

Policy on Using Non-Student Research Toward Degree Department of Microbiology & Immunology

UNC Graduate School policy is that "students are required to be registered whenever degree progress is being made or University resources (including faculty time) are being used to appropriately reflect work being done." Thus research conducted while an individual is not a student cannot count for degree credit.

Nevertheless, we have faced multiple situations in which a technician or a PREP student working in a Microbiology & Immunology department lab becomes a student (or a student leaves school for a while to be a technician) in the same lab. If research conducted partly while a non-student and partly while a student leads to a publication, then the following guidelines apply:

1. Fairness suggests that the student should be given credit for work done as a graduate student, but cannot receive credit for work done as a non-student. A reasonable way to accomplish this goal is to assess what type of authorship would be given to the person based solely on their contributions while a student. For example, a first-author paper arising from research spanning time as a non-student and student might be considered a middle-author paper toward the minimum publication requirement for the Ph.D., or might be considered a first-author publication if the work done while a student would merit first-authorship on its own. Similarly, a middle-author paper might or might not count, depending on the circumstances. The Director of Graduate Studies will make the decision about publication credit after consultation with both the student and research mentor.

This situation is not a concern for M.S. students, because there is no minimum publication requirement for the M.S. degree.

2. It is permissible to include in M.S. theses and Ph.D. dissertations manuscripts arising from projects spanning student and non-student status. A footnote should indicate what portion of the work the individual did while a student. This is entirely analogous to the requirement for a footnote indicating what portion of the work a student contributed to multi-author projects.

Note that we already have a policy (see October 2012 GSAC meeting) allowing technicians or post-baccalaureate students who take a UNC course within two years of entering BBSP to use one class toward fulfillment of our six course minimum. Other degree requirements (preliminary examinations, project approval, serving as TA, etc.) cannot be fulfilled while not a student.

Note that the above guidelines apply to regular M.S. and Ph.D. students; the special M.S. program for technicians has its own set of guidelines to deal with the situation of simultaneous technician and student status.