

Graduate Program Director (University Policies and Procedures, #5324)

A. 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 chair, while others report directly to an individual academic dean and still others report to the vice provost for graduate studies and research. 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 written description that provides a clear understanding of the expectations for both parties about their duties and the attendant compensations and includes criteria for the annual evaluation of graduate program directors.

The graduate program director should be a tenured faculty member from the program or department who is certified for graduate instruction. The appointment of non-tenured faculty is discouraged, and should be made only in exceptional circumstances that are approved by the provost and vice president for academic affairs.

In the case of programs located within a single department, the graduate program director will be appointed by the department chair, after consultation with faculty certified for graduate instruction in the program and with the approval of 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 chairs 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 vice provost for graduate studies and research, after consultation with the chairs of the participating departments, faculty certified for graduate instruction in the program, and deans of participating colleges.

The Office of Academic Affairs will be provided with a copy of the appointment letter or memorandum, after approval by the dean or vice provost for graduate studies and research, for review and record purposes.

B. Duties and Responsibilities

The duties of a graduate program director depend upon a number of factors: program level (master's 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 rests with its graduate faculty, managing the following areas of responsibility will be considered the baseline duties for the position:

Program Marketing and Recruitment – for example, plan, initiate and maintain contact with prospects, prepare the content of promotional materials and maintain program website.

Admission to Program – including coordinate application review, oversight of 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 plans of study, coordinate thesis and dissertation schedules, handle student requests for exemptions and waivers, and certify students for graduation.

Program Policies and Manual – maintain the program manual and disseminate student guidelines.

Curriculum and Program Assessment – maintain student progress and completion data, collect graduate student productivity data, survey student needs and satisfaction, advise department chair on course demands, oversee curricular changes, conduct periodic

external reviews, aid in determining graduate catalog content, interact with accrediting bodies, and coordinate the administration of candidacy exams. Additional responsibilities may be assigned by the department chair with appropriate levels of support.

The exact duties of a graduate program director will vary with the college and department, the size of the program, the general mission of the program, and various factors such as whether a program is concentrated within a department or multi-disciplinary in nature and whether or not a doctoral degree is offered. Consequently, only representative duties and responsibilities of a general nature will be listed below. More importantly, there should be established within each program a clear set of duties and responsibilities for the particular program director; and all persons involved should understand these conditions. Specifically, any authority delegated by the appropriate chair or the academic dean to the respective program director should be clearly stated.

The general areas of responsibility for a graduate director include, but may not be limited to, the following:

1. Provide recommendations to the Office of Admissions on acceptance or rejection of applicants;
2. Collect admission and program statistics;
3. Serve as academic adviser to graduate students and assist in developing individual plans of study;
4. Appoint various thesis, dissertation, and graduate examination committees;
5. Monitor and maintain the quality of student theses and dissertations;
6. Coordinate comprehensive, diagnostic, and qualifying examinations;
7. Conduct periodic surveys of graduates;
8. Serve as administrative liaison with other university offices for the expedition of various graduate forms and procedures;
9. Provide recommendations to the appropriate chairs concerning graduate course offerings and graduate teaching assignments;
10. Assist the department chair and/or dean in certifying faculty for graduate instruction;
11. Prepare catalog material and other literature concerning the program;
12. Counsel and provide special information to prospective students whether by visit or by mail; and
13. Serve as a primary representative for the program in interacting with the outside business, educational, and industrial community and in promoting the development of the program.

C. Released Time

The amount of released time and other compensation, such as a summer stipend, will vary with the various duties in a department established for the particular position as discussed in section B (above). A graduate program director normally is provided with released time for this function. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, academic year stipends (if provided) should be alternatives to course releases, not granted in addition to course releases. However, chairs functioning as graduate program directors might be offered a stipend instead of an additional course release.

The amount of released time will vary with the various duties in a department established for the particular position as discussed in section B (above). Normally a graduate program director is provided with three hours of released time per semester or a 25 percent reduction in load for this function.

D. 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 a portion of the annual faculty evaluation of the graduate program director will be

devoted to the performance in that capacity. The person responsible for the evaluation should seek as much input as appropriate to assist in the evaluation and should consult with his/her academic dean, particularly when a new appointment is contemplated.

- Approved by the vice president for academic affairs

December 5, 1978

Revised August 8, 1995

Revised and approved by the president

December 16, 1997

Revised August 22, 2003

Revised July 24, 2006