

## BIOCHEMISTRY AND MEDICAL GENETICS: BMG Student Advisory Committee Roles and Formal Meetings

### COMPOSITION:

**MSc:** Minimum 3, including Advisor, Internal BMG Faculty, External BMG Faculty

**MSc GCP:** Minimum 3 but usually 4, including Advisor, Internal BMG Faculty, External BMG Faculty, Genetic Counsellor (Program Director ex officio)

**PhD:** (Minimum 4) including Advisor and one External BMG Faculty

**For all committees, the external advisor must have no affiliation with BMG (cross appointment or adjunct for example). Please note that Co-supervisors count as a single member of the committee.**

### ROLES:

#### ***Student Advisor:***

This individual is the main mentor for the student in their program of study. Student and Advisor must collectively complete the Advisor Student Guidelines *Advisor Student Guidelines*. The Advisor and Student are jointly responsible for setting deadlines and formulating "Action Plans" subsequent to committee meetings.

#### ***Student Advisory Committee (SAC):***

1. Monitor the student's program of study, academic and research progress, with regular and constructive feedback
2. Provide advice to the student on research or other relevant matters connected with their programs of study at formal or informal meetings;
3. Conduct a Fall BMG Review of the student's progress in time to file a report to the Chair of GSAC, by December 1st of each calendar year;
4. Conduct a formal Annual FGS Review of the student's progress in time to file a report to the FGS by June 1st of each calendar year;
5. Advisory committees are encouraged to meet at other times during the year, in addition to the two annual reviews, especially if the student or supervisor is encountering any difficulties.
6. Make recommendations regarding thesis examiners to the FGS;
7. Assist the student in ensuring fulfillment of thesis requirements in a timely manner and other University requirements regarding the minimum number of courses, time, residence, academic standing, and significance of the research in his/her field;
8. The student is expected to seek approval of the advisory committee before beginning to write his/her thesis;
9. Provide mentorship in scientific publications, and presentation of seminars, understanding the scope and standard of work expected, and setting professional and personal goals;
10. Identify gaps in analytical, problem solving, technical skills and/or knowledge, and recommend relevant teaching and/or remediation steps with an appropriate assessment (e.g. oral examination, oral presentation, written assignment) in which the student must demonstrate proficiency (GCP students see academic advising section in this handbook for details).

### **SAC FORMAL MEETINGS:**

All meetings are chaired by the Graduate Student Affairs Committee (GSAC) Chair (or designate), who facilitates a question and answer session subsequent to the student's presentation. Each committee member is expected to ask the student a series of questions, relevant to the focus of the meeting (see below) and complete the [BMG Internal Evaluation Form](#) to identify areas of perceived strengths and weaknesses that will be provided to the student. Students are responsible for scheduling the meetings, inviting a GSAC chair, completing the documentation required, and submitting the documents at least 7 days prior to the meeting to their committee and chair as per the [BMG Student Handbook](#).

**Fall BMG Review (1 Hour Annually):** Focuses on students' knowledge in research area (background, experimental design, significance) and in field/coursework. One week ahead, the committee will be emailed an academic progress report form, research progress form and the GCP Progress Report checklist along with the [BMG Internal Evaluation Form](#), which can be completed in advance of the meeting by each committee member. The committee is expected to identify areas of strength and areas of weakness in their knowledge base. There is a 5 minute oral presentation by the student without presentation software. Details can be found on page 23 of the [BMG Student Handbook](#). Questions can be related to their research area and/or BMG/genetic counselling in general. This review does not focus on progress on their thesis program itself.

**For GCP 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Fall Review:** The GCP coursework is designed to prepare the students to meet [ACGC Competencies](#) by the end of the program. It is appropriate for questions in this review to be relevant to the thesis, coursework and clinical practice. Questions should address knowledge that would be expected from a 2<sup>nd</sup> year GCP student, based on their current progress in the program. Common conditions for which the student will have experience could include Cystic fibrosis, Fragile X syndrome, FMR1 related disorders, Myotonic Dystrophy, aneuploidies, cancer genetics (breast, colon), among others disorders. Examiners may ask questions regarding the above disorders such as genetic heterogeneity, phenotype and clinical disease course, inheritance, most appropriate test and test limitations, recurrence risk, etc. If the student does not have a complete answer, it is appropriate for them to describe which information they would look into and the resources they would use, which reflects actual clinical practice. Sample certification exam questions can give the supervisors an idea of the knowledge expected to for new graduates to have (see ABGC [Sample Certification Examination Questions](#)), however it is important to note that the students in 2<sup>nd</sup> year in fall are still acquiring some of this knowledge.

**Spring FGS Review (90 Minutes Annually):** Focuses on student's research and academic plan. One week ahead, the committee will be emailed an academic progress report form, research progress form and the [BMG Internal Evaluation Form](#), which can be completed in advance of the meeting by each committee member. The student will give a 20 minute talk with presentation software followed by questions from the committee. Details on page 24 of the [BMG Student Handbook](#). Questions can be related to their research area and their academic plan (timelines, coursework, clinical work).

**Thesis Proposal (Once per program of study):** Focuses on the student's research design, understanding of their research area and their competence in formulating and presenting a proposal. Details on page 26 and 29 of the [BMG Student Handbook](#).

**Thesis Examination (once per program of study):** Details on pages 27-30 of the [BMG Student Handbook](#).