

Graduate Student Mentor/Dissertation Advisor Designation Form Neuroscience Graduate Program

Name, a student in the Neuroscience Graduate Program, has indicated that **he/she** would like to pursue **his/her** doctorate research in your laboratory. We ask, that you as an advisor and faculty member of the Neuroscience Graduate program, be familiar with the program and Graduate College requirements. Those requirements, along with the mentoring and financial responsibilities involved are detailed in this document and are summarized as follows:

Mentoring responsibilities: Please read this document in its entirety so that you are aware of their student's academic requirements and can be supportive as the student work towards completing them.

Financial responsibilities: Please consider carefully the financial aspects of mentoring an NGP student. Details of those responsibilities are provided below. Briefly, student stipends and fees are paid in their entirety by the NGP for the first two years. Disbursement of these funds is handled by the NGP administrative office. Beginning with the student's third year, financial responsibility for stipends will be turned over to the student's home department. Administrative responsibility for distributing those funds will also move to the departments. The total costs associated with supporting your student based on current rates is \$30,275/year with an added 7.8% fringe benefit.

We ask you send an email to neurogp@uvm.edu acknowledging that both you and your departmental chair have received and understood this agreement.

If at any time you have questions or concerns, please reach out to the NGP Director: Tony Morielli, the NGP Assistant Director: Jom Hammack, or the NGP Administrator: Haley Olszewski.

Mentoring:

Below is a list of student requirements for doctoral training in the Neuroscience Graduate Program. A brief summary of your corresponding contributions as a mentor are highlighted in bold.

- To obtain a PhD, students must take 75 credits. 15 credits must be graded, a minimum of 30 credits need to be of didactic course work and a minimum of 20 credits of dissertation research. We also require a minimum of 6 selective credits; selectives are electives that are pre-approved by the program because they are clearly relevant to neuroscience. Given the broad scope of research interests in the NGP, courses not on the selectives list might also be useful in some cases. For more information on how to petition the program for courses to be recognized, please visit the NGP website tab named curriculum. Note that selectives can be taken past a student's second year. Therefore, when you and the student plan the courses that will best be suited for the student's research, please keep this flexibility in mind.
 - **Mentor responsibility: For the most part, the NGP tracking committee will ensure that the student meets their total credit requirements. However, mentors should advise students on taking specific selective courses that will best prepare them for their doctoral research.**
- Students must hold a GPA of 3.00 or higher to remain funded and to graduate.
 - **Mentor responsibility: The NGP tracking committee will monitor student grades. However, if a student is struggling in a course, the mentor can help by allowing a temporary reduction in research work load.**
- All Graduate students must pass a qualifying exam (comprehensive exam) in order to advance to candidacy. This exam typically occurs within the Fall Semester of the student's second year, but can extend through the Spring semester. The qualifying exam involves interrelated written and oral components. The student will prepare a dissertation proposal that reflects their anticipated doctoral research. The committee will assess the proposal based on its scientific coherence, general feasibility, and how well it is written. The oral portion of the exam will consist of questions from committee members on any scientific topic related to the student's NGP core curriculum course work or the dissertation proposal. Although the written portion of the exam is based on the student's anticipated dissertation project, this exam is not intended to focus exclusively on the dissertation proposal or to provide final approval of the proposal as the student's actual dissertation project. That will occur at the student's first dissertation committee meeting. A link to detailed exam guidelines can be found at:
https://www.uvm.edu/sites/default/files/media/QUALIFYING_EXAM_GUIDELINES.pdf
 - **Mentor responsibility: The hope is that by this stage the student will have a solid understanding of the research going on in your lab and how he/she will contribute to it going forward. Mentors are encouraged to provide guidance on developing specific aims and on the overall experimental approach. The written portion of the qualifying exam should be completed by the student, but some feedback from the mentor in the form of general editing suggestions is encouraged. The mentor does not serve on the examination committee.**

- Once a student advances to candidacy, a separate dissertation committee is formed. Students write and then defend their thesis proposal which becomes the framework for their dissertation work.
 - **Mentor responsibility: The mentor does serve on the dissertation committee. Because the thesis proposal reflects what the student will actually attempt to accomplish, it is critical that the mentor be closely involved with developing the ideas and ensuring that the scope, experimental approach and projected timelines are appropriate. The mentor is therefore encouraged to provide some feedback on the early drafts of the proposal, but feedback should be reduced as the proposal develops.**
- Starting in fall 2020, all students must complete teaching assignments in their first and second years. Those who entered the program prior to fall 2020 will teach in their second and third years. Teaching develops student knowledge of neuroscience and is required regardless of source of stipend support. Please be aware that teaching requires a 20 hour per week commitment. That still leaves ample time per week for research and/or other course requirements, assuming a typical 40-50 hour work week. Students sign up for research academic credit in NSCI 491 or GRAD 903. Each credit (research or course) assumes 3-4 hours of activity; thus a student signed up for 9 hours of 491 or 903 is expected to perform 27- 36 hours of research associated with that academic credit. (When they are supported as a GRA, there is then an additional 20 hours/week compensated effort in research associated with the GRA support, but as a GTA that additional 20 hours/week is in teaching.
 - **Mentor responsibility: Mentors can help by directing the students towards aspects of their research that have time flexibility (e.g. immunofluorescence) and by reminding them that even while teaching there is still plenty of time to be productive in the lab.**
- The NGP Student Journal Club is required of NGP students each semester. The student led seminar series meets Wednesdays at noon. At the seminar recent papers in neuroscience literature are presented by graduate students. Students are expected to review the chosen articles before class and participate in discussion. Journal Club develops professional skills in critical assessment and oral presentation of findings. Journal Club also develops scientific writing skills by requiring graduate students not presenting the paper of the week to write a summary paragraph outlining the strengths and weaknesses of the chosen paper. Students presenting papers work closely with peer mentors as well as faculty mentors to develop professional presentation skills necessary for a career in science. We highly encourage NGP faculty to attend and participate.
 - **Mentor responsibility: Please plan to attend your student's presentation. Doing so is a great way to show your support, provide encouragement and give feedback to hone your student's presentation skills. Please also consider coming to other presentations. The students do notice and clearly appreciate the effort.**
- To ensure all students in the NGP are making satisfactory progress, student progress will be monitored by a Tracking Committee composed of three faculty members and the Director. All records of student exams, committee meetings, courses taken and annual Individual Development Plans (IDPs) will be kept in a secure folder. The tracking committee will review

and report on student progress at the end of the fall and spring semesters to the Director. The Director will communicate the findings of the Tracking Committee to the student and their mentors and, if required, recommend corrective measures.

- **Mentor responsibility: It can be easy to lose track of how long a student has been in the lab. In the end, you are in the best position to know how your student's doctoral research is progressing. Please be mindful of whether your student seems to be on track for defending her/his dissertation somewhere close to the median time to completion of 5.5 years.**

Funding:

During their first two years in the program, student stipends, tuition remission, and health insurance premium are paid in their entirety by the NGP. Disbursement of these funds is handled by the NGP administrative office. Students are required to pay their own fees.

Beginning with the student's third year, financial responsibility for stipends will be turned over to the student's home department. Administrative responsibility for distributing those funds will also move to the departments.

- For students within the College of Medicine (COM): Through a revised FTARRS (Faculty Teaching and Research Reward System) formula, the departments of COM faculty mentoring doctoral students will receive approximately \$30,275/year for students entering labs of tenure-track faculty, of faculty supporting the student's stipends with extramural funds, or of faculty who have provided extramural funds for a stipend within the past two years. These funds are disbursed directly into the departmental budget and can be used to defer the cost of the student's stipend. These funds are expected to support the student's stipend when the faculty member does not have extramural resources for that support. *It is important to note that disbursement of these fees comes with a lag time of one year. Therefore, a given student will be "fronted" by the COM department for year three, but those funds will be recouped in the year after the student has left the program.*
- For students in departments outside of the COM or for COM faculty who do not meet the requirements for COM FTARRS support: Student stipends are anticipated to come from mentor grants or from the student's home department, for example in the form of a GRA or GTA. We ask that upon taking a new student (typically prior to the start of the student's second year) each mentor work in advance with their departmental chair and the NGP director to ensure that such funding will be available for the following year and beyond.
- Regardless of the lab or of the department, and regardless of the specific funding mechanism (PI grant, training grant, departmental funds), all students should be paid the same stipend (see below).
- The success of the program depends upon the ability of mentors or their departments to support the student's training. We ask that mentors notify their departmental chairs and the

and NGP director ***as far in advance as possible*** if it appears that funding for a student stipend might lapse so that alternative options for financial support can be identified. We make every effort to provide GTA funded teaching assignments, but their availability is limited and priority is given to the first and second year students. Please note that if a student receives support through GTAs beyond the first two years, the student is responsible for additional teaching, which is typically along the lines of 20 hours/week, with each semester of GTA work providing one semester of stipend support.

For your information, the **total costs** associated with supporting your student based on current rates are:

Stipend –\$30,275/year with an added 7.8% fringe benefit

Tuition – All GRA or GTA positions – regardless of funding source - come with a guarantee of 9 credits tuition scholarship per term and 5 additional credits in the summer for 12 month appointees. This scholarship is funded by the academic college/school in which the student's program resides; the transaction is made by the Graduate College. For the interdisciplinary NGP, this cost is shared by units participating in the program based on a percentage of total student credit hours in each unit. Thus, you (and your department) are not directly responsible for the student's tuition payment and your role in determining what a student takes is an academic one only. However, for students supported on extramural sources, we anticipate that the equivalent funds of 10 credits per year at the in-state rate be paid by the grant. That tuition funding is booked as revenue to the student's home college/school.

UVM student health insurance – 100% of the UVM health insurance premium is paid from the fringe rate associated with the stipend. The Graduate College handles all payments.

Fees – Students will be responsible for covering their own fees.

Continuous Registration: Your student must earn a total of 75 credits for a PhD. Based on your student's current plan of study, he/she must complete 75 credits before moving onto Continuous Registration. Tuition costs and fees are substantially less once students are on Continuous Registration, in effect providing the more advanced students a "raise".