

## Summary of Requirements for the Ph.D. in Molecular and Cell Biology

### **The Graduate Committee:**

Mike Marr (Director of Graduate Studies, DGS)  
Kaushik Rangunathan (Chair of Admissions)  
Yerbol Kurmangaliyev

Program Administrator: Jane Theriault, DivSci Graduate Student Affairs Office

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### **Summary of Requirements for Ph.D. Candidacy:**

All MCB students must successfully complete four lab rotations in the first year. After the rotations are completed, each student will select a thesis lab by mutual agreement with a faculty member. Over the first three years students must pass five lecture courses with a grade of B- or better. Usually in the second year, each student will TA two 1-semester courses. In May of the second year, each student will have a qualifying exam and orally defend a written thesis research proposition. Beginning in the third year, each student will present yearly in the Graduate Student Research Seminar (Friday “Pizza Talks”). In addition, graduate students must register for and attend the following courses/seminars: Responsible Conduct of Science in the first year (CONT 300b) or the equivalent Research Ethics Workshop, the Graduate Student Research Seminar every semester (BIOL 350), and a Journal Club every semester. Students must also register for their advisor’s section of BIOL 401D (Dissertation Research) in their second year and all subsequent years. Students in their fifth year must again participate in CONT 300b or the equivalent.

### **Details:**

**Courses:** There are four required/mandatory courses for all MCB Ph.D. students: BIOL 103b (Mechanisms of Cell Function), BIOL 105b (Molecular Biology), BIOL 107a (Data Analysis), and BIOL 200a (Proseminar). The remaining course must have a catalogue number of 100 or above (signifying graduate-level) and be listed or cross-

listed in the Molecular and Cell Biology section of the [Brandeis Bulletin](#). This class can be selected from a number of topic areas including molecular biology, neuroscience, genetics, cell biology, developmental biology, immunology, and structural biology. Courses not listed under the MCB program in the Brandeis Bulletin must be approved by the Graduate Committee. Transfer credits may be applied towards no more than two courses, and are decided on a case-by-case basis upon written petition to the Director of Graduate Studies. Students may petition to waive one of the required courses if they have had recent comparable training.

**Rotations:** All first year students are required to register for research rotations (BIOL 300a/b). Every student is required to satisfactorily complete **four** rotations (in four *different* laboratories) during the academic year (specific dates below). In the event that a student is completing only one rotation in a given term (fall, spring, or summer), the student should register for the half-credit rotations course, BIOL 301a/b. The choice of laboratory is made jointly by the student and the faculty member in whose lab the rotation is to take place. Students may choose from any Life Sciences faculty, which includes faculty from the Departments of Biology, Biochemistry, Chemistry, Psychology, Computer Science, and Physics.

Following the faculty research bazaar that takes place during orientation, we will ask you to list your top choices for rotations. We will then assign students to a first rotation, doing our best to give everyone their first or second choice. The remaining three rotations are the responsibility of the student to arrange with the appropriate faculty member ahead of time. We recommend that you arrange rotations at least a few weeks prior to the end of the previous rotation to ensure that you can get a spot.

**Rotation Reports:**

At the end of each rotation, the student will submit a written rotation report. The student should discuss expectations for the rotation report with their rotation advisor, and whether an oral presentation will also be required in that lab's group meeting. By 5pm on the date the report is due, an electronic copy should be sent to the program administrator in the Division of Science Graduate Affairs Office and the rotation advisor. Any requests for extensions must be received in advance, and must be approved by the rotation advisor and shared with the program administrator.

**Rotation Report Format:**

All students should follow this standard rotation report format.

Instructions: The intended audience is your fellow lab mates, graduate students and PI, so use language that is understandable to these groups. Many labs will use this document to continue the project, so as you are writing, please consider what you would like to know if you were the person continuing.

- I) Title (include name, lab name, and rotation number)**
- II) Introduction and Background**

What is the big picture scientific question that the project is focused on? How does this work contribute to this question? Should be 1-2 pages.

**III) Methods**

Give enough detail that someone could pick the project up after you. Should be as long as necessary.

**IV) Progress and Results**

What did you do during the rotation? How did it work? Include any drawings of apparatus and any data figures in this section.

**V) Discussion and Future Directions**

If someone were going to pick up your project, what should they know? What advice would you give them? What would you try next if you were continuing? Include some discussion of your preliminary results and their implications.

**VI) References**

Put references here in some consistent format. Consider using a reference management program like EndNote because you'll need to use one for proposals, papers, and your thesis.

Reports should be no longer than 10 pages, with figures embedded into the text.

**Rotation Schedule:**

|                 | <b>Start</b>   | <b>End</b>    | <b>Written Report Due</b> |
|-----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> | Tues. 9/2/25   | Fri. 10/10/25 | Mon. 10/13/2025           |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> | Mon. 10/13/25  | Fri. 11/21/25 | Mon. 11/24/25             |
| *no rotations   | 11/24 – 11/30* |               |                           |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> | Mon. 12/1/25   | Fri. 1/16/26  | Mon. 1/19/26              |
| *break:         | 12/24 – 1/1*   |               |                           |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> | Mon. 1/19/26   | Fri. 2/27/26  | Mon. 3/2/26               |

**Selection of a Thesis lab:**

**Students are not permitted to approach faculty about joining a lab until Monday, March 2, 2026 and should make every attempt to complete the selection process by Friday, March 13, 2026.** Students will begin work in their new thesis lab immediately following the end of the fourth rotation. The graduate committee reiterates that students should not ask for a commitment from a faculty member – nor can a faculty member promise a spot in their lab – **until March 2nd**. This policy protects the rights of all first year students in the Life Sciences and creates a level playing field independent of the order in which rotations are performed. It is taken very seriously by the Graduate Committees of all of the Life Sciences programs.

In exceptional circumstances, students may be permitted to complete a fifth rotation. This needs to be approved by the DGS. Students who wish to work on a collaborative project between two labs with two co-advisors may do so with advanced approval.

### **Journal Clubs:**

Every MCB student is required to register for and attend the “Topics in Molecular Genetics and Development” (BIOL 305 a/b) Journal Club each semester. By petition, a student may add or substitute the Topics in Neurobiology Journal Club. In their first year, the students should choose the journal club(s) attended by the labs in which they are rotating. If these Journal Clubs differ from what was registered for, it is ok. Students are not required to present an article until their second year. Students are required to present in BIOL 305 a total of 4 times during their time in the program, typically in years 2, 3, 4, and 5.

#### **Journal Clubs: (See course listings for times)**

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| Topics in Molecular Genetics and Development: | BIOL 305 |
| Topics in Neurobiology:                       | NBIO 306 |

### **Tuesday Colloquia Series:**

All students are required to attend the regular Tuesday Joint Biology/ Neuroscience Colloquia, typically held midday on Tuesdays.

### **Graduate Student Research Seminars (BIOL 350):**

All students are required to register for and attend Graduate Student Research Seminars Pizza Talks (BIOL 350), which are typically held Fridays around 12:30pm. All MCB (and Neuro) students are required to present their thesis work annually starting in their third year. Students are required to present a total of 3 times during their time in the program, typically in years 3, 4, and 5.

### **Chemical and Safety Trainings:**

All students must complete the appropriate chemical and safety trainings before they may begin in the lab. More information about these requirements will be explained during New Student Orientation. All MCB students are required to complete online Animal Care and Use training. Any student undergoing animal research is also required to attend the Foster Animal Facility training and Occupational Health Clearance. If applicable, students must also complete in-person Virus Training and Controlled Substances Training.

## **Timeline of Events:**

### **First Year**

**Courses:** Students in their **first semester** will typically register for Rotations (BIOL 300a), Journal Club (BIOL 305), the Graduate Student Research Seminar Pizza Talks (BIOL 350), and two lecture courses – BIOL 105b (Molecular Biology) and an elective. The elective course is normally selected from the list of graduate courses (catalogue number of 100 or above) in the Molecular and Cell Biology section of the Brandeis Bulletin.

Students in their **second semester** will register for Rotations (BIOL 300b), Journal Club (BIOL 305), the Graduate Student Research Seminar Pizza Talks (BIOL 350), either Data Analysis (BIOL 107) or Genomics (BIOL 131), and BIOL 103b (Mechanisms of Cell Function). In addition, the student must register for and attend the seminar in Responsible Conduct of Science (CONT 300b) or the equivalent Research Ethics Workshop usually offered in the spring term, which is a not-for-credit course.

If any of the above courses are not being offered, they should be replaced with an elective course and the required course should be taken in the second year.

**Graduate Student Research Seminars (BIOL 350):**

All students are required to register for and attend Graduate Student Research Seminars Pizza Talks each Friday. Students do not present until their third year.

**Journal Clubs:**

Every MCB student should attend the Topics in Molecular Genetics and Development Journal Club, unless approved by petition to attend the Neurobiology Journal Club instead. Students typically present in their second year.

**Tuesday Colloquia Series:**

All students are required to attend the regular Tuesday Joint Biology/ Neuroscience Colloquia.

**Choice of Thesis Lab:**

Students will choose their thesis lab by mutual agreement with a faculty member **between March 2<sup>nd</sup> and March 13<sup>th</sup> of their first year** and are expected to begin work on their thesis projects immediately following the end of the fourth rotation. Fifth rotations may be considered, but must be discussed with and approved by the Graduate Committee.

**Summer, between all years:**

**Courses:** This and every summer, all students will be automatically registered for CONT 250b (Summer Research).

**Thesis Research:**

Students will begin work on their thesis research immediately following their fourth rotation. They are expected to perform research throughout the summer. Vacations and other absences must be approved by the student's advisor. While classes follow the academic calendar, thesis research is an ongoing full-time endeavor.

**Second Year:**

**Courses:** Students will take BIOL 200 (Proseminar) in the fall of their second year. A student may take their elective in the spring semester if they have not already done so,

though it is also fine to wait until the third year. These classes can be chosen from the list of graduate courses (catalogue number of 100 or above) in the Molecular and Cell Biology Section of the [Brandeis Bulletin](#).

**Teaching:**

Each student is required to serve as a teaching assistant (TA) for two semesters, typically both semesters of their second year in the program. Teaching assignments are decided in the summer preceding the second year and will be emailed to students (usually in July).

Any Ph.D. student who is TAing for the first time is expected to attend the Teaching Practicum for teaching fellows, which is held during Orientation events in August, unless they did during orientation their first year. TA assignments are decided by the Program, and students will usually do at least one semester in a basic biology course. Students are expected to take their teaching responsibilities seriously, and successful completion of this teaching is a program requirement.

**Thesis Research:**

Students will work on their thesis projects starting at the end of their first year, when they join their thesis lab, and continue until completion of their dissertation (MCB students average about 5.5 years overall). Students must register for their advisor's section of BIOL 401d (Dissertation Research) each semester. Specific Ph.D. thesis requirements are set by the student's advisor and the thesis committee (see below).

**Graduate Student Research Seminars (BIOL350):**

All students are required to register for and attend Graduate Student Research Seminar Pizza Talks which are held each Friday at 12:30 pm. Students do not present until their third year.

**Journal Clubs:**

Every MCB student should attend the Topics in Molecular Genetics and Development Journal Club, unless approved by petition to attend the Neurobiology Journal Club instead. Students typically make their first presentations in their second year.

**Tuesday Colloquia Series:**

All students are required to attend the regular Tuesday Joint Biology/ Neuroscience Colloquia.

**Annual Thesis Committee Meeting:**

The thesis committee is typically composed of two faculty members who will also serve on the committee for the Inside Exam, plus the thesis supervisor. In the event that a student's MCB research advisor leaves for another university or is on a non-resident leave of absence for more than one year, their graduate students must have another MCB faculty member as a second mentor. This mentor shall meet with the

student no less than once a month and will ensure that a thesis review committee meeting will be held around the time of the student's Graduate Student Research Seminar Pizza Talk.

Students should have an initial meeting with this committee in their second year. Once thesis work has begun, **each student is required** to meet at least once per year with their thesis committee to complete an Annual Progress Report. These meetings should be arranged in advance by the student, and should occur very soon after the student's Graduate Student Research Seminar Pizza Talk. After the thesis meeting, the committee will submit the Annual Progress Report summarizing the student's progress, identifying possible problems, and any recommendations. The Graduate Affairs Office will send out required forms in advance. Graduating students **are required** to have all Annual Progress Reports in their files in order to remain in good standing with the program and with the Graduate School. It is the student's responsibility to make sure that the report is received by the program administrator in the Division of Science Graduate Affairs Office.

Once the committee agrees that the student has satisfied all thesis requirements set by the graduate program and the student's thesis advisor (see below), the student will be asked to assemble a thesis defense committee. The defense committee typically includes all members of the thesis committee and must also include one "outside reader" outside of the student's program and often outside of the University. The outside reader should be chosen in consultation with the student's advisor several months in advance of the defense.

[See the Bulletin for more detailed instructions on choosing a Dissertation Committee.](#)

### **Qualifying exam and Thesis Research Proposition:**

The Qualifying Exam must be taken by the end of May of the second year. **For the 2025-2026 Academic Year, it needs to be completed by May 31, 2026.** Extensions to this timeframe must be approved by the DGS/Graduate Committee. Exams are usually taken in the month of May.

The examining committee is composed of three MCB training faculty and **cannot** include the thesis supervisor. If requested, the thesis advisor may be present in the room during the exam as a witness (i.e., **they must remain silent during the process and their input is strictly prohibited**).

The format of the written proposal will be based on the NIH National Research Service Award (NRSA) format. Written proposals should be emailed (as a PDF) to the committee members and the Graduate Affairs Office a minimum of one week before the defense date. Petitions for extensions must be submitted in writing to the DGS and are only granted under exceptional circumstances. The oral proposition should be presented in the form of a chalk talk (PowerPoint presentations are *not* permitted). Exam evaluation forms (provided by the Graduate Affairs Office) must

be completed by each member of the examining committee and returned to the Graduate Affairs Office once the exam has ended. If revisions to the written exam or a re-defense are required, a second set of evaluation forms must be submitted indicating acceptance of the revision/re-defense and turned into the Graduate Affairs Office.

After the exam is completed, the Chair of the student's examining committee should write and submit a brief written report of the student's performance, which represents the consensus of the whole committee. This report should be distributed to the student, the student's advisor, the graduate program Chair, and the Graduate Affairs Office to be included in the student's file.

### **Third and Continuing Years:**

#### **Courses:**

If they have not already done so, students take their final elective in the third year. These classes can be chosen from the list of graduate courses (catalogue number of 100 or above) in the Molecular and Cell Biology section of the [Brandeis Bulletin](#).

#### **Thesis Research:**

Students by this time should be well into their thesis research projects. Students must register for their advisor's section of BIOL 401d (Dissertation Research) each semester.

#### **Graduate Student Research Seminars:**

Each student, starting their third year in the program, is required to present an annual Graduate Student Research Seminar Pizza Talk to the Department. It is the student's responsibility to remind their thesis committee ahead of time of the date, and make sure that they will attend the talk, as well as meet with the student very soon afterwards as a thesis committee (usually the same afternoon or the following week). All students must register for and attend these seminars each semester, which are typically held on Fridays at 12:30pm.

#### **Journal Clubs:**

Every MCB student should attend the Topics in Molecular Genetics and Development Journal Club, unless approved by petition to attend the Neurobiology Journal Club instead. Students typically begin presenting in their second year.

#### **Tuesday Colloquia Series:**

All students are required to attend the regular Tuesday Joint Biology/ Neuroscience Colloquia.

#### **IDP (individual development plan):**

An IDP is a career development tool that is used to a) maintain communication between you and your mentor(s) regarding your long-term goals and career development b) help identify an appropriate career path based on your skills and

interests c) assess current and missing skills and abilities for the desired career path  
d) set specific goals to prepare for the desired career path. The IDP will evolve as the interests and experience level of the student changes over time.

Students in their second year and above will be required to complete an Individual Development Plan once a year. Any disagreements between the student and her/his advisor concerning the IDP should be discussed with a member of the Graduate Committee. The IDP must be received no later than the annual committee meeting, and the student is encouraged to present the IDP at this time. The student/advisor can choose the written IDP format that they prefer (and some sample forms will be provided). Example IDPs and IDP requirement forms can be found [here](#).

### **Thesis Requirements:**

Specific Ph.D. thesis requirements are set by the student's advisor and the thesis committee. As a guideline, a Ph.D. student should have at least one first-author paper accepted or published at the time of their thesis defense, and ideally another publication (e.g., a middle author paper, or additional first author paper) in the works.

Specific deadlines for thesis submission to the thesis committee should be set by the student's advisor and approved by the entire thesis committee, but it is generally expected that the written thesis will be submitted to the committee, including the outside reader, at least two weeks in advance of the oral defense.

### **Thesis Seminar:**

Upon completion of their dissertation work, students are required to give a public seminar on their research, followed immediately by a private thesis defense (student and thesis committee only). Each member of the thesis committee must be present at the seminar and the defense.

### **Optional “Master’s in Passing”:**

When students have completed the requirements needed to satisfy a Master's Degree in MCB, they have the option to apply for a “Master's in Passing”. Most Ph.D. students will qualify for a Master's in Passing after completing their second year in the Ph.D. program. Briefly, students must complete and pass six graduate level life science courses with a grade of B- or better, including one laboratory- or research-based course (one semester of rotations counts towards this requirement). In addition to these six courses, students must register for and attend the following required courses/seminars: one semester of Responsible Conduct of Science (or equivalent), two semesters of Journal Clubs, and two semesters of Graduate Student Research Seminar.

### **Transition from Brandeis M.S. to Ph.D. Program:**

Students who have earned a M.S. at another institution will be admitted as normal first-year Ph.D. students (i.e. the following text does not apply unless the M.S. is from Brandeis).

Students in a Brandeis Life Sciences M.S. program who apply to and are accepted into the MCB Ph.D. program may be allowed to count courses and/or research experience towards the Ph.D. program. The exact timeline and circumstances surrounding the M.S. to Ph.D. transition will depend on the extent of independent lab research and courses completed during the M.S. degree. Brandeis M.S. students who have taken both BIOL 103 and BIOL 105 and who have had extensive research experience in a Brandeis lab may be able to combine aspects of the first and second-year program in an accelerated first year.

**Matriculation date:**

M.S. students may enter the Ph.D. program immediately following the completion of their M.S., as early as June 1st. The start of stipend payments will coincide with their matriculation date.

**Courses:**

Courses taken during the M.S. year may count towards the Ph.D. course requirement (to be approved by the graduate Chair). These students are expected to complete the remaining classes in their first year as a Ph.D. student, but no later than the end of their second year. If the student did not take BIOL 105 and BIOL 103 during the MS, they will be expected to take these courses, along with BIOL 200 (Proseminar) and BIOL 107 (Data Analysis) or BIOL 131 (Genomics) in the first year of their PhD program.

**Presenting at Pizza Talks and Journal Club:**

As with all Ph.D. students, students who transition to the Ph.D. program from the M.S. program are required to register for and attend Graduate Student Research Seminar Pizza Talks and Topics in Molecular Genetics and Development journal club. Students are required to present annually, according to the timeline discussed and agreed upon at the time of matriculation into the PhD program, typically near the end of their 2<sup>nd</sup> year in the Ph.D. program.

**Rotations and selection of a Thesis lab:**

The timeline for completion of rotations and for choosing their thesis lab will depend on the extent of independent lab work carried out by the student during their Master's.

If the student has performed independent research in at least one laboratory during the M.S. (BIOL 296, BIOL 299, or BIOT 293) they will be expected to complete at least two additional rotations after the M.S. is awarded (typically starting in the summer) after which the student will select a thesis lab.

Students who have taken only a Project Lab during the Brandeis M.S. will be expected to carry out four rotations and will follow a timeline more typical of a student who has just matriculated into the Ph.D. program.

While rotating, the student will register for the research rotation course (BIOL 300 for two rotations, or BIOL 301 for one rotation). The choice of laboratory rotations is made jointly by the student, the DGS, and the faculty member in whose lab the

rotation is to take place. It is the responsibility of the student to arrange with the appropriate faculty member ahead of time. Students may choose from MCB program Life Sciences faculty, which includes faculty in the Departments of Biology, Biochemistry, Chemistry, Psychology, Computer Science, and Physics.

At the end of each rotation, the student will submit a written rotation report. One electronic copy should be sent to the program administrator in the Division of Science Graduate Affairs Office and one should be provided to the laboratory head in which the rotation was done. In exceptional circumstances, students may be granted permission (from the DGS) to complete an additional rotation before joining a lab.

**Teaching:** Each Ph.D. student is required to serve as a teaching assistant (TA) for two semesters. Teaching assignments are decided in the summer and will be emailed to students (usually in July).

Ph.D. students are expected to attend the Teaching Practicum and Title IX training for teaching fellows, which will be held each summer during New Student Orientation week in August.

A student who has transitioned from the Brandeis M.S. program and who has been granted accelerated status will TA according to the timeline discussed and agreed upon at the time of matriculation into the Ph.D. program. If the student has joined a lab at the end of the summer and has already taken BIOL 105 and BIOL 103, they may be required to TA in both semesters of the first year in the Ph.D. program; otherwise, TA assignments may be delayed into their second year.

**Thesis Research Proposition:**

Accelerated Brandeis M.S. to Ph.D. students must complete their Inside Exam within one year after joining their thesis lab. Extensions to this time frame must be approved by the DGS. All guidelines and requirements are the same as for students who enter the program directly as Ph.D. students.

**Evaluation of Graduate Student Performance in the Molecular and Cell  
Biology Ph.D. Program:**

**Readmission:**

Each year in June/July, student progress will be evaluated, and students will receive a Progress Letter from the Graduate Committee. If the student has not completed a requirement, this will be noted in the letter, along with a suggested timeline for completion. Students will also receive a letter from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences informing them of their readmission status and financial support for the following year.

**Requirements to Remain in Good Standing**

**Year 1:** Students must complete their formal courses with a grade of B- or better. Students must satisfactorily complete each of the four required lab rotations as evaluated by the supervising faculty member, who will then submit a brief written report on the student's performance to be included in the student's permanent file. The written lab reports are **reviewed by the rotation adviser and by the graduate committee.** Students must also have secured a thesis lab by mutual agreement with the faculty mentor. The Graduate Committee evaluates the progress of each student at the end of the first year. Students that perform below the minimum expectations outlined above will be placed on probation by the program and academic alert with the graduate school. In cases where the performance is exceedingly low they may not be re-admitted for the second year.

Students on probation must pass all of their elective courses with a grade of **B** or better and unconditionally pass the Inside Exam. In addition, they must adequately perform their teaching duties and make acceptable progress on their thesis work. The student's standing in the program will be reassessed at the end of their second year **and if they have not displayed satisfactory progress they may be dismissed from the program.**

**Year 2:** Grades in formal courses must be B- or better. Students will submit their thesis research proposal (Inside Exam) in writing. A panel of three faculty members (not including the thesis adviser) will be selected by the student for the oral defense of the inside exam. Those committee members will evaluate the student's performance and submit a written evaluation to the Graduate Affairs Office using a form provided by the program administrator. Two of those faculty members are typically retained and, along with the thesis advisor, will comprise the thesis committee until the student graduates.

The Graduate Committee will evaluate the progress of each student at the end of the second year. Continuation in the program will be decided based on successful defense of the Thesis Proposal (Inside Exam), a grade in all six courses of B- or better, satisfactory teaching performance, and progress in thesis research. Students that perform below the minimum expectations as outlined above may not be re-admitted for the third year.

**Years 3+:** Grades in formal courses must be B- or better. Each student is required to present a research talk in the Graduate Student Research Seminar Pizza Talks sometime during each year. The student's thesis committee will meet following the talk to evaluate the student's progress and will submit the Annual Progress Report to the program administrator in the Division of Science Graduate Affairs Office. Students are required to hold at least one thesis committee meeting per year to remain in good standing with the program, but meetings can be held more frequently at the discretion of the student and thesis committee. Students are expected to have all course and teaching requirements fulfilled before the start of their fourth year; exceptions should be discussed with the Graduate Committee.

**Thesis****Defense:**

The student will submit the completed thesis, give a public seminar, and will be examined by a panel consisting of at least three faculty members. The thesis defense must meet requirements of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. The thesis examination committee must contain one faculty member from outside the program and the thesis advisor.

## **Graduate Teaching Assistants in Molecular and Cell Biology:**

### **Assignments:**

Over the course of the graduate program, usually in the second year, each Ph.D. student is required to serve as a teaching assistant in TWO courses or labs.

Teaching assistant (TA) assignments are decided by an interdepartmental graduate committee based on faculty request, course enrollment, training grant requirements, and graduate student expertise. For the 2025-2026 academic year, the DGS, Mike Marr, will review MCB teaching assistant assignments.

In all cases, an attempt will be made to inform graduate teaching assistants of their assignments during the summer prior to the commencement of teaching responsibilities. In cases of unexpected enrollment shifts, cancellations or additions of courses, or inequities in work load, assignments may be changed with short notice. If there is a likelihood that such a change will be made, the TA Committee will notify those teaching assistants as soon as possible to permit ample preparation time.

### **Responsibilities:**

When the assignment is made or at the beginning of the term, graduate teaching assistants and faculty members will discuss course requirements, attendance policies, and the range of graduate responsibilities (in class, outside the classroom, administrative duties, technical assistance, e.g., running a projector, etc.).

In order to encourage an open, cooperative relationship between the graduate teaching assistant and faculty member, meetings will be held on a regular basis to discuss the progress of the course.

The TA and faculty member will consult each other on any problem arising in the course as soon as possible so that the faculty member and graduate student can cooperate in addressing it.

If TAs are to grade undergraduate papers or exams, the faculty member and TA will discuss the number of assignments, grading procedures and standards (letter grade/pass, fail/comments only, grading in pencil, and expectations for student writing ability), and an expected range of grades.

TAs may be required to hold at least two weekly office hours, usually in the evenings.

TAs are seldom asked to tutor students requiring additional help. If tutoring is expected and one hour/week is insufficient to address difficulties in the course, the graduate student will refer the problem to the professor and, if necessary (and agreed upon), to the appropriate agency on campus for additional assistance.

Faculty members will advise TAs on policies for academic honesty and sexual harassment at the beginning of the term. At this time, procedures for alerting the proper university officers and dealing with such matters will be agreed upon.

**Evaluation/Oversight/Professional Development:**

TAs are encouraged to discuss teaching with the professor or with a member of the Graduate Committee.

TAs are expected to consult teaching materials available at the Office of the Dean of Arts and Sciences and to attend teaching seminars sponsored by the Graduate School.

Faculty should evaluate the TAs performance and provide written comments documenting the teaching fellow's experience and development over the course of the semester.

Every attempt should be made to resolve any difficulties experienced between a TA and faculty member. If such resolution is impossible, official grievances should be made per the stated procedures in the student handbook.

TAs are encouraged to document teaching experiences for future job searches. Faculty members should agree to provide letters of reference for teaching, which will be included in the student's departmental file.

At the end of the semester, students enrolled in courses will complete a "TA evaluation report" where they will provide feedback of several aspects of their TAs performance. After the course is completed, TAs can retrieve these reports from SAGE. A copy of this record will also be stored in the student's file in the Graduate Affairs Office.

**Questions:**

**If you have questions you can contact a member of the Graduate Committee:**

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Mike Marr, DGS       | <a href="mailto:mmarr@brandeis.edu">mmarr@brandeis.edu</a>       |
| Kaushik Ragunathan   | <a href="mailto:kaushikr@brandeis.edu">kaushikr@brandeis.edu</a> |
| Yerbol Kurmangaliyev | <a href="mailto:yerbol@brandeis.edu">yerbol@brandeis.edu</a>     |

**You may also contact our program administrators in the Division of Science Graduate Affairs Office:**

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| MCB, Neuroscience: Jane Theriault | <a href="mailto:jtheriault@brandeis.edu">jtheriault@brandeis.edu</a>       |
| Director: Maryanna Aldrich        | <a href="mailto:maldrich@brandeis.edu">maldrich@brandeis.edu</a>           |
| Graduate Affairs Office team      | <a href="mailto:scigradoffice@brandeis.edu">scigradoffice@brandeis.edu</a> |

## **Resources for graduate students and ways to get help**

At many points during your graduate career, you will probably have questions you'd like to ask someone, great ideas you'd like to share, or concerns you'd like someone to address. Please know that there are many people here on campus to answer those questions, help, and support you. Before we go into specifics of who to ask for help, please know that the majority of people on campus are "responsible reporters." This means that they are obligated to share any information that has been disclosed to them regarding discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct with the Office of Equal Opportunity. If you are hoping to have a confidential conversation about one of these topics, you will find a list of confidential resources later in this section.

Most issues can be best addressed by those closely associated with your graduate program or with Division of Science staff and faculty, so we encourage you to seek assistance from this group first. We recognize that sometimes there may be a particular person that you are more comfortable speaking with or that one faculty member may be holding multiple roles/positions, but we suggest that you reach out for assistance in the following general order (see schematic at the bottom as well):

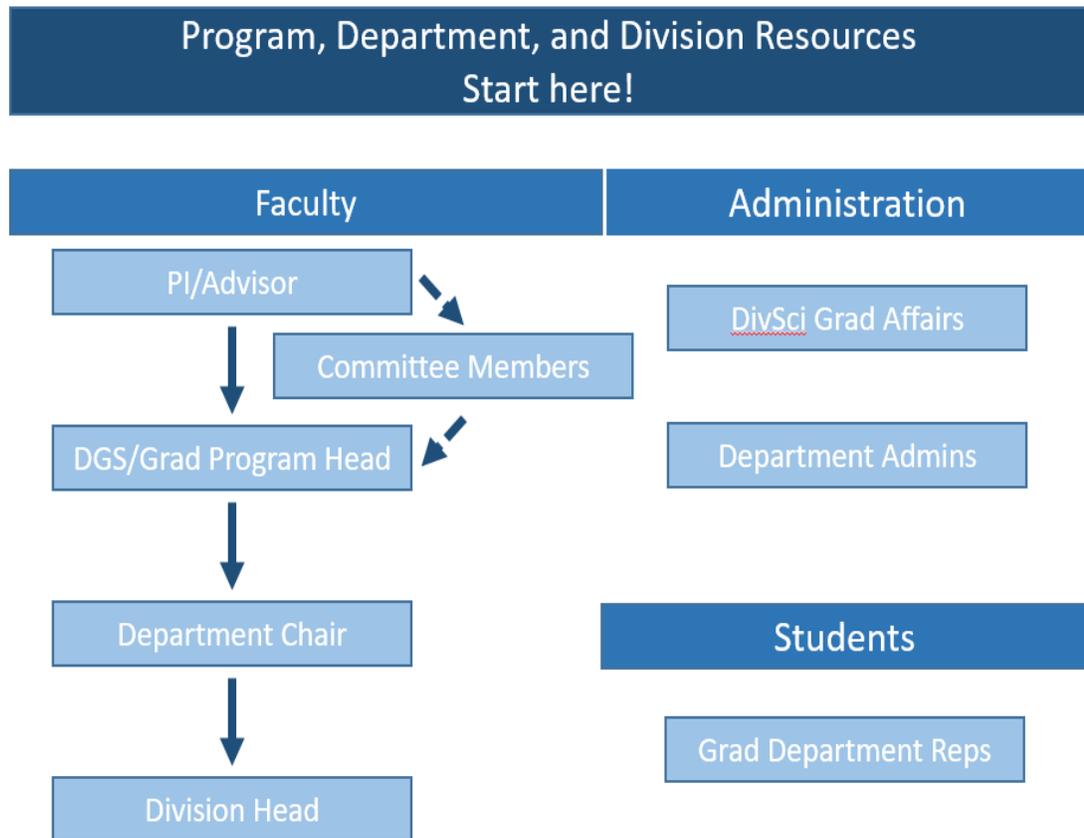
- **Your PI/Advisor:** Your first stop will most often be your PI/advisor, if you have chosen one by this point. Your advisor will have the most intimate knowledge of your research/program progress and career goals, and is here to help train and guide you. PIs usually have regular meetings with their students and you can talk about issues that concern you, in addition to discussing your research project. If you are still rotating, you should feel comfortable talking to your rotation PI.
- **A member of your committee (once you have one):** You are always welcome to reach out to any faculty member on your committee. While not tied to your progress as closely as your PI/advisor, they will be familiar with your progress in your program and will have sufficient background knowledge on your project and your goals to provide personalized support. Committee members will be especially good resources if you have concerns about some aspect of your project design or results and may have useful ideas about your professional development. Keep in mind also that while annual meetings with your committee are required, you can call additional meetings at any time.
- **DGS (Director of Graduate Study, or chair of your grad program):** This faculty member oversees your grad program as a whole, and is here to support all students in the program. They will be extremely knowledgeable in the program's requirements and are also tuned in to the current GSAS and University policies. Early in your grad career when you have not yet chosen an advisor, the DGS's job to support you. Later on, the DGS may be a good person to contact if a few students from different labs have shared concerns. The specific faculty member who fills this role may change from year-to-year, so check with your program administrator or check your program

- website for the current DGS first. *In academic year 2025-2026, your DGS is Mike Marr.*
- **Your department's Chair:** This faculty member oversees the program that your grad program falls under and is a step above your DGS. If you have concerns that aren't necessarily specific to your grad program but are relevant to the department as a whole, the chair may have good insight. Chairs are good to talk to if concerns are shared with other populations in the department such as staff, postdocs, or undergraduates. The specific faculty member who fills this role may change from year-to-year, so check with your program administrator or check your program website for the current Chair. *In academic year 2025-2026, your department chair is Bruce Goode.*
  - **The Head of the Division of Science:** This faculty member oversees the entire Division of Science, and works to support all of the departments and graduate programs within the sciences. The head of the Division of Science has frequent meetings with individual program and department chairs, as well as with leaders across the University, so they will be knowledgeable about current Division and University practices. They are here to support and advocate for the entire science community. Talk to them if people from different graduate programs or departments have a shared concern or to raise. In particular, concerns about research integrity should be brought to the attention of the Head of the Division of Science. As with the DGS, the faculty member in this role can change from time-to-time. *In academic year 2025-2026, the chair of the Division of Science is Susan Birren.*

In parallel to these program-level and Division-level faculty resources, there are non-faculty resources within the Division who you can go to for help. The following are good places to go to for help:

- **The Division of Science Grad Affairs Office:** This office is the administrative home for most of the graduate programs within the Division of Science, including yours. The staff here work closely with grad students and faculty administratively oversee those graduate programs and student progress. The staff in this office know your program's faculty, are well-versed in your program's requirements and policies, and are up-to-date with the other sources of support on-campus. If you are unsure about who to talk to first, the DivSci is often a good place to start as they can help you decide who to approach and how to have that conversation. Within this office, *Jane Theriault is the primary contact for your graduate program.* You should also feel free to contact Maryanna Aldrich, who oversees this group.
- **Your Department Administration:** These staff work in your department's office and are here to help their entire department community. These staff may be a bit less familiar with your graduate program requirements, but they know your department's faculty and any non-grad-program details about your department well.
- **The DivSci Pre-Award Office:** If you are applying for grants or fellowships, please loop these staff in. They may be able to provide guidance and help you navigate the submission process.

- **Your program’s Grad Department Representatives (GDRs):** These graduate students were elected to represent the student body. One of the roles of the GDR is to bring concerns from students as a whole to the program faculty or to GSAS, so if you have a concern that you are comfortable discussing with your GDR it’s a good idea to let them know. They cannot bring these concerns to the faculty to advocate for all students if they don’t know about them, and there may be other students with similar concerns. Your GDRs may hold a student “town hall” once a semester or year to bring up issues, and this is a good forum to discuss some topics that may be weighing on your mind. New GDRs are elected each year early in the fall semester.
- Below is a flow chart demonstrating the general hierarchy of sources of support:



Outside of the general hierarchy of Division of Science places to go to for help, that are various other entities on campus here to support students. These resources on campus are dedicated to supporting graduate students:

- **The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS):** GSAS oversees all graduate programs within the school of Arts & Sciences at Brandeis and is invested in the success of all graduate students in these programs. If you have a topic that you’d rather discuss with someone outside of the Division or want a non-DivSci perspective on, the staff in this office are a great resource for graduate students. GSAS is also a

- good resource if you are uncomfortable discussing a topic with any of the resources mentioned so far or if you have not made sufficient progress in those discussions. Depending on the topic that you have raised with faculty or administrative staff, they may have already contacted GSAS for advice/assistance on how to help or to handle the next steps. GSAS and your program/department faculty or the Head of the Division of Science frequently work together to support students, resolve problems, and enact positive changes. Please visit their [staff directory](#) to explore the areas GSAS can help with. If you are in a research group with limited funding, GSAS provides conference and research awards for [PhD students](#) and [Master's students](#). They also strongly encourage students to [apply for external fellowships and grants](#).
- **[The Office of Graduate Affairs](#)**: This office is a home and source of support for all graduate students at Brandeis, including those studying at the Heller School, the Rabb School, or the International Business School. Graduate Student Affairs provides students with information and events about graduate life at Brandeis and community resources.
  - **[The Graduate Student Association \(GSA\)](#)**: Supported by The Office of Graduate Affairs, the GSA is an independent student body that represents all graduate students and provides a platform for graduate students to raise issues and concerns and build community. If you have a concern about an issue affecting graduate students that extends past your program, department, and the Division of Science, the GSA is a good group to talk to. To connect with them, visit their website to see the current year's grad student executive committee.
  - There are some offices on campus that specialize in specific topics and who will almost always be the best resource for those topics:
  - **[The Office of Research Administration \(ORA\)](#)**: ORA, which reports to the [Vice Provost for Research](#), can help with issues related to research integrity and compliance. If you want to discuss the possibility of research misconduct, you may wish to report things there directly.
  - **[The International Students and Scholars Office \(ISSO\)](#)**: ISSO supports all of Brandeis' international students and scholars. This office determines visa eligibility and prepares and issues visa documents. If you ever have any questions about your Visa or any of the associated regulations (e.g., travel, CPT, OPT), you should reach out to your ISSO advisor. They can advise students on rights and responsibilities and provide guidance regarding issues that may impact their legal status. Their website also has a collection of useful information for international students.
  - **[Student Accessibility Support](#)**: If you are a student with a disability and in need of academic or non-academic accommodations, this office can support you and help you navigate this process. The definition of a person with a disability is broad, and many students who do not think of themselves as students with disabilities may qualify for

support under the law. Even if you are not sure if you will qualify, you are encouraged to reach out to SAS.

- As mentioned at the start of this section, there are some topics that responsible reporters on campus cannot keep confidential, and those are issues of discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct. The office on campus that addresses these issues is the [Office of Equal Opportunity \(OEO\)](#). OEO provides information regarding support resources, information about taking action (internal resolution processes and criminal action), inquiries and investigations into concerns, processes to address grievances, and training for the Brandeis community. Please visit their website for contact information and steps (and an online form) to file a report. You are welcome to contact a resource listed above for support or advice about these topics, but they will be obligated to share the issue with OEO.
- If you would like to have a *confidential* conversation with someone on campus, the following are our on-campus confidential resources:
  - [The Brandeis Counseling Center \(BCC\)](#)
  - [The Brandeis Health Center](#)
  - [The Prevention, Advocacy, and Resource Center \(PARC\)](#)
  - [The University Ombuds](#)
  - [The Chaplains in The Center for Spiritual Life](#)