced or failing grade was assigned because of an Academic Misconduct violation (e.g., "F, Academic Misconduct violation, June 15, 2006"), on the judgment of the Honor Council. A second violation of the Honor Code shall result in expulsion from the University. No student may graduate until pending allegations of an Academic misconduct violation have been resolved. No student expelled from the Graduate School because of an academic misconduct violation shall be eligible for readmission.

If at the end of the appeals process performed at the school level, the accused student wishes to appeal to the Graduate School Appeals Board, he/she must follow the procedure outlined in this Handbook. Upon receipt of the appeal from the student, the Graduate Dean will request from the Academic Dean of the school in which the student is enrolled all appropriate documentation accumulated to that point. The Graduate Dean will then be responsible for maintaining records of all additional proceedings.

**Nonacademic Conduct**

The university is a community of scholars and learners; therefore, all participants are expected to maintain conduct that (1) facilitates the institution’s pursuit of its educational objectives, (2) exhibits a regard for the rights of other members of the academic community, and (3) contributes to the maintenance of a healthy learning environment. Through appropriate due process procedures, conduct action will be taken in response to behavior that violates these principles. The office of Non-Academic Student Conduct supports the mission of the university by protecting the rights of all members of the university community and by promoting civility, integrity, responsibility, openness, mutual respect and justice by enforcing community standards. A more detailed description of nonacademic misconduct can be found in the student handbook, Direction. It is the student’s responsibility to be fully aware of the policies and procedures described in Direction. The Office of Student Life and the Vice Provost for Student and Faculty Success have the responsibility for coordinating policies and procedures regarding students’ nonacademic misconduct.
Faculty, staff, and students of a university create, disseminate, and apply knowledge for the benefit of society. When faculty of the university are involved in research, some of which may be of a proprietary nature, particular care must be taken to ensure that the need for graduate students to publicly present and publicly defend the results of their thesis or dissertation research is not compromised. Graduate student advisors, graduate program directors, and graduate students themselves, therefore, share in the responsibility to ensure that graduate students are well informed if they become involved in thesis or dissertation research that is, or has the potential to become, proprietary if participation in that research will delay completion of their degree requirements or negatively affect their productivity or future employability. Students must be made aware of the implications of performing thesis or dissertation work of a proprietary nature. For example, will that work delay time to degree, or will it have a potential negative effect on obtaining a postdoctoral position or an employment opportunity? In cases where the thesis or dissertation work has intellectual property implications, adherence to university policies on intellectual property is required.

It is the policy of the Graduate School that a faculty member or a graduate student should not enter into an agreement that prevents or significantly delays the presentation or publication of research results unless the delay is required for proprietary reasons. Students and their advisors can embargo the release of the contents of a thesis or dissertation by both the UAB library and ProQuest UMI for up to two years to provide time to resolve intellectual property considerations or prior publication issues. If, however, a decision is made to embargo a student’s thesis or dissertation, or delay publication of work described therein, these decisions should not delay the student’s time to completion of his/her degree requirements.

In instances where, despite good faith efforts on the part of the graduate student advisor, the graduate program director, and the graduate student, a dispute arises regarding the release or publication of a graduate student’s thesis or dissertation research, the Graduate School Dean must be notified. The Graduate School Dean will immediately convene a meeting of the graduate student, the graduate advisor, the involved graduate program director, and members of the student’s thesis or dissertation committee. This group, in consultation with the Vice President for Research and/or the Executive Director of the Research Foundation, will resolve the problem.

If the situation cannot be resolved through the efforts of this group, a ruling will be made by the Senior Vice President and Dean, School of Medicine; the Vice President for Research and Economic Development; or the Provost.
The previous version of this policy was adapted from a statement on "The Maintenance of High Ethical Standards in the Conduct of Research" (1982) published by the Executive Council of the Association of American Medical Colleges. The current version, while based on the 1997 version, has been modified to conform to the Public Health Service Policies on Research Misconduct: Final Rule, 42 CFR Parts 50 and 93, published May 17, 2005 in the Federal Register. This policy is broad in scope and addresses, as the title states, “ethical standards in research and other scholarly activities.”

**Introduction**

The maintenance of high ethical standards in research and scholarly activities is paramount to ensuring the success of UAB’s mission and demonstrates UAB’s values in action. Validity and accuracy in performing, recording, and reporting research and other scholarly activities are intrinsically essential to the process for discovery of new knowledge; dishonesty in these endeavors runs counter to the very nature of research and scholarly activities, that is, the pursuit of truth and public trust.

It is in the best interest of the public and of academic institutions to prevent misconduct in research and scholarly activities and to deal effectively and responsibly with instances in which misconduct is suspected. This policy supports these fundamental values and reinforces the expectations of UAB community members as expressed in the UAB Enterprise Code of Conduct.

**Definitions**

For purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- **Allegation** – A disclosure of possible Research Misconduct through any means of communication.

- **Assessment** – A review to determine if the Allegation states a potential claim of Research Misconduct, as defined by this policy, and if the Allegation is sufficiently credible and specific to identify possible evidence of Research Misconduct.

- **Fabrication** – Making up data or results and recording or reporting them.

- **Falsification** – Manipulating Research materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the Research is not accurately represented in the Research record.

- **Inquiry** – A process conducted by a committee involving information gathering and initial fact finding to determine whether an Allegation of Research Misconduct requires further review and to determine the Respondent(s).

- **Investigation** – A formal examination and evaluation of facts conducted by a committee for the purpose of determining if Research Misconduct has occurred and, if Misconduct is established, to identify the person(s) responsible.

- **Plagiarism** – Appropriation of another person’s ideas, processes, results, or words, without giving appropriate credit.


**Reports** – Work product, including but not limited to, manuscripts submitted for publication, publications or presentations, abstracts submitted for presentations at meetings, summaries of Research or other deliverables to Research sponsors, and any internal Research summaries, publications or presentations.

**Research** – A systematic experiment, study, evaluation, demonstration, survey, or other scholarly work designed to develop or contribute to general knowledge or specific knowledge.

**Research Misconduct** – Fabrication, Falsification or Plagiarism in proposing, recording, performing or reviewing Research, or in reporting Research results.

**Respondent** – the individual against whom an Allegation of Research Misconduct is directed or who is the subject of a Research Misconduct proceeding.

**Policy Statement**

1. UAB shall accept as employees only those individuals whose career activities clearly demonstrate the highest ethical standards. To this end, the relevant credentials of all potential employees are to be thoroughly examined by the appropriate department/unit heads or their representatives in order to verify the claimed accomplishments of the candidate. The responsible department/unit heads or their representatives shall seek further confirmation of the candidate's accomplishments during the normal procedures of personal interviews and letters from references. Proof of faculty credentials shall be maintained by the responsible dean or department head in accordance with appropriate records retention policies and schedules.

2. Faculty members and any individuals who supervise colleagues, fellows, technicians, staff, or students are expected to provide them with appropriate guidance and counsel to maintain the highest professional and ethical standards.

3. The UAB academic and research community is encouraged to promote individual awareness of the importance of maintaining high ethical standards in Research and scholarly activities and to discuss issues related to Research ethics in formal courses, in seminars, and by other informal means.

4. Results of Research and scholarly activities should be supported by verifiable evidence. Faculty and staff should maintain sufficient records or other documentation of their studies for at least six years following the most recent use of such records or information contained in such records. It is the responsibility of senior investigators and scholars to develop among junior colleagues and trainees the necessary respect for careful recording and preservation of primary data.

5. The UAB research and academic community is encouraged to engage in free discussion of results, to share data and techniques, and to avoid secrecy in the conduct of scholarly activities, provided such free discussion and sharing are consistent with the proper protection of intellectual property. It should be remembered that independent confirmation of results is important in direct proportion to the potential significance of the results in question and may be crucial to the establishment of new concepts.
6. Faculty members are responsible for the quality of all Reports based on their own efforts or on the collaborative work of students, technicians, or colleagues, especially those which bear the faculty member’s name. The same standards of scientific integrity apply to abstracts as to full-length publications. Abstracts or other Reports of preliminary findings should indicate clearly that the findings are preliminary. Any Report of Research results must include the name of at least one faculty member, employee, or trainee who assumes full professional and ethical responsibility for the contents of the Report. Each contributor to the Report must assume full responsibility for their own contributions to the Report. UAB supports the practice of explicitly describing the role(s) of each contributor in the conduct of the project and preparation of resulting Report(s).

7. Any faculty member, employee, or trainee who has reason to suspect any other faculty member, employee, or trainee of Research Misconduct with regard to the conduct or reporting of Research has the responsibility of following up these suspicions in accordance with the procedures outlined below.

8. Research Misconduct does not include honest error or honest differences of opinion. Intentionally withholding information relevant to the review of Research Misconduct, intentionally pressuring others to do so, or bringing malicious charges against another individual shall be considered a violation of this policy and the UAB Enterprise Code of Conduct. Additionally, any act of interference, retaliation or coercion by a UAB employee against a faculty member, employee, or trainee for using this policy is prohibited and is also a violation of this policy and the UAB Enterprise Code of Conduct.

9. A finding of Research Misconduct requires that: 1) there is a significant departure from accepted practices of the relevant Research or scholarly community; 2) the Research Misconduct is committed intentionally, or knowingly or recklessly; and 3) the alleged Research Misconduct is proven by a preponderance of the evidence. If the initial Inquiry or the subsequent Investigation indicates that the Allegations are unsubstantiated, UAB will make diligent efforts to restore the reputation of those accused at UAB with any involved funding agencies and elsewhere.

10. Allegations of this nature are very serious matters, and all parties involved should take measures to assure that the positions and reputations of all individuals named in such Allegations and all individuals who in good faith report apparent Research Misconduct are protected. Details of the charge, the name of the accused, the identity of the complainant, and all other information about the case shall be kept confidential as far as possible, compatible with investigating the case. Revealing confidential information to those not involved in the review shall itself be considered a violation of this policy and the UAB Enterprise Code of Conduct.

11. Because UAB is interested in protecting the health and safety of research subjects, students, staff, and faculty and because UAB is responsible for protecting sponsored research resources, if the situation warrants it, interim administrative action may be taken prior to conclusion of either the Inquiry or the Investigation to provide protection for individuals and resources in accordance with existing UAB policy. Such action includes, but is not limited to, administrative suspension; re-assignment of student(s); involvement of the Institutional Review Board, the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, the University Compliance Office, and the Office of Internal Audit-UAB; or notification of external sponsors when required by federal regulations.
12. In the event that a respondent is employed by UAB and another organization, UAB may share information with such employees of the other organization as it deems appropriate and employees from such organization may also participate in the process set forth in this Policy as UAB deems appropriate.

Procedures To Be Followed

Reporting Allegations of Research Misconduct

It is the responsibility of faculty, employees, and trainees who become aware of Research Misconduct to report such Research Misconduct to one of the following: (a) their department/unit head, (b) the dean of the school in which their department/unit is located, (c) the UAB Research Integrity Officer (RIO), or (d) the UAB Ethics Matters Hotline. In the case of graduate students or of trainees at any level, such evidence also may be reported to a faculty mentor or the Dean of the Graduate School. Those individuals receiving such Allegations or evidence of Research Misconduct must immediately report to the UAB RIO. The RIO will report the Allegation to the Dean of the unit in which the alleged Research Misconduct occurred and to the Provost. In the event that there are Allegations against a Dean or other member of senior leadership, the RIO will consult with the Office of Counsel regarding the appropriate reporting line.

Assessment

In consultation with the Dean and the Provost, or other appropriate responsible official, the RIO will conduct or direct a preliminary Assessment of the information presented. The purpose of the preliminary Assessment is to determine if the Allegation states a potential claim of Research Misconduct, as defined by this policy, and if the Allegation is sufficiently credible and specific to identify possible evidence of Research Misconduct. If these criteria are met, the RIO will inform the appropriate department/unit head and the Office of Counsel and will initiate an Inquiry. Reporting Allegations to the department/unit head in advance of the preliminary Assessment will be at the discretion of the Dean.

Inquiry

1. If, as a result of the Assessment, an Inquiry is deemed necessary, the RIO will prepare a written summary of Allegations for the suspected individual (respondent), if named or known, which will be delivered in a manner sensitive to the confidentiality of the process. At the time the summary of the Allegations of Research Misconduct is delivered to the respondent, i.e., the accused party, records thought to be relevant to the Allegation(s) will be sequestered by the RIO or his/her designee. Such records will be inventoried and, thereafter, access to the originals or copies will be provided, to the respondent or his/her designee, as may be necessary. Original records will be retained by the RIO for the duration of the Inquiry/Investigation.

2. In consultation with the Dean(s), the RIO shall appoint a committee of faculty members to investigate the charges through an Inquiry process, including interviews with the individual making the Allegation (complainant, if known), the respondent (if one is known), and such other individuals deemed necessary to determine whether the Allegation warrants an Investigation. The RIO will appoint the committee chair. The Inquiry Committee will usually be comprised of at
least three members with relevant expertise who, preferably, do not hold primary academic appointments in the department of the respondent. To ensure that necessary expertise is available to the Inquiry Committee, advice may be sought from appropriate individuals outside the Committee and University. The RIO shall consult with the Dean, the proposed members of the Committee, and the respondent in order to ensure that a real or apparent conflict of interest does not exist between the Committee members and the complainant, or the Committee members and the respondent. The decision of the RIO regarding an alleged conflict of interest shall be final.

3. UAB will endeavor to complete the Inquiry within 60 days of its initiation. If the Inquiry extends beyond 60 days, the reasons for the extension will be documented by the UAB RIO and will be retained with the record of the Inquiry.

4. The RIO shall keep the Dean or department/unit head and the Office of Counsel informed during the Inquiry process, and the Office of Counsel shall provide advice concerning procedural matters.

5. The written report of the Inquiry shall state what evidence was reviewed, shall summarize the relevant interviews, and shall include the conclusions of the Inquiry and the basis for its recommendation. The respondent(s) shall be given a copy of the Inquiry report and shall have up to 14 calendar days to make written comment regarding the report. This report, including a conclusion as to whether there is reasonable cause to believe that Research Misconduct has occurred, shall be forwarded to the Provost (with a copy to the UAB RIO) through the appropriate dean who should make whatever comment or recommendation is deemed warranted.

6. The Provost, with the advice and counsel of the RIO and others, as appropriate, shall decide whether to close the matter following the Inquiry or whether sufficient basis exists to proceed with an Investigation.

**Investigation**

1. The RIO, in consultation with the Provost and others, as necessary, will initiate a formal Investigation and appoint an Investigation Committee within 30 days of the completion of the Inquiry. The written report of the Inquiry will be made available to the Investigation Committee.

2. The RIO shall appoint a chair of the Committee. The Investigation Committee will usually be comprised of at least five members who, if possible, do not hold primary faculty appointments in the department of the respondent(s) and were not part of the Inquiry proceeding. The RIO shall consult with the Provost, the proposed members of the committee, and the respondent to ensure that a real or apparent conflict of interest does not exist between the Committee members and the complainant, or the Committee members and the respondent. The decision of the RIO regarding an alleged conflict of interest shall be final.

3. If applicable, upon initiation of an Investigation, the RIO will notify the appropriate oversight agency or body, for example, the Office of Research Integrity, in accordance with federal regulations and in consultation with the Provost. Appropriate funding agencies or journals shall be notified if it is ascertained during the Inquiry or Investigation that the potential Research
Misconduct constitutes an immediate health hazard or, if such notification is necessary to protect the interests of the persons making the Allegations, the individuals who are the subject of the Allegations, or any co-investigators and associates, or, if it is likely that the alleged incident is going to be publicly reported or if there is a likelihood that a criminal violation has occurred.

4. The chairperson shall conduct meetings of the Investigation Committee as frequently as required in order to determine whether or not the activities alleged in the charge constitute Research Misconduct, and, if so, to identify the individual(s) responsible. During the course of the Investigation, new charges and/or different respondents may be identified and the Investigation may be modified accordingly. If additional Research data are thought to be relevant to the Investigation, they may be sequestered and access to the originals or copies will be provided, as may be necessary.

5. The respondent(s) will be given a written summary of the charge(s) and access to supporting evidence, and will be afforded an opportunity to appear before the Committee to comment on Allegations. The respondent may be accompanied by an advisor of his or her choosing, but the advisor may not participate in the proceeding or address the Committee. The Committee will base its findings and conclusions on a preponderance of the evidence considered.

6. All meetings and deliberations of the Investigation Committee shall be held in confidence. The RIO and/or his or her designee(s) and a representative of the Office of Counsel may be present at meetings for technical assistance and to provide guidance and advice as to process. The Committee may call upon persons with technical expertise for assistance in the review of data or in the investigative process, as necessary. Technical expertise may be sought from within or outside the University, at the discretion of the Committee. If persons called to meet with the Committee are unable to meet face-to-face, interviews may occur by other means. Interviews of persons appearing before the committee in formal session, whether in person or remotely, will be recorded and transcribed. In some instances, one or more members of the Committee may be authorized to conduct an interview on behalf of the entire Committee.

7. The Committee will endeavor to complete its review and report for submission to the President within 120 days of being charged with its task. This time period includes 30 days for the respondent to provide a written response to the report (see below). In the event that a case takes longer to resolve, the RIO will request, if required, extensions from the appropriate oversight agency or body, for example the Office of Research Integrity for PHS-funded research.

8. A copy of the Committee’s report will be provided to the respondent, who will have up to 30 calendar days to provide a written response, if desired. Such response will be included as an appendix to the report submitted to the President. A respondent found by the Investigation Committee to have committed Research Misconduct will also have 30 calendar days to submit a written appeal of the findings and conclusion(s) of the Committee to the President. An individual found by the Investigation Committee to have committed Research Misconduct may or may not be the respondent identified in the original Allegation.

9. The President, based on the Investigation Committee’s findings and responses to those findings, shall determine what actions are appropriate; such actions may include discharge from employment at UAB or, in the case of a student, expulsion from UAB. The President will notify
the UAB RIO who in turn will work with the appropriate UAB offices to notify any sponsors supporting the Research in question and any journals or other publications which may have been affected by the publication of results of that Research. The President’s decision is final.

10. If applicable, the UAB RIO shall submit the report of the Investigation to the appropriate federal oversight agency, e.g., the federal Office of Research Integrity, and shall include in that report the policies and procedures under which the Investigation was conducted, how and from whom information was obtained relevant to the Investigation, the findings of the Investigation, and the basis of the findings. Also included will be a description of any sanctions taken by UAB and the actual text of, or an accurate summary of, the views of any individual(s) found to have engaged in Research Misconduct.