

Chapter 1

Responsibilities of the Directors of Graduate Studies

The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) is the official departmental or program administrator of the rules and regulations of the Graduate School, the designated advocate of the needs of the graduate program and graduate students, both within the department and in the University, and the initial advisor of all matriculating graduate students. Directors of Graduate Studies are nominated by the department chair or the program director and are appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School for a specified term of service. Candidates for DGS must be faculty members of the graduate program they are nominated to lead, and are expected to have had deep engagement with the teaching and training activities of the program. They should qualify for full membership on the faculty of the Graduate School. Because of the demands of the position and the sometimes contentious issues between students and faculty that the DGS must resolve, it is strongly advisable that the DGS be a senior faculty member.

Because the Director is responsible to the graduate faculty and the graduate students of the department, as well as to the staff of the Graduate School, the job is both critical and demanding. This manual is intended as a guide to the major components of that job.

The chief responsibilities of the Director are the following:

- to serve as chair of departmental graduate recruiting, admissions, and fellowship committees or to delegate such authority where appropriate;
- to oversee all matters relating to the departmental review of applications, ensuring equal, fair, and timely consideration of all applicants;
- to sign off on all departmental recommendations for admission/rejection;
- to nominate students for Graduate School fellowships;
- to prepare the annual Graduate School awards request and to allocate such funds as are allotted;
- to report student funding administered by the department or received directly by the student from an external funding agency;
- to serve as initial advisor and continuing advocate for all graduate students;
- to oversee all registration procedures and verify student enrollments;
- to monitor annually students' progress towards degree, including RCR compliance and English language requirements where mandated;
- to assess the quality of the graduate program using quantitative metrics and descriptive narrative for University accreditation reports;
- to review and if appropriate, endorse any individual exceptions requested to standard milestone examination timelines or committee participation;
- to recommend to divisional representatives of the Executive Committee desired modifications of Graduate School rules, regulations, or procedures;
- to recommend to the department chair and the Associate Dean graduate course offerings and instructors;
- to maintain complete and confidential academic records on all students in the department;
- to notify the Graduate School of all final degree examinations;
- to forward to all graduate students such announcements as are periodically sent from the Graduate School.

- to recommend to the Graduate School:
 - all M.A., M.S., or Ph.D. committee assignments;
 - all additions to or deletions from the department's graduate faculty;
 - any changes in departmental course offerings;
 - any modifications of program requirements;
 - all requests for transfers of graduate credit, leaves of absence, or time extensions;
 - probationary conditions for any student in academic difficulty.

Obviously the fulfillment of these tasks requires a considerable amount of time and attention to detail, and the department/program is expected to provide staff assistance (typically a designated Director of Graduate Studies Assistant (DGSA)). Links to commonly-used administrative forms can be found on the Graduate School web page: [Academic Policies and Forms](#). Timely and accurate submission of required forms helps the Graduate School maintain accurate records of all enrolled graduate students in order to certify, at the appropriate time, that all degree requirements have been met.

The chair of your department is responsible for determining whether or not you will receive any compensation for service as DGS. Departments often provide the DGS with secretarial or other assistance and some reduction in teaching or other administrative responsibilities. A typical term of service is three years, renewable with mutual agreement between the faculty member, chair and dean. Longer periods of service, where possible, may provide important stability for graduate programs and graduate students.

The Graduate School staff is ready to assist you in fulfilling your various duties. When exceptional situations arise, do not hesitate to call upon us for whatever advice we may be able to give. In the meantime, we hope that familiarization with this manual will help with most of the routine business you will be asked to conduct.



Who handles routine jobs like forming committees and scheduling examinations?

Since you are ultimately responsible for forming committees, not the student, it may be considerably easier for you or your assistant to request the services of individual faculty members. In general, it is not in the best interest of the graduate student to have to “negotiate” with faculty over scheduling examinations. The same principle holds as well for asking faculty to serve on examination committees.



To what extent can I delegate tasks to a graduate program assistant?

*There is, of course, no uniform answer to this question. One important principle to bear in mind is that you are the primary representative of the faculty for your graduate students. The more hands-on you are with their programs — even with routine paperwork — the more supportive students and faculty will feel you are. **For the Graduate School, we require that all official paperwork be reviewed and signed by you — not by your assistant and not with a stamped signature.** It is important to remember that many of these forms represent legal documents and your signature is the guarantee that actions have been approved at the departmental level.*