

Protocol 1023 Thesis Laboratory Placement Protocol

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Protocol

Students enter thesis laboratories of their choosing in their first year. Placements are made with the consent of the faculty and final approval by the Dean. Students are expected to develop and execute a research project that addresses a significant biological question to satisfy the requirements of a Ph.D. degree in their thesis laboratories.

Students base their decisions for thesis laboratories on the following factors:

- 1) Research interest. Module courses, faculty talks about their lab's research to the first-year class, and rotation experiences are opportunities for the student to be exposed to the research topics being explored in faculty laboratories.
- 2) Learning style. Students are exposed to aspects of a faculty's mentoring style and scientific focus during the module courses and rotation experiences. They are encouraged to select a faculty whose mentoring style matches their learning style.

The Dean acts to ensure that faculty is able to provide a successful environment for crafting and completing the thesis.

Process

Standard Admission Students

Faculty accept GSSIMR students into their laboratories for their thesis work beginning in the summer term of their first year based on the following factors:

- 1) Budget. GSSIMR provides funding support for a student for the first four terms of thesis research. The faculty's budget must be sufficient to support a student for the remainder of their thesis research.
- 2) Fit. The student has demonstrated an adequate fit with the lab environment.

Standard admission students will use the first week of thesis research lab time in the summer term to acclimate to the lab, to prepare and refine the rotation presentation, and participate in orientation activities hosted by the lab. Students may not have access to lab drives the first week.

Prior to the start of rotations, the Dean determines the eligibility of laboratories to host students. This determination is made based on an assessment of the following three factors:

- 1) Budget. Prior to confirmation of rotations, principal investigators will confirm to the Associate Dean for Administration that their lab's budget will be sufficient to support a student for thesis research (if the principal investigator and a student mutually agree on a thesis lab placement).

- 2) Space and Resources. The Dean's assessment on this factor is based on conversations with the faculty.
- 3) Overall Performance as a GSSIMR Faculty Member. This determination is influenced by the following factors: failure to adequately advance current students in the lab toward program completion; evidence of not fulfilling duties of a thesis advisor; failure to perform duties of a GSSIMR faculty member; or behavior by the faculty that is contrary to GSSIMR policies and environment.

Students

During each of their three rotations, students should fully engage in the laboratory experience, including following direction from the faculty, attending meetings, and focusing on successfully completing a small project. They should consider their research interest and faculty's mentoring styles to assist them with selecting a lab for thesis research.

Before or during the eighth week of the third rotation, by the date specified in the academic calendar for that year, students must do the following:

- 1) Select a host lab for thesis research. Meet with the host lab's principal investigator to express interest. Determine if the principal investigator consents to the placement. If the placement is agreed upon, the process continues. If the placement is not agreed upon, the student repeats this step until a host thesis lab placement is determined. The student may consult with the Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs and/or the Dean.
- 2) Email the Associate Dean for Administration to confirm the host lab placement for thesis research.
- 3) Contact (in person, if possible) the principal investigators of the other rotation labs to let them know which lab was chosen for thesis research.
- 4) Wait for the Dean's approval of the thesis lab placement.

Faculty

During students' rotation lab experiences, faculty should assess a student's fit with the lab environment.

When considering a thesis lab placement, faculty complete the following steps in the timeframe and order that makes the most sense for the situation:

- Meet with the interested student to discuss their interest in the lab for thesis research.
- Assess their budget to determine if it is sufficient to support a student for thesis research. GSSIMR provides funding support for a student for the first four terms of thesis research. The faculty's budget must be sufficient to support a student for the remainder of their thesis research. If there is any question about the sufficiency of the budget, the faculty consults with the SIMR Finance Department or Dean, as appropriate.
- Consider the space and resources available in the lab to determine if the lab can accommodate a student for thesis research.

If a faculty completes the steps above and decides to consider accepting a student for thesis research, they will do the following:

- 1) By the end of the fourth week of the third rotation (or another date announced in advance by the Associate Dean for Administration), email the Associate Dean for Administration with the maximum number of students they could support and would accept for thesis research.
- 2) Wait for budget confirmation from Finance.

If a faculty completes the steps above, receives budget confirmation from Finance, and decides to accept a student for thesis research, they will do the following before or during the eighth week of the third rotation, by the date specified in the academic calendar for that year::

- 1) Confirm the thesis lab placement with the student.
- 2) Email the Associate Dean for Administration to confirm their willingness to accept the student for a thesis placement.

SIMR Finance Department

- 1) By the start of the fifth week of the third rotation, receive a report from the Associate Dean for Administration that lists the labs and the maximum number of students each lab would accept for thesis research.
- 2) Run budget projections to confirm funds in lab budgets to support a student for thesis research.
- 3) In the fifth or sixth week of the third rotation, provide budget projection confirmation to the Associate Dean for Administration.

GSSIMR Staff

The Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs is available throughout the thesis lab selection process to provide guidance and assistance to students, faculty, and other staff members.

Associate Dean for Administration:

- 1) Receive emails from faculty with the maximum number of students they could support and would accept for thesis research.
- 2) Notify Finance of the labs and maximum number of students each lab could support and would accept for thesis research.
- 3) Receive budget projection confirmation from Finance; communicate budget projection confirmation to Dean and individual faculty.
- 4) Receive emails from students with their thesis lab selections.
- 5) Receive emails from faculty to confirm thesis lab placements.
- 6) After discussion with the Dean, confirm the thesis lab placement with the student and faculty.
- 7) Make arrangements with SIMR administrative and scientific departments for the student to join the lab for thesis research.

Dean:

As noted above, the Dean will assess the acceptability of each proposed placement, based on the following criteria:

- 1) Budget.
- 2) Space and Resources.
- 3) Overall Performance as a GSSIMR Faculty Member.

Should any of these three criteria suggest that a given placement might not be in the best interest of the student or GSSIMR, the Dean should consult directly with the faculty. The purpose of that meeting is to explore opportunities to address significant concerns. Following that conversation, the Dean will take one of the following actions:

- 1) If the Dean approves of a desired thesis lab placement, they notify the Associate Dean for Administration who informs the student and faculty.
- 2) If the Dean does not approve of a desired thesis lab placement, they consult with the faculty, GSSIMR president, and/or SIMR scientific director, as appropriate, to attempt to resolve the situation. If a desired placement is not approved, the Dean meets with the student.
- 3) If the desired placement is not approved after the Dean's attempts to resolve a situation, the Dean works with the Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs, GSSIMR president, SIMR scientific director, CFO, and/or SIMR chief scientific officer, as appropriate, to assist the student with finding a thesis lab placement.

Direct Admission Students

Direct admission students do not participate in laboratory rotations and are not placed in a thesis laboratory as described above. These students are directly admitted to the host PI lab for thesis research. They initiate their academic program at the beginning of either Summer or Fall term, complete the module course sequence, and then join the host lab without participating in rotations. Host PI labs cover the full costs of students directly admitted to their labs, including personal financial support and benefits, plus GSSIMR benefits such as relocation assistance, travel, laptops, etc., identical to that of all GSSIMR students.

For costs that are not direct billed to the lab, GSSIMR covers such costs up front and chargebacks to the host lab are invisible to students.

Thesis Laboratory Placement Changes for all Students

If a student in good standing elects to leave the host lab prior to the qualifying assessment, the host lab will cover personal financial support, benefits, and potential additional costs of two rotations. The new host lab will cover ongoing personal financial support, benefits, and additional costs, beginning at the time of placement in the lab for thesis research. After two rotations, if no lab chooses to host the student for thesis research, the student will have to leave the graduate program.

If a student in good standing elects to leave the host lab after the qualifying assessment, they will be eligible for the Master of Science degree in Biology. Protocol 1029 (Master's Degree) applies. If the student does not pursue the master's degree, they will have to leave the graduate program.

If a PI leaves their position at Stowers, Protocol 1024 (Faculty Member's Departure) applies.