

Protocol 1023 Thesis Laboratory Placement Protocol

Protocol Number: 1023

Effective Date: 08/01/2017

Revised Dates: 12/04/17; 5/04/18; 01/12/21

Protocol

Predoctoral researchers enter thesis laboratories of their choosing in the summer term of the first year. Placements are made with the consent of the faculty and final approval by the Dean. Predoctoral researchers 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.

Predoctoral researchers 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 predoctoral researcher to be exposed to the research topics being explored in faculty laboratories.
- 2) Learning style. Predoctoral researchers 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.

Faculty accept GSSIMR predoctoral researchers into their laboratories for their thesis work based on the following factors:

- 1) Budget. The faculty's budget must be sufficient to support a predoctoral researcher for at least the first five terms (approximately 18 months) of thesis research, with the intent that the budget will be sufficient to support the predoctoral researcher for the entirety of their thesis research.
- 2) Fit. The predoctoral researcher has demonstrated an adequate fit with the lab environment.

The Dean acts to ensure that faculty is able to provide a successful environment for crafting and completing the thesis. Three to four months before the start of rotations, the Dean determines the eligibility of laboratories to host predoctoral researchers. This determination is made based on an assessment of the following three factors:

- 1) Budget. The Dean's determination is based upon a financial projection from the SIMR Finance Department for the first five terms of thesis research. For any laboratory deemed by the Finance Department to have insufficient resources, the Dean will contact the faculty to determine if there are contingency plans or extenuating circumstances that might allow the faculty to successfully support a predoctoral researcher's thesis endeavors.
- 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 predoctoral researchers 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.

Process

Predoctoral researchers

During each of their three rotations, predoctoral researchers 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.

By the end of the sixth week of the third rotation (or another date announced in advance by the Associate Dean for Administration), predoctoral researchers do the following:

- 1) Select a lab for thesis research. Meet with that lab's principal investigator or director to express interest. Determine if the principal investigator or director consents to the placement. If the placement is agreed upon, the process continues. If the placement is not agreed upon, the predoctoral researcher repeats this step until a thesis lab placement is determined. The predoctoral researcher may consult with the Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs and/or the Dean.
- 2) Email the Associate Dean for Administration to confirm the lab placement for thesis research.
- 3) Contact (in person, if possible) the principal investigators or directors 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 predoctoral researchers' rotation lab experiences, faculty should assess a predoctoral researcher'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 predoctoral researcher to discuss their interest in the lab for thesis research.
- Assess their budget to determine if it is sufficient to support a predoctoral researcher for the first five terms (approximately 18 months) of thesis research. (The intent is that their budget will be sufficient to support the predoctoral researcher for the entirety 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 predoctoral researcher for thesis research.

If a faculty completes the steps above and decides to accept a predoctoral researcher for thesis research, he/she will do the following by the end of the sixth week of the third rotation (or another date announced in advance by the Associate Dean for Administration):

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

SIMR Finance Department

- 1) Prior to rotation lab selections, the Finance Department provides the Dean's office with a report that places all labs in one of three categories:
 - a. Labs that *have* budgets that will be sufficient to support a predoctoral researcher for the first five terms (approximately 18 months) of thesis research.
 - b. Labs that *might have* budgets that will be sufficient to support a predoctoral researcher for the first five terms (approximately 18 months) of thesis research.
 - c. Labs that *do not have* budgets that will be sufficient to support a predoctoral researcher for the first five terms (approximately 18 months) of thesis research.

When preparing this report, the Finance Department takes into consideration a faculty's anticipated promotion, as well as the lab's monetary obligations, expected grant renewal(s), and turnover of personnel.

- 2) Early in the third rotation, the Finance Department reviews the report prepared previously and, if necessary, provides a revised report to the Dean.

GSSIMR Staff

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

Associate Dean for Administration:

- 1) Receive emails from predoctoral researchers with their thesis lab selections.
- 2) Receive emails from faculty to confirm thesis lab placements.
- 3) After discussion with the Dean, confirm the thesis lab placement with the predoctoral researcher and faculty.
- 4) Make arrangements with SIMR administrative and scientific departments for the predoctoral researcher 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 predoctoral researcher 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, he/she notifies the Associate Dean for Administration who informs the predoctoral researcher and faculty.
- 2) If the Dean does not approve of a desired thesis lab placement, he/she consults 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 predoctoral researcher.
- 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 president, as appropriate, to assist the predoctoral researcher with finding a thesis lab placement.