



**DIVISION OF GRADUATE MEDICAL SCIENCES
BOSTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE**

To prospective thesis mentors in the MA in Medical Science Program:

The MA in Medical Science is a program in which the majority of students undertake in preparation for a career in medicine and/or research. It had been developed some years earlier, as a pioneering effort, in part, to help alleviate the shortage of physicians in this country. It has also provided opportunities for students who decide on a medical career post graduation. It has had a remarkable success to date. It requires 32 credits; most are taken with medical students. The thesis option can be completed by a 2-credit library thesis or up to an 8-credit research thesis. During 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007, 683 students graduated – an average of 171 students per year.

Of these, about 80% have conducted a laboratory thesis for Honors consideration. These theses may provide 2-8 credits but the standards for Honors are independent of the number of credits.

Students conducting a research thesis require an absolute minimum 6 months for their work for Honors consideration. Of these, approximately 64% will conduct their research at BUSM. They will spend a minimum of 5 hours per day or 25 hours per week for 6 months or a total of 672 hours in the laboratory or clinic.

A smaller group, about 16% annually, will conduct theses for Honors consideration outside the Institution. This occurs when a) *in-house* mentors are unavailable, b) for financial reasons, c) to gain experience in a desired area of research that may be unavailable at this Institution or d) students return to labs where they were employed prior to taking the MA in Medical Sciences Program (many in the Boston Area). In all cases, an *in-house BU* mentor is appointed as a first reader on the thesis to oversee the conduct of the research and assumes responsibility to avoid any legal issues. Locally a number of labs have been repeat participants in which our students have gained notable experiences and earned laudatory recommendations. These sites in close proximity include Boston Med Center, Framingham Heart Study, Mass. Gen. Hosp, Brigham & Women's Hosp, Beth Israel Hosp., Dana Farber, MIT labs, Medical Examiner, etc.

Additionally, numerous schools and academic institutions, private, state, and federal government, across the country have also hosted our students for research projects as well. In these latter instances, as well, the *in-house* BU mentor is strictly an administrative first reader. He or she is responsible for oversight on the thesis, i.e. legal issues – patent infringement, plagiarism, institutional standards, etc. and is not considered an author on any publications arising from the thesis. The laboratory mentor, the 2nd thesis reader, is provided full responsibility regarding publication and authorship. There are however, instances in which the *in-house* mentor and mentor at a distant institution have collaborated on a project involving shared interests and publication authorship; this decision has generally preceded

the start of the student's involvement. In some of these instances, the collaboration had been pre-determined and waited for an appropriately talented student.

In terms of the thesis itself, students need to write up their work as a formal thesis. Lab theses are on average 35-50 pages and are written in a similar format as a manuscript but with prepages and a vita. There are additional guidelines given to all MA students from Mugar Memorial Library on formatting. The project is one agreed upon by you and the student. It can be patient oriented / clinical or statistical work or it can be more traditional bench work. It is important to choose a project that is of reasonable scope for the time commitment you and the student decide. Some students work full time for 3-6 months, others work part-time for 6-8 month, a few may commit to a full year with a stipend. The project choice is up to you, your needs, the student's interests and time availability. There are a few forms that the student will need to complete and will require your signature. Additionally, we would greatly appreciate a copy of your C.V. so that the Division of Graduate Medical Sciences of Boston University School of Medicine may provide you a Special Appointment for mentoring one of our students.

All students completing a lab thesis are eligible for honors recognition. As their primary mentor you will need to recommend a deserving student for honors credit when they submit their final thesis by writing a brief letter supporting the thesis. All work is reviewed by the honors committee and they will make the final decision.

We thank you for providing an opportunity for one of our students to conduct research under your guidance.

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