

**Faculty Instructions for Biannual Committee Meetings**  
**Required for tracking the progress of Microbe-Host Interactions Students**  
(for Chair, Mentor and all committee members)

**I. Instructions for faculty at the Committee Meeting**

The committee meetings occur every 6 months. Scheduling of the committee meeting is the responsibility of the student. Scheduling should take place well in advance to ensure the presence of quorum at the meeting. The student can work with the MHI Program Manager (Liz Roelofsz) to reserve a room for an in-person meeting. The student will also obtain the relevant Redcap links that the student will send to the chair. These links are for the SACS evaluation form and the upload of the Chair's letter upon conclusion of the committee meeting. One week prior to the scheduled committee meeting, the student will send a written progress report in the form of an NIH F31 progress report to the committee. This writeup serves two purposes: A written documentation of progress on research and career development and an evaluation of student's writing skills.

The primary goal of the committee meeting is for the committee to assess the progress of the student and determine if there is any cause for concern. At the beginning of the meeting, the student is asked to leave the room and the committee discusses the progress of the student with the mentor, probing as to whether the student is on track in terms of research, academics, professional development and RCR. The committee is encouraged to ask the mentor if there are particular areas of strength, as well as areas of growth for the student that the mentor has identified. The student is then asked to step back into the room to begin the presentation of their work. ***Please note that if a mentor deems progress as Unsatisfactory, the Chair should ask whether a U grade has been assigned or will be assigned by the mentor. Graduate school rules are that 3 U grades in a row warrant student dismissal from the program.*** The committee chair needs to know this information in order to guide the student if a U grade is pending or has been assigned *prior to the committee meeting*. The DGS should also be made aware.

The main activity of each committee meeting is for the student to give a short presentation that introduces their project and discusses progress on their specific aims. The committee can ask clarification questions, big picture questions, as well as general on-topic questions as necessary to understand how independent and knowledgeable the student is on the work they are presenting and to determine areas of strength and growth. The session should not feel like an exam for the student, but rather like a consulting session, where the committee provides critical feedback and experimental ideas to advance the student's research. As the student advances in their training, the committee is also there to provide career advice.

At the end of the presentation and discussion, the student is once again asked to step out of the room, as the committee helps the Chair fill out the SACS evaluation form. The SACS form contains evaluation metrics both for the written and the oral communication skills of the student. Please use the written report as a guide to evaluate the written component. Please use the oral presentation to evaluate the oral component. In addition to these metrics, questions in the SACS form, evaluate the student's independence, creativity, critical thinking skills, how the student responds to questions and laboratory skills. The mentor's input is critical for assessing the latter.

**II. Specific role and responsibilities of the CHAIR at the committee meetings**

At all committee meetings, the responsibilities of the Committee Chair include –

- 1) At least one week prior to the committee meeting, ensure that you have the student's written report. Please notify the student if report submission is outstanding.
- 2) At least one day prior to the committee meeting, ensure that you have the SACS form and letter links provided by the student. Please notify the student if SACS link submission is outstanding.
- 3) At the beginning of the committee meeting, ask the student to step out. Please assure the student that this is customary, if this is the first committee meeting following the qualifying exam.
- 4) Once the student is out of the room, ask the mentor(s) to share their input on research and professional development progress for the student. Ask the mentor if there are any concerns that the committee or the DGS should know about regarding student research progress, professional development or wellness. Ask the mentor if a U grade is considered for the student.
- 5) Once the committee meeting begins, keep everyone on track for time – the meeting should not last more than 1.5-2 hours, including time for the committee to discuss and fill out SACS forms.
- 6) At the close of the meeting, the student needs clear direction about whether they are making sufficient progress and what areas of growth have been identified by the committee.

**FORMS:** The **SACS committee meeting Evaluation form** should be filled out in discussion with the committee members while the student is out of the room. The chair will discuss these criteria for evaluation with the student during the post-meeting discussion, and through the committee report that the Chair will upload (see below).

**Committee Report:** The Chair is responsible for composing a report in the form of a letter that documents the committee's evaluation of the exam and outlines comments and suggestions by all committee members. It is customary to send the report to the other committee members for comments or edits before sending to the student to ensure that everyone's input is incorporated. The letter is then uploaded via the student-provided Redcap link. An automated notice of upload and meeting completion is then sent to the MHI program manager to ensure that all students are on track with completion of their committee meetings. Please upload this letter **within one week** of the meeting.

If you have any confidential concerns pertaining to the student's behavior, mentor-student interactions, or committee member interactions, please either compose a Confidential Chair's report and send to the DGS, or simply schedule a time to talk to the DGS. Likewise, if a U grade has been discussed with the mentor, or if the student's progress is marked as unsatisfactory, please notify the DGS.

**DEBRIEFING WITH STUDENT:** As the student is invited back, the other committee members may depart if they choose to; the Chair stays with the student to inform them of the outcome and go over the committee's evaluation. The mentor may be present at the discussion at the Chair's discretion. The Chair needs to remind the student that every semester there is a grade (S – satisfactory, U – unsatisfactory) that the mentor is responsible for providing and that the committee meeting evaluation helps guide that grade. Remind the student that three U's in a row result in dismissal from graduate school as per graduate school rules. Make sure to indicate clearly as to whether the committee feels that a Satisfactory, or Unsatisfactory progress has been made and then proceed to discuss what formed the rationale for an S or U evaluation. These discussions are very important to the student. It is helpful to be specific when discussing strengths and weaknesses. The evaluation forms and letter are immediately available to the student, as soon as they are uploaded by the Chair to Redcap.

**CHAIR RESPONSIBILITIES IF MEETING IS HELD REMOTELY:** If the committee meeting is held remotely via Zoom, the student generates and shares a link with the committee. There are additional responsibilities of the chair:

- The chair should advise the student to log on a few minutes prior to the meeting so that the chair and the student can share host and ensure that the share screen and audio works properly. It is important for the Chair to have the option to become the host, so that they can enable the waiting room option for the student prior and after the conclusion of the student's update presentation.
- At the start of the meeting, the Chair establishes how questions will be asked. Because it is difficult to identify pauses on zoom, one style that works well is for committee members to interrupt at any time with the single word "Question." The student can then finish speaking their thought and acknowledge the questioner.
- After discussion is concluded, the Chair - as co-host - can place the student in a waiting room so the committee can fill out the SACS forms and discuss the contents of the Committee report. Let the student know that deliberations often last 10-15 minutes.
- After the deliberations, the student is readmitted from the waiting room and the other committee members can depart if they choose to. The chair discusses the committee's thoughts with the student.