

**AU-CMB Doctoral Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs)
Policies for Application Review, Orientation, Rotations and Evaluation**

Application and Review Cycle:

- AU-CMB GRA application and review cycles will be scheduled annually.
- **The CMB graduate fellowship is intended for recruitment. Students already enrolled in a Ph.D. program are not eligible.**
- **At the present time, students completing a master's degree at AU are eligible. However, these students are required to do research rotations in two laboratories other than the one in which they have conducted their M.S. research. They do not simply continue to work in the laboratory in which they conducted their M.S. research. They are free to choose the same or a different laboratory for their Ph.D. research**
- Applications will be accepted throughout the year
- Deadline for receipt of applications will be **February 15**.
- Announcement of awards will be made no later than **April 1**.
- Students will be accepted to begin their doctoral training in the Fall of each year.
- Deferral of admission from Fall to Spring may be approved with adequate justification.
- Applications will be reviewed, and recommendations for assistantship awards will be made to the Director by the AU-CMB Graduate Student Affairs Committee.
- The AU-CMB Graduate Student Affairs Committee will consist of 6 AU-CMB Graduate Faculty members (level 2) representing each AU-CMB area and participating college, and one doctoral student engaged in AU-CMB-related research.

Orientation:

- Orientation will be conducted by the Director of the AU-CMB each Fall / Spring.
- Orientation objectives will be to:
 - introduce new GRAs to the AU-CMB program;
 - review expectations of AU-CMB GRAs; and
 - review policies governing AU-CMB assistantship support as outlined below.

Conditions of Assistantship Support:

- Each AU-CMB GRA will receive:
 - a base stipend (assistantship) of \$15,360;
 - a stipend supplement of \$3000 (total stipend = \$18,360.00); and
 - an AU-CMB *Peak of Excellence* tuition waiver.
- AU-CMB GRA support at the level indicated above will be budgeted for one year.
- Assuming satisfactory performance (see below) AU-CMB GRA support will be provided for one year. Thereafter, responsibility for assistantship support and arrangement of tuition waivers must be assumed by a home department, as identified and negotiated by the GRA (see below). Support at the level provided by the AU-CMB is not guaranteed after the first year.
- AU-CMB GRA support for the full one year will require a satisfactory overall performance evaluation, to be submitted at the end of the probationary rotation period (see below).
- AU-CMB GRA support will be terminated at 30 days after submission of an unsatisfactory overall performance evaluation that is approved by the AU-CMB Graduate Student Affairs Committee (see below).

Doctoral Graduate Assistants (GRAs) - Responsibilities:

Minimally, each AU-CMB GRA will be responsible for:

- becoming informed of and meeting all requirements of the AU-CMB program and Graduate School as necessary for progress toward completion of the PhD degree in a

- timely manner;
- working with the AU-CMB Graduate Faculty Mentor (GFM) to develop a rotation schedule;
- completing rotation-related activities and scheduling performance evaluations (see below)
- maintaining positive academic standing in the Graduate School while meeting all research/rotation-related requirements as defined through interactions with the GFM and cooperating faculty participating in rotations and performance evaluations (see below).
- identifying, in consultation with the GFM, an academic home department and graduate advisor through which stipend and related support will be arranged upon completion of the one year AU-CMB GRA period.

Graduate Faculty Mentors:

- Upon enrollment, AU-CMB GRAs will be assigned to a member of the Graduate Faculty who is conducting research in an area of primary interest to the student, and who agrees to serve as the Graduate Faculty Mentor (GFM).
- Students may request a specific GFM however **it is CMB graduate fellowship policy that a faculty member is only allowed to mentor one CMB fellowship recipient each year.**
- **More than one CMB student per year may participate in a laboratory research rotation with a faculty member, but only one student at a time. Because the restrictions apply only to the first year of a CMB student's PhD program (after that the student becomes a member of a department and is no longer a "CMB student"), it is possible that more than one student may ultimately choose and work with the same advisor for their Ph.D. research after the first year.**
- **It is the intent of the CMB fellowship program that students enter without commitment to or from a particular faculty member beyond the first year and that commitments are made after exploring options through rotations.**
- It will be the responsibility of the GFM to:
 - provide an academic home to the GRA during their first year by serving as advisor and principal coordinator of academic and research-/rotation-related activities of the GRA;
 - organize and monitor the rotation schedule (see below) with the GRA;
 - serve as chairperson for performance evaluations of the GRA (see below); and
 - facilitate efforts of the GRA to identify a 'permanent' academic home through which the student will receive support and pursue their doctoral research upon completion of the one year AU-CMB-supported training period.
- The 'permanent' academic home can be identified at any time after certification of a 'satisfactory' probationary period (see below), and must be identified prior to the end of the first year.

Rotations:

- All AU-CMB GRAs are required at least two research rotations, **(each 6-14 weeks long)** one of which must be arranged outside of the laboratory of the GFM (mentor). Additional rotations are encouraged, but not required.
- Broadly, rotation objectives are to provide opportunities for GRAs to learn about research programs, methodologies and directions in active CMB-affiliated laboratories, and to facilitate interactions between faculty and students that will contribute to identification of a research area and academic home for the GRA after completion of the AU-CMB-sponsored year. **Students may enter the AU-CMB program with the idea that they want to do research with a certain faculty member, but the rotations encourage students to explore other areas and possibly change their minds.**
- **During the period of each rotation, the student conducts a research project and becomes a member of the rotation sponsor's research group, attending lab meetings,**

journal clubs, and reading journal articles in the research area of that lab. Students should expect to spend at least 20 hours a week on these activities.

- During the research rotation, the student should not continue to work on projects or have responsibilities in their mentor's lab. The research rotation should not consist of being sent to another lab simply to learn a technique to be applied to a project in the mentor's lab.
- Students who have conducted research at Auburn University as an undergraduate student, M.S. student, or employee should do both of their required research rotations in labs other than the one(s) in which they have already worked. (This does not apply to undergraduate student jobs that consisted entirely of lab maintenance work such as dishwashing or reagent preparation.) The rationale is that the student already has been exposed to research in that lab and should have the opportunity to explore more areas.
- The rotation schedule will be planned by the GFM, in consultation with the GRA, and will be coordinated with AU-CMB faculty who agree, in writing, to sponsor the rotation (see Rotation Proposal form below). As noted above, only one CMB student may rotate with a faculty member at a time.
- General scientific and technical objectives of each rotation will be defined in writing before the first rotation begins, approved by the GFM and faculty rotation sponsor(s), and filed by the GRA in the CMB program office by the end of the third week after enrollment (see Rotation Proposal form below).
- Students will receive academic credit for their rotation as a 'Special Problem/Study/Topics' (Ex. - 2h credit for a 6wk rotation; 4h credit for a semester rotation).
- The faculty sponsor of the rotation will arrange to receive credit as 'instructor' for the rotation period.
- At the end of each rotation the GRA will file a brief written report in summary of the rotation experience (rotation summary; see Rotation Summary form below).
- The rotation summary will be signed by both the GRA and sponsoring faculty member to document that it is an accurate, fair and reasonable account of the activities engaged in by the GRA during the rotation period.
- Faculty research rotation sponsors will indicate, in writing whether GRA performance was satisfactory or unsatisfactory, and provide a brief explanation of any unsatisfactory evaluation (see below).

Seminar Course:

- During each term (fall, spring, summer) of the CMB assistantship, GRAs will enroll and participate in a one credit CMB seminar course. Fall semester 2009, the course number for this course will be: VBMS 8950 Biomedical Sciences Seminar, section P77. (In future terms, the course will have a different number.)
- First term, the course will be a journal club. Students will present and discuss journal articles from primary literature. Second term, each student will present his/her research work during their first and/or second research rotations. Third term, students will prepare a short proposal of their proposed PhD research. Students beginning the CMB program in spring semester will participate with the other students, but will make a presentation (journal club, research, proposal) corresponding to their term (first, second, or third).
- In addition to scientific presentations, the course will provide a forum for interaction among CMB-GRAs and discussion of various aspects of graduate study.
- Grading will be Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory for the first semester (journal club). The second and third semester courses will be graded with letter grades.

Performance Evaluation:

- Upon enrollment, AU-CMB GRAs begin a probationary period that will extend through the second week after mid-term of the second semester.

AU-CMB GRA Program Policies 2010

- A preliminary performance review will be conducted at 10-12 weeks after the beginning of the first semester, and will involve the GRA, GFM and either a member of the AU-CMB Graduate Student Affairs committee (GSAC) or the faculty rotation sponsor if different from the GFM.
- Objectives of the preliminary performance review will be to:
 - review academic and scientific/technical progress of the GRA
 - provide the GRA with constructive criticism and recommendations for improvement.
 - determine whether performance of the GRA is 'satisfactory' or 'needs improvement'.
- Suggestions for improvement of performance should be made directly to the GRA and recorded at the time of the performance review meeting (see Preliminary Performance Evaluation form below).
- An overall performance evaluation of each GRA will be conducted after mid-term of the second semester and within the probationary period (see above).
- Present at the overall performance review will be the GRA, the GFM, the faculty rotation sponsor(s), and a representative of the AU-CMB Graduate Student Affairs Committee (GSAC).
- The GFM will serve as chair of the performance evaluation meeting.
- Objectives of the overall performance evaluation will be to:
 - permit the GRA to review academic, technical and research-related progress to date, with appropriate documentation;
 - provide an opportunity for faculty in attendance to identify academic, technical and professional strengths and weaknesses in performance of the GRA and provide constructive criticism as appropriate.
 - allow participating faculty to determine whether overall performance of the GRA during the probationary period was satisfactory or unsatisfactory.
- The GRA will be informed of the overall performance evaluation at this meeting.
- A final report of overall GRA performance in the probationary period will be filed in the CMB program office with a recommendation from participating faculty for continuance (satisfactory performance) or non-continuance (unsatisfactory performance) of AU-CMB support for the balance of the year.
- An explanation of an unsatisfactory overall performance evaluation will be developed by the GFM and GSAC representative in attendance at the review and communicated to both the Director and to the Chair of the AU-CMB GSAC. This report will be reviewed by the GSAC within one week of submission. Acceptance of an unsatisfactory performance review by the Director, as recommended by the GSAC, will result in 30 days notice of non-continuance of AU- CMB GRA support.

**AU-CMB Doctoral Graduate Research Assistants Program
Rotation Proposal^{1,2,3}**

Student name:
Starting date/Date Enrolled:
Email:
Phone:

AU-CMB Graduate Faculty Mentor (GFM):
Email:
Phone:
Department:
College:

Rotation 1:

Faculty Sponsor:
Email:
Phone:

Proposed length of Rotation: 6wk 10-14 wk/semester

Start date: End date:

Objectives (Briefly, describe technical/scientific goals):

Signature of Faculty Sponsor of Rotation 1: _____

Signature of AU-CMB GRA: _____

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¹This form must be filed with the CMB program office no later than the end of the 3rd week after enrolling in the program.

²A minimum of one rotation must be completed outside of the laboratory of the Graduate Faculty Mentor (GFM).

³Single rotations must be at least 6 weeks in length and should not exceed 1 semester in length.

**AU-CMB Doctoral Graduate Research Assistants Program
Rotation Proposal^{1,2,3}**

Student name:
Starting date/Date Enrolled:
Email:
Phone:

AU-CMB Graduate Faculty Mentor (GFM):
Email:
Phone:
Department:
College:

Rotation 2:
Faculty Sponsor:
Email:
Phone:
Proposed length of Rotation: 6wk 10-14 wk/semester
Start date: End date:
Objectives (Briefly, describe technical/scientific goals):

Signature of Faculty Sponsor of Rotation 2: _____

Signature of AU-CMB GRA: _____

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¹This form must be filed with the CMB program office no later than the end of the 3rd week after enrolling in the program.

²A minimum of one rotation must be completed outside of the laboratory of the Graduate Faculty Mentor (GFM).

³Single rotations must be at least 6 weeks in length and should not exceed 1 semester in length.

**AU-CMB Doctoral Graduate Research Assistants Program
Rotation Summary**

Student name:

Email:

Rotation (circle 1): 1st 2nd

Faculty Sponsor:

Email:

Rotation Start date:

End date:

To be completed by the student:

Summary - (In the space below, provide a succinct description of the technical objectives, documentable accomplishments and scientific implications of work conducted in this rotation):

This is an accurate account of the rotation activities engaged in by the student named above and whose signature appears below:

Faculty Sponsor

Student

— To be completed by the faculty rotation sponsor ---

Rotation performance was (circle one): Satisfactory Unsatisfactory¹

¹If unsatisfactory, please provide an explanation on the back of this form.

**AU-CMB Doctoral Graduate Research Assistants Program
Preliminary Performance Evaluation**

Student:

Date enrolled:

Date of Preliminary Performance Evaluation Meeting:

AU-CMB Graduate Faculty Mentor (GFM):

Email:

Faculty Sponsor of Rotation 1 (if different from GFM) :

AU-CMB Graduate Faculty Representative (if applicable):

We have met with the AU-CMB Doctoral Graduate Research Assistant named above and have reviewed and discussed the overall performance of this student as reflected by their academic, scientific and technical activities and accomplishments at Auburn University to date.

Performance of this student during the preliminary evaluation period is (circle one):

Satisfactory

Needs Improvement¹

Signatures (as appropriate):

Graduate Faculty Mentor

Faculty Rotation Sponsor

AU-CMB GSAC² Representative

I disagree with the above evaluation³:

Graduate Faculty Mentor

Faculty Rotation Sponsor

AU-CMB GSAC² Representative

¹Note: Recommendations for improvement should be communicated to the GRA and recorded on the back of this form.

²AU-CMB Graduate Student Affairs Committee (GSAC).

³Dissenting faculty must provide an explanation on the back of this form.

**AU-CMB Doctoral Graduate Research Assistants Program
Overall Performance Evaluation for the Probationary Period**

Student:

Date enrolled:

Date of Performance Evaluation Meeting:

AU-CMB Graduate Faculty Mentor:

Email:

Faculty Sponsor of Rotation 1:

Faculty Sponsor of Rotation 2 (if applicable):

We have met with the AU-CMB Doctoral Graduate Research Assistant named above and have reviewed and discussed the overall performance of this student as reflected by their activities and accomplishments through rotations and by their academic performance at Auburn University to date.

Performance of this student during the probationary rotation period has been (circle one):

Satisfactory

Unsatisfactory¹

Signatures (as appropriate):

Graduate Faculty Mentor

Faculty Rotation Sponsor - 1

Faculty Rotation Sponsor - 2

AU-CMB GSAC² Representative

I disagree with the above evaluation³:

Graduate Faculty Mentor

Faculty Rotation Sponsor - 1

Faculty Rotation Sponsor - 2

AU-CMB GSAC² Representative

¹Note: An unsatisfactory overall evaluation, approved by the GSAC and Director, will result in termination of AU-CMB support in 30 days.

²AU-CMB Graduate Student Affairs Committee (GSAC).

³Dissenting faculty must provide an explanation on the back of this form.