

The Role of Graduate Program Director

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A. Introduction

The primary role of the head of the graduate program (referred to as graduate program director herein) is to ensure the academic integrity of graduate degree programs in their academic program area. First and foremost a graduate program director is charged with determining that policies and procedures outlined in the Graduate Catalog and Academic Affairs Policies are followed by all program area faculty and students. Second, but of equal import, a graduate program director facilitates faculty engagement around critical program functions such as recruitment, admission, and retention practices and procedures.

B. Appointment

Many graduate programs are implemented and administered within a single department, while others are multidisciplinary in nature and involve the cooperative efforts of several individual departments or colleges on a shared basis. Because of these variations, some graduate program directors report directly to a particular departmental Academic Unit Head (AUH), while others report directly to an individual academic dean. The delineation of administrative authority should be established at the time a program director is appointed and clearly understood by all parties involved. At the time of appointment, graduate program directors and their supervisors should develop a plan for regular consultation and a written position description that provides a clear understanding of the expectations for both parties about their duties and the attendant compensations, along with criteria for the annual evaluation.

A graduate program director is typically a tenured faculty member (or equivalent RTA faculty member) who is from the program and department in which the program is located and who is certified for graduate instruction. The appointment of non-tenured, tenure-track faculty should be made only in exceptional circumstances after consultation with the academic dean.

In the case of programs located within a single department, the graduate program director will be appointed by the department AUH, after consultation with those faculty certified for graduate instruction in the program after consultation with the academic dean in whose college the program is offered.

In the case of multidisciplinary programs within a college, the graduate program director will be appointed by the dean of the college that has administrative responsibility for the program, after consultation with the AUHs of participating departments and faculty certified for graduate instruction in the program, and deans of other colleges, if necessary.

In the case of multidisciplinary programs that involve more than one college, the graduate program director will be appointed by the provost or designee, after consultation with the AUHs of the participating departments and the deans of the participating colleges.

A graduate program director shall report to the AUH or appropriate administrative supervisor. The Office of Academic Affairs and The Graduate School will be provided with a copy of the appointment letter or memorandum after approval by the dean or designee for review and record purposes.

C. **Typical Duties and Responsibilities**

The duties of a graduate program director depend upon a number of factors: program level (certificate, master's, specialist, or doctoral), particular discipline, size of the program, and degree of staff support being some of the most important. While the ultimate responsibility for a graduate program rest with its graduate faculty, who may serve on specific committees or who may otherwise assist in various capacities, managing the following areas of responsibility will be considered the baseline duties for the graduate program director.

Program Marketing and Recruitment – work with the Graduate School to plan, initiate and maintain contact with prospects, prepare the content of promotional materials and maintain program website if applicable.

Admission to Program – work with the Graduate School and the program to coordinate application review, oversee admissions decisions, maintain communication with admitted students, determine financial aid offers to candidates, establish program capacity, manage enrollment, and conduct student orientation.

Advising and Problem Resolution - mentor and advise students, establish student programs of study, coordinate thesis and dissertation schedules, handle student requests for exemptions and waivers, coordinate graduate assistant evaluations, and certify students for graduation in collaboration with the Graduate School.

Comprehensive Examinations & Continuance - work with appropriate administrative supervisor and the Graduate School to monitor a student's academic progress, and work with the program faculty to coordinate the administration of candidacy examinations.

Final Document (Thesis, or Dissertation) or Capstone Project Coordination – approve the appointment of faculty to serve on and/or chair thesis and dissertation committees. Such appointments must also be approved by the student's advisor, Thesis or Dissertation Chair, Academic Unit Head and the Dean of the Graduate School (or appointee).

Certifying Students for Graduation – certify students for graduation, including making course substitutions and other exceptions to Graduate Catalog requirements, in coordination with Academic Unit Head, advisor, or other department appointees; the Graduate School; and the Registrar's office.

Scheduling and Curriculum Review – advise department AUH or appropriate administrative supervisor on course demands and scheduling each semester and work with the Graduate School to revise and update the Graduate Catalog content, including all curricular changes, new course proposals, and old course deactivations.

Program Assessment – work with the department AUH or appropriate administrative supervisor to coordinate with the CARS, submit annual assessment reports, and facilitate Academic Program Reviews and accreditation processes.

Regular Training – attend regular graduate policy and procedure training offered by the Graduate School to stay current with university practice; regularly review the Graduate Catalog; participate in scheduled Graduate Council meetings and committee; and create and foster a graduate community within the department.

Additional responsibilities may be assigned by the AUH or dean with appropriate levels of support.

D. Release Time and Remuneration

The Graduate Council recommends that graduate program directors receive release time and/or remuneration commensurate with their responsibilities. The amount of release time and/or remuneration will be determined in consultation with the AUH, dean, and the provost or designee, and will vary with the size and scope of the program and the duties established for the particular position as discussed in section C (above).

E. Consultation and Supervision

Decisions of the graduate program director are ordinarily made in consultation with program faculty and the graduate program director's supervisor. Disagreements can be adjudicated by more senior supervisors.

F. Evaluation of Performance

The primary person responsible for evaluating the performance of the graduate program director will be the person to whom the program director normally reports as indicated in section A (above). It is expected that the performance of graduate program directors will be evaluated annually. The person responsible for the evaluation should seek input from program faculty, students and other stakeholders to assist in the evaluation and should consult with the academic dean, particularly when a renewal of the appointment is contemplated.