**Expectations for Graduate Research Assistants supported by SwRI and enrolled in the Joint Physics PhD program between UTSA and SwRI**

This document lists expectations for students with Research Assistantships and are enrolled in the joint physics Ph.D. program between UTSA and SwRI. These are to be considered minimum expectations, and individual advisors may have additional expectations. Address any questions regarding these expectations to your advisor or to the lead Adjoint Faculty member, Mihir Desai.

UTSA, SwRI, and the Space Science and Engineering Division all strive to have a safe, productive work environment. If you feel that any part of this program does not meet this goal at any level (e.g. unsafe working conditions, harassment in the work place, etc.) you should inform with your advisor, Mihir Desai (as lead Adjoint), or UTSA faculty or staff.

The doctoral degree requires a minimum of 81 semester credit hours beyond the bachelor's degree. These credits include contributions from both coursework and research work. For further details see <http://utsa.edu/gcat/chapter6/COS/phydept.html#phdp>.

In addition to satisfying all of the UTSA Graduate School requirements, SwRI-supported PhD students are also expected to meet the following criteria:

**Coursework**

Coursework will provide the fundamental understanding that your research will be built upon. Refer to your Graduate student handbook for more information, however you should:

* Enroll in at least 3 classes during Spring and Fall semesters, each with 3 semester credit hours, until advancement to candidacy.
* Complete a total of 13 courses, each with 3 semester credit hours that include 4 core courses and 7 advanced electives.
* Space Physics students advanced electives must include all seven Space Physics courses, namely, PHY 6123, PHY 6403, PHY 6623, and 4 Special Topics courses PHY 7703. Astrophysics students required core course requirements are being developed at this time.
* Maintain a GPA of at least 3.5, with a minimum Grade of B in any graduate class. All students should strive for straight A's in their coursework.

**Research Work**

The time required to graduate will depend largely on your effort in the program. As a funded research assistant we expect:

* At least 20 hours per week of research work during each Spring and Fall semester.
* At least 40 hours per week of research work during each Summer semester. Of these, 6 semester credit hours can be applied toward degree requirements such as Directed, Doctoral, or Dissertation Research.
* The number of hours listed above is what is needed to fulfill contractual requirements. You will need to put in significantly more hours to make substantial progress toward your degree.
* Three peer reviewed publications (accepted or in press) in the Journal of Geophysical Research, the Astrophysical Journal, Icarus or other equivalent journals related to your PhD Thesis project

**Facilities and Benefits**

In addition to the stipend and benefits listed in the Appointment Letter, students supported by SwRI shall be provided the following facilities:

* Access to laboratory and on-site SwRI campus facilities.
* Office and work space for research activities.
* Resources required to execute your research, including personal desktop computer with access to the internet.

**SwRI expectations**

As a visitor working at SwRI you will be expected to follow all institute regulations. These include:

* Agree to the institute acceptable use policies prior to gaining access to network resources.
* Complete required SwRI safety training courses prior to working in any laboratory.
* Not host any visitors (specifically foreign nationals) on the institute grounds without prior authorization from your advisor.
* Dress and act professionally while at the SwRI campus.

**Other helpful advice or comments for students (in no particular order):**

* Students must learn that mistakes are part of research, and lack of perfection does have the virtue of being an effective teacher. You will often be at a stage of your research where the next steps are not obvious. Try something and learn from it.
* Make sure to communicate with your advisor and committee often. This teamwork will make sure you are working on what is important and their experience can get you through some difficult issues.
* Do not neglect your classes, but be cognizant that ultimately you will be judged on your research. Classes are where you will build the foundation of your knowledge for your research, and on a practical point, if you do not keep your grades up will not be allowed to progress.
* Writing is a critical skill for working scientists. Like all skills, it needs to be practiced to achieve a level of proficiency. Unfortunately, many students (and scientists) are not proficient writers. Practice. When you write something (papers, proposals, etc.) ask for feedback from your advisor and your peers.
* In graduate school you will be building your network of peers, both inside and out of our program. When you go to meetings, make sure to meet and talk with other students and scientists from other institutions. Volunteer to serve on panels and committees and to review papers. This will not only expose you to what others are doing, but it will also help to introduce you as someone who wishes to be an active member of this field.
* There are many summer schools and conferences that you may attend. These are wonderful opportunities that we encourage you to pursue. However, it is possible to spend all summer in summer schools and conferences and not have any time for your research. Discuss with your advisor in advance your summer plans and the time you are expected to be here during the summer.
* One of the difficult lessons you may need to learn is time management. There are many resources out there to help (books, advice from faculty). We suggest you make yourself a plan with clear milestones. Include things like the classes you need to take, and the papers you will want to write. This will evolve over time, so review it with your advisor and change as appropriate. Be prepared to say no to things that won't advance you toward your degree.