

## University of Miami Biology Department Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct has the purpose of helping to ensure a psychologically and physically safe environment in the Department of Biology at the University of Miami. We hope these “codes” allow everyone (faculty, graduate students, postdocs, and staff) to feel welcome, listened to, and part of the Biology community and team. By promoting a psychologically and physically safe environment, we aim to create an environment for everyone to be capable of fulfilling their own goals and fulfilling departmental expectations. This is a living document that should be continually improved by faculty, postdocs, students, and staff working together. This document uses the Expectation of Graduates Departments and Programs outlined by the University of Central Florida, as well as work done by the previous DEI committee of the Biology Graduate Student Association at UM. The resources used to build this document are shared at the end for all of us to have access [**Resources**].

\*Codes that refer to the whole department include faculty, graduate students, postdocs, and staff.

### Research

- The department will strive to provide resources (i.e., conference funding, invited speakers funds) and maintain facilities (i.e., molecular core, greenhouse, classrooms, and meeting rooms) that allow faculty, postdocs, and students to complete research promptly and productively.
- Faculty, postdocs, and students will exercise the highest integrity in all aspects of their work, especially in collecting, analyzing, and presenting research data.
- The department will provide appropriate guidelines for students to achieve their degree and for faculty to guide students in this process [**Resources**: Graduate Student Handbook].
  - Students will be provided with expected timetables to complete their degree, as well as the program requirements for completion of research projects and their dissertation defense.
  - Faculty will have a written document (i.e., lab agreement) outlining their lab’s, research, working hours/time off, meeting, and coauthorship expectations to be shared with prospective students and then discussed and signed by both the faculty and graduate student during the first semester [**Resources**: Dr. Towers’ sample lab agreement and Co-authorship website].
  - Everyone will create an environment that openly discusses laboratory or departmental authorship policies and recognizes and acknowledges the individual contributions of all research team members in the publications or presentations of its research [**Resources**: Co-authorship website].
- PIs will strive to provide resources (i.e., instruments and training) that allow students to complete their research in a timely manner.
- PIs will provide intellectual guidance and rigor regarding students’ educational programs and specific research projects. They will also work with students to develop their

research interests/goals, which will benefit both the student's career and the lab objectives. PIs will also communicate openly and consistently with postdoctoral trainees about research projects and career advice/mentoring.

- Students will communicate regularly with faculty mentors and their masters/doctoral committees, especially in matters relating to research, progress, and sufficiency within the degree program. Faculty will reply in a timely manner (within 2 weeks or sooner) with their availability for requested meetings.
- All faculty on committees will treat all students fairly and assess their work in thoughtful and constructive ways consistent with the practice of the field. By agreeing to serve on a committee, faculty accept the responsibility to meet formally at least once per academic year and act as an informed and nurturing professional mentor to graduate students in training and, where appropriate and desirable, in students' post-Ph.D. careers.

## **Teaching and Training**

- The department should strive to provide course offerings that help prepare students and encourage and support them in rounding out their coursework by offering them the possibility of taking short courses, online courses, and/or workshops offered at UM or outside UM.
- The department will encourage and assist students, postdocs, and faculty in developing teaching and presentation skills, including course development, lecture preparation, and classroom communication.
- Staff will send requests for course enrollment forms in a timely manner, and students and PIs will ensure they submit them before the deadline. Staff will enroll students who complete their forms before the course enrollment deadlines to ensure that students can get the training they need for their research even when the course is in other departments.
- Faculty on course record will provide clear expectations to students regarding their responsibilities as TAs, and these responsibilities should be able to be feasibly completed within a 20-hour period each week.
- Faculty on course record will also be available to meet with TAs if they have time-sensitive questions or concerns and will be the main point of contact for their assigned TAs.
- TAs will devote the same seriousness to their undergraduate instructional duties that they expect from their instructors.
- Faculty and RAs will meet before the semester to discuss when the busier periods of work will be (i.e., periods that will require more than 20 hours/week of work) to ensure that it works with the student's schedule and in places where it doesn't that both the faculty and RA are reasonable in reaching a compromise. By doing this, both Faculty and RAs will ensure that RA's duties are kept on average less than 20 hours/week, with some weeks requiring more hours than others.
- RAs will devote the same seriousness to their RA research duties that they would to their own dissertation research.

## **Professional Development**

- The department will seek out a range of faculty and peer mentors who can help students and postdocs prepare for a variety of professional and career roles and responsibilities.
- The department will keep students informed of regulations and policies governing their graduate studies. The staff will help the department and the students complete all required paperwork and other degree obligations in a timely manner.
- The department will provide constructive annual reports on the satisfactory progress of students toward the degree. PIs will provide constructive feedback to postdocs and other research employees through direct conversations and the annual TALK assessment provided by HR.
- The department will help and encourage faculty, postdocs, and students to participate in colloquia, seminars, guest lecture series, workshops, and conference presentations.
  - All faculty, students, and postdocs, regardless of their research discipline, should strive to attend at least 51% of Monday seminars.
  - We expect all grad students to present at least once per year during the Friday seminar and/or give an oral presentation during the symposium.
  - All faculty, students, and postdocs should strive to attend at least 51% of the Friday seminars, proposal defenses, and dissertation defenses. Faculty are encouraged to attend grad students presentations during normal Friday seminars, so that students can get constructive feedback at the end of the presentation.
- Faculty, postdocs, and students will contribute to the discourse of the scholarly discipline through conference presentations, publications, and collaborative projects when funding is available.
- All tenure-track faculty position search committees will have at least two grad student representatives, who will have a combined single vote in all search committee meeting decision-making.

## **Community**

- The whole department will work towards cultivating a learning environment where we all work together in mutual respect and collaboration.
- The whole department will be aware of their responsibilities as individual and professional representatives of both the university as a whole and the Department of Biology.
- The whole department will promote a diverse, inclusive, and equitable environment where everyone feels welcomed and appreciated.
  - Diversity includes, but is not limited to, personal and academic opinion, origin, nationality, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, and medical condition.
- The whole department will ensure that international students and postdocs are treated equally to other students/postdocs (with the exception of where it may be in conflict with state or federal law) and allowed the same opportunities within the purview of the university.

- The department will encourage all faculty, postdocs, and students to participate in programs such as BioReach, Science Made Sensible, Fairchild Challenge, and other outreach events.
- All faculty will contribute to maintaining a well-functioning department, sharing as equitably as possible in the departmental service and leadership responsibilities to benefit the departmental community. Similarly, where appropriate, trainees are encouraged to contribute to the overall functioning of our community through service in leadership.
- Faculty and TAs will create an environment of collegiality in the classroom and laboratory so that learning occurs within a community of scholars.
- All graduate students will contribute to maintaining a well-functioning department, sharing as equitably as possible in the Biology Graduate Student Organization duties.
- Second-year graduate students will be expected to serve as peer mentors to the incoming cohort of new graduate students in both professional and scholarly development.

## **Safety**

- The whole department will create a safe environment that protects the mental and physical well-being of faculty, postdocs, students, and staff.
  - A safe environment includes, but is not limited to, safety from crime, safety from harassment and discrimination, safety from bullying and intimidation, and a research and learning space that complies with federal, state, and university laws and regulations regarding environmental and occupational standards.
- The department will support at least one first aid training course per academic year for faculty, students, and staff, including paying for wilderness first aid for students who require it.
- PIs will ensure students/postdocs feel safe while working in the lab or field. Students/Postdocs will inform PIs about their needs and requirements so they feel secure.
  - Field safety includes ensuring students/postdocs are not alone in remote locations.
  - Field safety also means that each student/postdoc will also have access to the necessary means of emergency communication, such as cell phones, satellite phones, and satellite messengers. Emergency communication units will be placed in a centralized location that is not controlled by the PI.
  - Lab safety includes ensuring students have an available point of contact when working alone in the lab, especially during non-business hours.

## **Overcoming Conflict**

- Faculty will form a conflict advisory committee composed of at least 3 faculty [with at least 1 Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, 1 Molecular and Cell Developmental Biology and 1 member of the standing DEI committee to serve as the faculty representatives]. In

the case of a conflict of interest, the faculty will let the committee know, and another faculty representative should be asked to help. This committee will:

- Be formed when all the other faculty service positions are assigned.
  - Moderate conflict when either the PI or student violates their signed lab agreement.
  - Be fair, impartial, and professional in all dealings with graduate students per university policies governing nondiscrimination, harassment, and confidentiality.
  - Provide guidance for specific appeal or complaint mechanisms when standards of collegiality or fairness may have been violated.
- In the case a faculty supervisor decides to leave the department, they are expected to make a good-faith effort to work with each of their trainees to develop an individual plan and make reasonable efforts to facilitate the transition. In this case, the department will:
    - Help students find another PhD supervisor by providing guidance and contacting potential faculty. Students should be aware that faculty in the Biology Department will be their best option.
    - Strive to meet any funding commitments that were made by the leaving advisor and support the students emotionally beyond their first couple of years to ensure that they can still finish their degree despite the change.
    - Offer safe spaces (i.e., “physical space in which everyone feels comfortable expressing themselves and participating fully, without fear of attack, ridicule, or denial of experience” [**Resources:** Safe space]) of conversation for students by the Department Chair and the Biology Graduate School Director.
    - Follow this protocol, remembering that each case is unique and not all solutions will look alike.
  - The Department Chair will consider adherence to the codes mentioned in this document during the yearly faculty evaluations, including a mentoring section. If any flags are raised, the Department Chair will talk with the students mentored by the faculty, the DEI committee, and the Graduate Program Director, and report any violations to GAAC. GAAC will determine the number of recruitment spots a faculty member will have for their lab based on the gravity of the violations.
  - The Graduate Program Director will consider adherence to the codes mentioned in this document during the yearly graduate student evaluations. If any flags are raised, the Graduate Program Director will talk with the student’s PI, the DEI committee, and the Department Chair, and report any violations to GAAC. GAAC will determine if a student can apply for Departmental Awards or Travel Funding based on the gravity of the violations.

## **This document has been:**

- Prepared 2024 by graduate students Lina Aragón and Amanda Rawstern
- Edited 2024 by faculty (Michelle Afkhami, William Browne, Kenneth Feeley, Kevin McCracken, Christopher Searcy, and Athula Wikramanayake), graduate students (Millie Rogers and Jessica Okutsu).
- This code of conduct was approved and accepted by 100% of the Faculty, Graduate Students, Postdocs, and Staff present during the Faculty Retreat on April 26, 2024

## **Resources**

- **University of Central Florida**  
<https://graduate.ucf.edu/student-handbook/expectations-of-graduate-departments-and-programs>
- **Graduate Student Handbook**  
<https://biology.as.miami.edu/graduate/graduate-student-handbook/index.html>
- **Dr. Towers' sample lab agreement**  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kXYq0po16xEstc2\\_WA1\\_0q0Jytx5H20k1-8\\_ftwrcQ/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kXYq0po16xEstc2_WA1_0q0Jytx5H20k1-8_ftwrcQ/edit)
- **Co-authorship website**  
<https://credit.niso.org/>
- **Safe space**  
<https://repository.law.miami.edu/umlr/vol76/iss1/4/>