

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA MEDICAL CENTER

Guidelines for Good Practice in Graduate Education



Faculty and Graduate Students

A major purpose of graduate education at the University of Nebraska Medical Center is to instill in each student an understanding of and capacity for scholarship, independent judgment, academic rigor, and intellectual honesty. It is the joint responsibility of faculty and graduate students to work together to foster these ends through relationships which encourage freedom of inquiry, demonstrate personal and professional integrity, and foster mutual respect.

Graduate student progress toward educational goals at the University of Nebraska Medical Center is directed and evaluated by an advisor, the relevant graduate committee, and the student's supervisory committee. The advisor and the individuals on the committees provide intellectual guidance in support of the scholarly activities of graduate students. The advisor, the supervisory committee, and the graduate committee also are charged with the responsibility of evaluating a graduate student's performance in scholarly activities. The graduate student, the advisor, the supervisory committee, and the graduate committee, comprise the basic unit of graduate education at an institution. It is the quality, breadth, and depth of interaction within this unit that largely determines the outcome of the graduate experience.

High quality graduate education depends upon the professional and ethical conduct of the participants. Faculty members and graduate students have complementary responsibilities in the maintenance of academic standards and the creation of high quality graduate programs. Excellence in graduate education is achieved when both faculty and students are highly motivated, possess the academic and professional backgrounds necessary to perform at the highest level, and are sincere in their desire to see each other succeed.

Graduate students must be viewed as early-stage professionals, not as students whose interest is guided by the desire to complete the degree. Graduate students have made a career choice, and must be viewed and treated as the next generation of professionals.

To accomplish this, it is essential that graduate students:

- ◆ conduct themselves in a mature, professional, ethical, and civil manner in all interactions with faculty and staff in accordance with the accepted standards of the discipline and UNMC policies governing nondiscrimination and sexual harassment.
- ◆ recognize that the faculty advisor provides the intellectual and instructional environment in which the student conducts research, and may, through access to teaching and research funds, also provide the student with financial support.
- ◆ expect that their research results will be incorporated into progress reports, summary documents, applications for continuation of funding, and similar documents authored by the faculty advisor, because most often the students' research is related to the faculty advisors' research program and the grants which support that research.
- ◆ recognize that faculty have broad discretion to allocate their own time and other resources in ways which are academically productive.
- ◆ recognize that the faculty advisor is responsible for monitoring the accuracy, validity, and integrity of the student's research. Careful, well-conceived research reflects favorably on the student, the faculty advisor, and the UNMC.
- ◆ exercise the highest integrity in taking examinations and in collecting, analyzing, and presenting research data.
- ◆ acknowledge the contributions of the faculty advisor and other members of the research team to the student's work in all publications and conference presentations; acknowledgment may mean co-authorship when that is appropriate.
- ◆ recognize that the faculty advisor, in nearly every case, will determine when a body of work is ready for publication and the acceptable venue, since the faculty advisor bears responsibility for overseeing the performance of the students and ensuring the validity of the research.
- ◆ maintain the confidentiality of the faculty advisor's professional activities and research prior to presentation or publication, in accordance with existing practices and policies of the discipline.
- ◆ take primary responsibility to inform themselves of regulations and policies governing their graduate studies and the University of Nebraska Medical Center.
- ◆ recognize that faculty and staff have many professional responsibilities in addition to graduate education.

It is also imperative that faculty:

- ◆ interact with students in a professional and civil manner in accordance with the accepted standards of the discipline and the UNMC policies governing nondiscrimination and sexual harassment.
- ◆ impartially evaluate student performance regardless of religion, race, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, or other criteria that are not germane to academic evaluation.
- ◆ serve on graduate student committees without regard to the race, gender, sexual orientation, or national origin of the graduate student candidate.
- ◆ prevent personal rivalries with colleagues from interfering with their duties as graduate advisors, committee members, or colleagues.
- ◆ excuse themselves from serving on graduate committees when there is a familial or other relationship between the faculty member and the student that could result in a conflict of interest.
- ◆ acknowledge student contributions to research presented at conferences, in professional

- ◆ publications, or in applications for copyrights and patents.
- ◆ not impede a graduate student's progress and completion of his/her degree in order to benefit from the student's proficiency as a teaching or research assistant.
- ◆ create in the classroom or lab, supervisory relations with students that stimulate and encourage students to learn creatively and independently.
- ◆ have a clear understanding with graduate students about their specific research responsibilities, including time lines for completion of research and the thesis or dissertation.
- ◆ provide oral or written comments and evaluation of students' work in a timely manner.
- ◆ discuss laboratory and/or departmental authorship policy with graduate students in advance of entering into collaborative projects.
- ◆ ensure an absence of coercion with regard to the participation of graduate students as human research subjects in their faculty advisor's research.
- ◆ refrain from requesting students to do personal work (mowing lawns, babysitting, typing papers, etc.) with or without appropriate compensation.
- ◆ familiarize themselves with policies that affect their graduate students.

Graduate education is structured around the transmission of knowledge at the highest level. In many cases, graduate students depend on faculty advisors to assist them in identifying and gaining access to financial and/or intellectual resources which support their graduate programs. In addition, faculty advisors, program chairs, etc. must apprise students of the "job market" so that students can develop realistic expectations for the outcomes of their studies.

In some academic units, the student's specific advisor may change during the course of the student's program, either because of faculty or student wishes. The role of advising may also change and become a mentoring relationship.

The reward of finding a faculty advisor implies that the student has achieved a level of excellence and sophistication in the field, or exhibits sufficient promise to merit the more intensive interest, instruction, and counsel of faculty:

To this end, it is important that graduate students:

- ◆ devote an appropriate amount of time and energy toward achieving academic excellence and earning the advanced degree.
- ◆ be aware of time constraints and other demands imposed on faculty members and program staff.
- ◆ take the initiative in asking questions that promote understanding of the academic subjects and advances in the field.
- ◆ communicate regularly with faculty advisors, especially in matters related to research and progress within the graduate program.

Faculty advisors, on the other hand, should:

- ◆ provide clear maps of the requirements each student must meet, including course work, languages, research tools, examinations, and thesis or dissertation, and delineating the amount of time expected to complete each step.
- ◆ evaluate student progress and performance in regular and informative ways consistent with the practice of the field.
- ◆ help students develop interpretive, writing, oral, and quantitative skills, in accordance with the expectations of the discipline.
- ◆ assist graduate students in the development of grant writing skills.
- ◆ take reasonable measures to ensure that graduate students who initiate thesis or

dissertation research do so in a timely fashion, regardless of the overall demands of the laboratory.

- ◆ when appropriate, encourage graduate students to participate in professional meetings or display their work in public forums.
- ◆ stimulate in each graduate student an appreciation of teaching, and promote the acquisition of teaching skills where appropriate.
- ◆ create an ethos of collegiality so that learning takes place within a community of scholars.
- ◆ prepare students to be competitive for employment which includes portraying a realistic view of the field and the job market and making use of professional contacts for the benefit of their students, as appropriate.
- ◆ create an environment of the highest ethical standards and insist that the student behave ethically in all their professional activities.

In academic units, faculty advisors support the academic promise of graduate students in their program. In some cases, academic advisors are assigned to entering graduate students to assist them in academic advising and other matters. In other cases, students select faculty advisors in accordance with disciplinary interest or research expertise. Advising is manifest in its scope and breadth and may be accomplished in many ways.

A student's academic performance and a faculty member's scholarly interests may coincide during the course of instruction and research. As the faculty-graduate student relationship matures and intensifies, direct collaborations may evolve the sharing of authorship or rights to intellectual property developed in research or other creative activity. Such collaborations are encouraged and are a desired outcome of the mentoring process.

This document was revised from the document entitled "University of Oregon: Guidelines for Good Practice in Graduate Education" which was written by their Graduate Council and adopted as a statement of the faculty by the University of Oregon Senate on May 24, 1995. Materials are used by permission.

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