

Student-Faculty-Staff Rights and Responsibilities at the University of South Florida College of Marine Science

Preamble

The College of Marine Science at the University of South Florida (USF-CMS) is an academic institution dedicated to the education and training of future scientists, and is a scientific community where world-class research is performed. The primary mission of USF-CMS is to conduct basic and applied research in ocean sciences. The academic environment at USF-CMS includes but extends well beyond the classroom, with students, staff, and faculty all required to travel globally and to work in close quarters in order to conduct cutting-edge ocean science research.

The success of graduate faculty, students, and staff (including post-docs and non-tenure earning faculty) conducting ocean science research at USF-CMS is integral to our research mission. To ensure the success of all members of our academic community, we must be able to work freely in an academic environment of respect, dignity, diversity, and inclusion. The USF-CMS community embraces individual differences in culture, race, age, sexual orientation, gender, and abilities.

It is the intention of this document to strengthen the USF-CMS academic environment by offering a defined set of professional, ethical, and scientific principles aimed toward academic success. This document is also intended to establish a system for reporting and reviewing violations of this policy, and offers guidelines of disciplinary actions for violations. Nothing in this document replaces existing guidelines, rules, procedures, or contracts as set forth by the USF Office of Graduate Studies, the USF College of Marine Science, United Faculty Florida (UFF), Graduate Assistants United (UFF-GAU), or others. It is expected that all members of the USF-CMS community understand and adhere to the principles laid out here.

1. Responsibilities of all graduate students, staff, and faculty

All students, staff, and faculty are expected to treat each other with the same respect, dignity, and professionalism afforded to any other colleague or peer. To this extent, USF-CMS fully endorses and abides by the code of scientific ethics endorsed by major scientific organizations, such as the American Geophysical Union¹. The basic principles of this code are:

- *Excellence, integrity, and honesty* in all aspects of research.
- *Personal accountability* in the conduct of research and dissemination of the results.
- *Professional courtesy, equity, and fairness* in working with others.
- *Freedom to responsibly pursue science* without interference or coercion.
- *Unselfish cooperation* in research.
- *Good stewardship* of research and data on behalf of others.
- *Legal compliance* in all aspects of research, including intellectual property.
- *Ethical approach* in evaluating the implications of research on humans and animals.

¹ <http://ethics.agu.org/files/2013/03/Scientific-Integrity-and-Professional-Ethics.pdf>

It is the responsibility of *all* members of the USF-CMS community to also uphold the codes of conduct as outlined by the USF Office of Graduate Studies and the USF Faculty Handbook. However, since the graduate-only academic environment at USF-CMS is unique, it is important to enumerate some specific responsibilities. Although we have listed some specific examples and situations, this document cannot cover all eventualities. If a situation occurs that student, staff, or faculty member feels may impede academic success, and it is not covered here with a specific procedure, he or she should feel free to contact the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs to mediate or find a solution.

1. All students, staff, and faculty should realize that any email sent to or from a University account (@mail.usf.edu or @usf.edu account) is public record, is archived, and is subject to Florida's public records Sunshine Laws². Therefore, one should be thoughtful and respectful in what they communicate over email. Also, any communications sent to or from USF email may be used as an official record of communications between students, staff, and faculty (e.g., to confirm deadlines or expectations of work, research, or exams).
2. A student should meet with their advisor at least once per semester (and preferably more regularly). A faculty member has the responsibility to set aside time to meet with their students on a regular basis. The time of meetings should be negotiated between the student and faculty member so that it is convenient for both.
3. Students should also be in contact with the other members of their committee (once it is formed) at least once per semester.
4. It is the responsibility of all members of USF-CMS to maintain a safe environment, to be responsible for their personal safety and to report unsafe practices or conditions to their supervisors.
5. It is the responsibility of students to use laboratory equipment in a safe manner, the way in which it was designed/according to safe standard operating procedures, and the way in which the supervisor/staff member has trained them. In the event of a failure/malfunction or compromise to user safety or equipment, the student should stop use immediately, report it to their supervisor or appropriate staff member, and wait to complete any task(s) until the issue has been resolved.
6. It is the responsibility of the faculty member (or staff supervisor) to maintain a safe environment and safe operation of equipment in the lab where students work. If a student has reported a failure or a safety issue in a piece of equipment that is necessary to perform a task for the student's thesis, the student cannot be faulted if the task cannot be completed until the supervisor has repaired the equipment or fixed the safety issue.
7. Students should be prepared when reporting results to their advisors in meetings (e.g., with a PowerPoint summary, written text, summary figures), and be ready to answer questions the advisor may have. If practicable, materials should be sent to the advisor to review in advance of the meeting.

² The Florida Supreme Court has interpreted public records to encompass all materials made or received by an agency in connection with official business which are used to perpetuate, communicate or formalize knowledge. Electronic communications, such as e-mail, made or received by employees in connection with official business are public records, and subject to disclosure. Refer to the 2017 Sunshine Law Manual for more details: [http://myfloridalegal.com/webfiles.nsf/WF/MNOS-AKBS9L/\\$file/2017+Sunshine+Law+Manual.pdf](http://myfloridalegal.com/webfiles.nsf/WF/MNOS-AKBS9L/$file/2017+Sunshine+Law+Manual.pdf)

8. It is the responsibility of the advisor (faculty or staff) to review any material sent by a student before a meeting in preparation for the meeting, and vice versa, provided sufficient time is given.

1.1. Data Management and Responsibility

All non-Defense Department US funding agencies (e.g., NSF, NASA, NOAA, etc.) require that data collected or generated under a grant be managed appropriately so that they can be used by other scientists in the future. But any data collected by a USF student, staff, or faculty member is considered the intellectual property of USF, and thus must also be managed appropriately, even if it is NOT collected as part of a federal funding agency.

This means keeping appropriate metadata (i.e., where the data were collected, times of collections, instruments used in the collection, etc.), as well as details of any analysis or editing done on the data. Federal agencies, and many journals, also require that the data be stored in a publically accessible database (i.e., with a permanent and searchable web-link). It is ultimately the principal investigator's (PI's) or advisor's responsibility to maintain the data properly, but all scientists working with the data (including students and staff) must be cognizant of these rules and provide support to their supervisor as needed to help meet these requirements.

The following are some specific rules to be aware of.

1. All research data, notebooks, and methods generated are intellectual property of USF or of the collaborating institution. This includes, but is not limited to: raw observations, computer models, computer programs, analyzed data, and lab manuals. Students must ensure that any data set they generated, or code they wrote to analyze the data, and lab notebooks are given to the PI of the project (or advisor) along with relevant descriptions. This ensures the PI or advisor and future students can continue the analysis. If the data, code, and notebooks have no restrictions (e.g., from a DoD grant), the student or staff member is free to keep a copy.
2. Because ultimate responsibility for all data rests with the PI on the project (or advisor), they have the right to request a copy of those data at any time and may use those data in project reports and presentations. When the student's advisor is not the lead PI on a project, the advisor still retains the right to request a copy of project data from supervised students at any time and to use those data in project reports and presentations as necessary to meet obligations to funding agencies and the university. Data and results generated by a student, but presented by the advisor, will be attributed and acknowledged appropriately as the work of the student.
3. Everyone working with the data (students, staff, faculty) is expected to exercise utmost responsibility and integrity when analyzing the data entrusted to them. That includes quality checking all data and formulas, and asking for assistance and advice as appropriate on data analysis and interpretation. It also means that the data should not be shared without the approval of the PI or advisor.
4. In the event that the data are proprietary (e.g., using Department of Defense or private funding), points 2 and 3 still apply; however, everyone working with the data will also be required to sign a data-confidentiality agreement.

5. In the event that the data contains sensitive information (e.g., personally identifying information of interviewees or participants, financial data, confidential data from other agencies) the student must respect the data handling policies of USF, the funding agencies, and data providers. Students, staff, and faculty may be asked to read, acknowledge receipt and follow the data management plan as submitted to a funding agency.

1.2. Publications and Presentations

It is expected that the results of scientific endeavors will be shared with the broader community. This is generally done via presentations at scientific meetings and publication in peer-reviewed journals. There are some specific responsibilities for students, staff, and faculty regarding presentations and publications that are enumerated below.

1. All abstracts students plan to submit for presentation at professional meetings should be given to the advisor and any co-authors sufficiently in advance of deadlines to make any suggestions and corrections before the abstract is submitted (at a minimum, one week before a deadline). To determine authorship, students should consider whose efforts and data contributed to the data to be presented; in some cases, the advisor will recommend addition of appropriate co-authors.
2. The student should prepare a draft of the presentation and distribute to the advisor and co-authors sufficiently in advance of the meeting (at a minimum, one week in advance) so that they have time to make suggestions and corrections.
3. All papers students have prepared for submission for publication in professional journals or similar venues must be submitted to the advisor and any other co-authors to make suggestions and corrections before submission.
 - a. The student must give the co-authors sufficient time to make comments before they submit. **Three to four weeks is a recommended minimum for co-authors other than the student's primary advisor**, with the understanding that timelines may need to be adjusted depending on individual circumstances for the advisor, the student, and co-authors.
 - b. The faculty advisor **MUST** provide written comments on student papers being prepared for publication **within a reasonable time frame to maximize student success**. To ensure proper editorial feedback, a student cannot expect rapid turnaround of a manuscript or other written reports with short notice. However, if an advisor has not given a written revision **after two months, following repeated follow-up written communications** by the student, then the student should contact the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs to mediate and advise on the next course of action. This is to allow for continued scholarly productivity and advancement of the student.
 - c. Graduate students will ideally be first author on any paper they derive from their thesis or dissertation research and edit to a publishable form, as long as they meet the qualifications or expectations as previously discussed with their major advisor. However, this **must** be discussed and agreed upon by the student, major advisor, and all co-authors.
 - d. Often, a graduate student's work is only part of a large collaborative project that involves numerous institutions or PIs. In such cases, it is expected that the major advisor, the lead PI, or a designee of the lead PI will be the lead author who

synthesizes the contributions and data from multiple co-authors. In such a case, the student will be given a co-authorship appropriate to their contributions to a publication. This should be discussed and understood by all parties before the paper is written. The designee may be the student if this is agreed upon by all parties, and in such a case the student would be lead author.

- e. Sometimes a student's work must be published very quickly and before they graduate (e.g., due to grant restrictions or because it is a novel work that might be "scooped" if not published quickly). However, if the advisor agrees that it is not necessary to publish the work immediately, then a graduated student can publish the work as first author within a reasonable time after completing their degree. The exact amount of time **must** be agreed upon by both the student and the advisor. If a graduated student does not make a **good-faith attempt** to submit their research for publication within the time frame mutually agreed upon by the student and advisor, **AND** the advisor has either documented written attempts to contact the student about the manuscript or confirmed that the work has been abandoned by the student, then the advisor assumes the right to publish parts or all of that thesis or dissertation research as first author (or ask another student, post-doc, or staff member to take over the manuscript). In this case, the graduated student will be listed as a co-author as appropriate to their contributions to a publication.
4. Acknowledgments are a critical part of papers and presentations. Students should check with their advisor (and the lead PI, if other than the advisor) for appropriate information on grant and funding agency details, contract, and permit acknowledgments, as well as names of others whose efforts or support contributed to the success of the research.

2. Graduate Research and Teaching Assistants

A Graduate Assistant (GA) is first and foremost a student who is engaged in the continued process of training and acquisition of knowledge in order to enhance employability in the job market. A GA is an *employed* position and generally classified as either a Research Assistant (RA) or a Teaching Assistant (TA). GA positions are not a fellowship. Thus, RAs and TAs are expected to perform work for a supervisor to support either a funded grant (RA) or a class (TA) in addition to their regular class work and research for their dissertation or thesis.

Salary paid from a GA appointment should not be confused with a fellowship, where a stipend is given to the student to support their dissertation or thesis research. All GAs have to sign an appointment letter specifying their position and appointment terms, while fellowship recipients do not. A graduate student can hold a fellowship at the same time they hold a GA appointment, and are expected to work to complete the duties of both.

All GAs are also required to be enrolled as full-time students, for a minimum of 9 credit hours in the Fall and Spring semesters and 6 credit hours in the Summer. Thus, a GA should expect to be spending a minimum of 27 hours per week (9 credits x 3 hours per credit) on class work and/or independent research **in addition to** the duties and hours of the GA appointment. Considering a GA is typically hired for 20 hours per week (0.50 FTE), this means a student with a GA appointment should expect to spend at least 47 hours per week on their studies, research, and tasks as assigned under the terms of their appointment. All GAs are expected to complete the duties of

their appointment regardless of whether or not the tasks are directly related to their thesis or dissertation research.

Although all GAs and faculty that supervise them have the general responsibilities outlined in Section 1, they also have some additional responsibilities outlined below.

2.1 Graduate Assistant Responsibilities

1. It is the responsibility of the GA to meet with their advisor at the beginning of the appointment term to discuss expectations and a schedule for the student to perform their tasks that works for both individuals.
2. At the start of an appointment term, a GA should set up a regular time to meet with their supervisor to discuss results, ask questions, and allow modification of task lists. If an in-person meeting is not possible, a GA should report outcomes to their supervisor via email or phone call. The supervisor and the student must agree upon the regular meeting or reporting times. Changes to a GA's schedule should be communicated in writing with as much advance notice as possible.
3. If the GA has any questions about the task(s) assigned, has problem(s) that may inhibit progress, etc., it is their responsibility to contact their supervisor as soon as possible to discuss and find a resolution. RAs should understand that some tasks may lead to experiments that don't work as intended. While this is frustrating, it is part of scientific research and should be considered part of the RA's work tasks.
4. GAs have the responsibility of **full participation** in activities associated with funded research activities that support the basic operation of the laboratory. These activities may include field projects, time-sensitive post-sampling activities and analyses, dishwashing, and other sporadic lab maintenance chores, as assigned by the advisor or advisor's designee with advisor's concurrence.
5. If office hours are required to be held for a TA position, the TA must arrange office hours at a time and place agreed upon with the instructor of the course. The hours and location must be advertised clearly to students in the course and the TA must be present during those hours to engage with students.
6. GAs may be asked to suspend work on regular or already assigned tasks in order to perform an additional task(s) with more immediate deadlines. Common examples include conference presentation or grant proposal deadlines, where the supervisor requests data, figures, or text prepared by a student. Prompt completion of any such assigned task(s) with a given deadline is expected. If for any reason a GA cannot complete the new task(s) by the deadline, they must inform the supervisor immediately.
7. Part of an RA's training may be to help train new students or RAs in the lab. If a supervisor asks an existing RA to train another student, this becomes part of their assigned tasks and it must be treated with due deference along with other assigned tasks. If an RA does not feel confident in their ability to train another student on such task(s), for any reason, this should be communicated immediately to the supervisor.
8. GAs may be expected to travel to work sites, meetings, or conferences as part of their responsibilities. Some effort may be required on the part of the GA to mitigate travel costs, such as traveling on weekends or holidays, taking public transportation instead of costlier alternatives, or staying at less expensive lodging. All GAs travelling under USF funding must follow USF travel policy.

9. GAs should keep detailed notes of all work carried out (e.g., in lab notebooks, electronic diaries, etc.), which are to be given to the appropriate supervisor at the end of their period of employment. See also “Data Management and Responsibility” in Section 1.

2.2 Faculty and Staff Supervisor Responsibilities

1. It is the responsibility of the faculty or staff supervisor to meet with the GA at the beginning of the appointment term to discuss expectations and a schedule for the student to perform their tasks that works for both individuals. Supervisors should also inform GAs about funding expectations and any grant funding timelines (e.g., when the funding supporting their position will end; see section 2.2.8 below).
2. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to clearly articulate the tasks they want the GA to perform at the start of the appointment term and to make sure the GA knows of any specific deadlines. This includes any tasks associated with basic operations of the lab (see section 2.1.4 above).
3. The supervisor (or a staff designee) must be available to meet with the GA on a regular basis in order to discuss results and to answer questions. At the start of an appointment term, the supervisor (or a staff designee) should set up a regular time to meet with the student to discuss results, ask questions, and allow modification of task lists. If an in-person meeting is not possible, a supervisor should be available to receive a report via email or phone call, and is responsible to respond in a timely manner to such a report. The supervisor and the student must agree upon the regular meeting or reporting times. Changes to a supervisor’s schedule should be communicated in writing with as much advance notice as possible.
4. A supervisor has the responsibility to inform a GA of new deadlines that arise after the start of the appointment that may lead to new task(s) to be performed (including, but not limited to, conference presentation or grant proposal deadlines where the GA may be expected to contribute data, figures, or text). It is the responsibility of the supervisor to inform the GA of new deadlines or tasks in a timely fashion that allows for successful completion of the tasks requested. If for any reason the GA indicates that they cannot successfully complete the new tasks by the deadline, the supervisor should make every effort to either (1) assign the tasks to another GA or student in the lab, or (2) provide assistance to the GA so the tasks can be completed by the deadline.
5. If an RA does not feel confident in their ability to train another student on a task(s) as assigned (see 2.1.7 above), the supervisor should make every effort to either (1) find another RA or student in the lab that can complete the training of the new student, or (2) provide assistance so the RA can complete the task(s) as requested.
6. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure the GA has access to all materials and space needed to successfully complete appointment duties. This may include access to primary literature, lab space, lab equipment and supplies, or a private or semi-private office to meet and talk with students during office hours.
7. It is the supervisor’s responsibility to maintain the safety and equipment in the lab where the GA works. If a GA has reported a failure in a piece of equipment, or a safety issue, that is necessary to perform an assigned task, the GA cannot be faulted if the task cannot be completed until the supervisor has repaired the equipment or fixed the safety issue.
8. The supervisor must give a GA sufficient warning if the grant supporting their appointment is ending (i.e., financial condition non-reappointment). This is to allow the GA sufficient

time to find new funding opportunities. Supervisors are encouraged to give students as much notice as possible, and **at a minimum**, GAs should be notified **at least one semester before** funding will end. A supervisor should make reasonable efforts to assist the GA in finding alternate employment through consideration for other vacancies appropriate for the skills of the student³.

9. If an RA appointment ends only because the grant funding ended, the supervisor must, at the request of the student, write a letter/email to the student noting that termination was due to financial considerations, and was not due to any problems with, or quality of, their work. This letter or email, if requested by the student, is in addition to the written non-reappointment notice required to be given to the GA by the University³.
10. The supervisor will provide a written annual evaluation of the GA's work for each appointment term which is one (1) semester or longer. The University-wide comprehensive annual performance appraisal format will be used. The evaluation shall include evaluation of assigned duties and such other responsibilities as are appropriate to the assignment. Additional consideration will be given to the satisfactory progress towards completion of the degree program according to University policy. Currently, at USF-CMS, this is completed as part of an annual student progress report. In addition, the USF-CMS Human Resources Office will require an annual performance evaluation for all Graduate Assistants. The evaluation will be conducted at the end of the appointment term and will be kept in an employee evaluation file in the Human Resources Office.

3. Academic Success through Proper Academic Conduct

The academic environment of USF-CMS is unique at USF in that it is dependent on a safe research environment that may include unusual working hours, a small campus, research at sea or at remote field camp locations. All of these environments are critical areas for students' professional training and pursuit of academic success. Work conducted in off-campus laboratories, on research vessels, small boats, field camps, and remote parts of the world is considered part of the USF-CMS academic environment, and the same rules and expectations apply as in a classroom or laboratory on campus.

Professional or scientific misconduct of any sort by students, faculty, or staff that is deemed to harm the academic environment or disrupt the academic progress or scholarly productivity of others will not be tolerated. Such conduct may be grounds for dismissal from the program, pursuant to policies and procedures outlined in USF Policy 3.025 ("Disruption of Academic Process")⁴. Disruptions include those incidents that either:

1. Direct attention away from the academic matters at hand; or
2. Present a danger to the health, safety or well-being of self or other persons.

For conduct that has a deleterious effect on the unique academic environment of USF-CMS, that cannot be resolved by the parties, and is deemed significant by either a faculty member, student, or staff member, USF-CMS will convene an Academic Grievance Committee (AGC) created on an *ad hoc* per-grievance basis. Each AGC will consist of two USF faculty, two students, and one

³ See also GAU Collective Bargaining Agreement, Section 2.5: Changes in appointment.

⁴ <http://regulationspolicies.usf.edu/regulations/pdfs/regulation-usf3.025.pdf>

staff member who are aware of the unique academic environment of a marine science college, and who are not directly involved with the disruption in question. The Dean of the College of Marine Science (CMS Dean) will appoint individuals to the committee on a per-grievance basis. To the extent practicable, members of the committee will be from disciplines outside those of the grievant and respondent. **Decisions of the AGC shall be solely based on judging whether a disruption has created an environment where academics or other scholarly activities have been harmed or hindered.**

Everyone at USF-CMS is encouraged to report any potential misconduct, even if they are not sure that it rises to the level of impinging on academic success, as defined here. One can discuss it with their advisor, another trusted faculty member, the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, or the Associate Dean of Research. These people can guide the determination of whether the misconduct rises to the level of officially reporting it.

3.1 Roles and Responsibilities of the USF-CMS Academic Grievance Committee

The Academic Grievance Committee neither supersedes nor precludes complaints or reports from being filed through other outlets concerning conduct at the University. The AGC can act in parallel with investigations being carried out by the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equal Opportunity (DIEO; charged with Title IX and Title VII investigations), by the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (SRR; student conduct investigations), or as referred by the Office of Students of Concern and Assessment of Threat (SOCAT), for instance.

1. The AGC will provide a transparent and straightforward mechanism for members of the USF-CMS community to put forth grievances. Any disruption that may involve forming an AGC must be reported first to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs (or the Associate Dean of Research or CMS Dean if the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs is involved). All members of the USF-CMS community are expected, and encouraged, to report academic grievances, academic disruptions, or potential violations of scientific or professional conduct policies as soon as they occur, or as soon as reasonably possible.
2. Once a disruption has been reported, the CMS Dean will decide if an AGC needs to be formed, and if so, will appoint members as outlined above.
3. The AGC will review facts related to the grievance and notify the respondent of the grievance.
4. The AGC will collect facts from the respondent and establish a list of witnesses of both the complainant and the respondent.
5. The AGC will conduct investigatory interviews, review evidence set forth by the complainant and the respondent, and file a finding in the grievance including recommendations for actions to be taken, including, but not limited to:
 - a. No finding, no action
 - b. recommendations for future faculty-student-staff interactions
 - c. restriction of participation in University or College activities, access to particular areas of the College (e.g., labs, offices), or restriction to areas during particular times of day
 - d. change in advisor, work supervisor, or committee member
 - e. dismissal from the program
6. The final finding and decision of action from the AGC is just a recommendation. The final decision of action will lay with the CMS Dean.

7. The AGC will provide the USF-CMS with redacted findings of all past cases to establish precedent. Such past findings will have to be redacted to satisfy the requirements of FERPA laws.

4. Debate and Critique

We recognize that USF-CMS is a unique place with a diverse community, and scholarly pursuits must include and respect a diversity of ideas, approaches, expression, and modes of learning. Respectful constructive debate and informed challenging of ideas are crucial aspects of the scientific process.

The scientific method is based upon the critical discussion of ideas and outcomes, including critique or rebuttals by colleagues. Constructive critique, respectful dialogue, and informed discussion are expected to be part of a graduate student's education and training as a scientist.

However, critique may rise to the level of bullying when it is destructive rather than constructive, inappropriate, personal or demeaning, or not related to the student's work. If a student feels that critique of their work has risen to the level of bullying, then they should immediately talk to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs to discuss and find a resolution.