ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORTS FOR THE GRADUATE PROGRAM IN PHYSIOLOGY AND PHARMACOLOGY

Preamble:

The document POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR THE GRADUATE PROGRAM IN PHYSIOLOGY AND PHARMACOLOGY indicates that written reports are required for advisory committee meetings (with the exception of the first introductory meeting). The reports are to be given in hard copy to Committee members **at least one week before the meeting,** and should contain 4 sections: 1) Academic courses/teaching accomplished; 2) Background and rationale; 3) Research progress update; 4) Proposed future plans.

This document provides a template for Advisory Committee Reports, highlighting features that experience has shown to be useful.

The general strategy is to write the advisory report as the beginning of your thesis or publication. It should not be composed *de novo* for the Advisory Committee. Rather, present the background and rationale as you would for a scientific paper, including full and complete referencing in a suitable style. Present data in a style suitable for future publication. The document will evolve and be improved as you progress through the program. It is understandable that some preliminary data will be presented, which will require additional studies. This saves your time and aids in soliciting the advice of your Advisory Committee about the raw data and the advantages of differing types of presentations. The end result will be a polished document with data figures that may be suitable for directly incorporated into the thesis.

(Approved by Graduate Studies Committee, February 5, 2002)

Cover Page

Tentative thesis title

Student name

Advisor(s)

Members of the advisory committee

(Remember that the Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee and the Chair of the Department are *ex officio* members of all Advisory Committees. They do not normally receive copies of the advisory committee reports.)

Date of Meeting

Location of Meeting

Body of Document

Include page numbers.

Use double spacing to allow room for written comments.

1) Academic courses/teaching accomplished

Summarize your activities during the last few months (usually since your last Advisory Committee Meeting AND what you are doing for the next academic term).

2) Background and rationale

After a concise statement of the rationale, present the overall and specific **HYPOTHESES**. There is benefit in composing clear statements of objectives and hypotheses from the very beginning. (For reports in the middle of your graduate program, this can include a brief overall concept of the thesis and then a more concise summary of the material for the recent work and the proposed next phase).

It is almost always useful to prepare a **schematic diagram** summarizing the background knowledge, and highlighting the focus of your studies.

This “conceptual framework” will prove useful throughout your training period, and in many cases will be incorporated into the thesis introduction and discussion.

3) Research progress update

Data presentation is critical.

The material should be organized in a way that reflects the beginning of a scientific publication. That means the findings need to be supported with sample sizes and general details of reproducibility. Give sample sizes, # animals, # cells, # fields examined, whatever is suitable.

Start learning the appropriate statistical analysis NOW.

Provide Figure legends with the Figures. Indicate if your estimates of variation are standard error of the mean, or standard deviation. Give sample sizes.

These details are the first draft for your thesis. They will evolve, but always keep that endpoint in mind.

Do prepare figures incorporating suitable control experiments or validation of methods (e.g., time-course, concentration-dependence, vehicle controls). They may not go into a publication, but are often essential in the thesis.

Do not waste your time preparing frivolous figures just for the advisory report. Focus your attention on drafts of final figures.

Are you presenting micrographs? If so, include calibration bars. If you don't have them, go back and calibrate your system now. It is better to learn these steps early in the process.

References: It is imperative that you use suitable references from the scientific literature, as you would in a publication or thesis. It is preferable to use names and dates in the text (rather than numbers). For the reference list, use a format with **full authors and publication title**. If you are using referencing software, now is the time to begin building that database.

4) Proposed future plans.

Give a concise summary of your future experimental plans, along with a realistic timetable. Keep in mind that you will be meeting with your Advisory Committee approximately every 6 months, so set your goals appropriately. This does NOT preclude providing a longer-term plan – particularly when looking at the "package" you will be considering for your thesis. Presentation of preliminary data greatly strengthens the case.

Knowing the literature (and citing it) is important so that you can justify the appropriateness and timeliness of the proposed studies.