

Graduate Program Director

A. Introduction

The primary role of the graduate program director is to ensure the academic integrity of graduate degree programs in their academic program area. First, a graduate program director is charged with ensuring that policies and procedures outlined in the Graduate Catalog are followed by all program area faculty and students. Second, a graduate program director facilitates faculty engagement around critical program functions such as recruitment, admission, enrollment, and retention practices and procedures. Some graduate program directors in Health Sciences have additional responsibilities related to personnel and budget.

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B. Appointment

Many graduate programs are implemented and administered within a single department, while others are multidisciplinary in nature and involve the shared, cooperative efforts of several individual departments or colleges. Because of these variations, some graduate program directors report directly to a particular department chair, while others report directly to an academic dean or school director. The administrative authority delineation should be established when a graduate 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 clear expectations for both parties about their duties, compensation, and annual evaluation criteria. The graduate program director should ordinarily be tenured faculty from the program or department in which the program is located, if applicable, who is certified for graduate instruction at levels I or II (see the policy for Certification of Faculty for Graduate Instruction).

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In the case of programs located within a single department, the graduate program director will be appointed by the department chair, after consultation with program faculty and with the approval of the academic dean in whose college the program is offered. The department chair or school director is the administrative supervisor for the graduate program director.

In the case of interdisciplinary programs within a college, the graduate program director will be appointed by the dean after consultation with the chairs of participating departments and faculty certified for graduate instruction in the program, and deans of

other colleges, if necessary. The dean is the administrative supervisor for the graduate program director.

In the case of interdisciplinary programs located within standalone schools residing outside of a college, the graduate program director will be appointed by the school director, after consultation with the chairs/directors of participating departments/schools and faculty certified for graduate instruction in the program, and deans of other colleges, if necessary. The school director is the administrative supervisor for the graduate program director.

A graduate program director shall serve at the pleasure of the administrative supervisor and shall ordinarily be appointed to a three-year term with the possibility of renewal. A graduate program director may ordinarily serve no more than two consecutive terms; however, the administrative supervisor may reappoint the individual for one additional term, subject to the approval of the dean or the appropriate Executive Vice President (either the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs or the Executive Vice President for Health Sciences) if the dean is the administrative supervisor. An appointment exceeding three consecutive terms may be made only in extraordinary circumstances with the additional approval of the appropriate Executive Vice President. The Office of Academic Affairs will be provided with a copy of the appointment letter or memorandum, after approval, for record purposes.

C. Duties and Responsibilities

The duties of a graduate program director depend upon a number of factors, including program level (master's, education specialist, or doctoral), discipline, program size, and degree of staff support. While the ultimate responsibility for a graduate program rests 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.

- Oversight of Program Marketing and Recruitment – provide current program materials to the Office of Graduate Admissions to support program marketing and recruiting. Support maintenance of program websites.
- Admission to Program – work with the Office of Graduate Admissions and/or the Office of International Admissions, and the program admissions committee 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 plans of study, handle student requests for exemptions and waivers, and coordinate graduate assistant evaluations.

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- **Thesis and Dissertation Coordination** – approve the appointment of faculty to serve on and/or chair thesis and dissertation committees.
- **Continuance** – monitor students’ academic progress, and work with the program faculty to coordinate the administration of candidacy examinations.
- **Certifying Students for Graduation** – certify students for graduation, including making course substitutions and other exceptions to Graduate Catalog requirements, in coordination with the Office of the University Registrar.
- **Program Policies and Manual** – maintain and disseminate current program requirements and guidelines. **Scheduling and Curriculum Maintenance** – work with the relevant departments and the Office of the University Registrar to ensure appropriate scheduling of graduate courses and update the Graduate Catalog.
- **Program Assessment** – collect graduate student productivity data, survey student needs and satisfaction, complete annual assessment reports, assist with external reviews, and interact with accrediting bodies and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV). Additional responsibilities may be assigned by the administrative supervisor, dean, or provost with appropriate levels of support.
- **Regular Training** – attend graduate policy and procedure training offered by the Graduate School and other Offices as appropriate to stay current with University policy and practice.

Decisions made by graduate program directors in executing the above-mentioned responsibilities or duties may be overturned by their administrative supervisor in exceptional circumstances (e.g., to settle an unresolved disagreement between the director and graduate faculty over an action). If the graduate program director objects to the administrative supervisor's ruling, the matter shall be decided by the academic dean (or school director) or designee. If the program dean or designee is the administrative supervisor, the appropriate Executive Vice President shall decide the matter.

D. Release Time and Remuneration

During the academic year, all graduate program directors will receive some release time and/or remuneration. The amount of release time and/or remuneration will be determined according to guidelines or criteria established by the department and/or academic college. In addition, GPDs receive remuneration in the summer as established by Academic Affairs. Release time and/or remuneration may vary with the program's size, scope, complexity, and the duties established for the position as discussed in section C (above).

E. Evaluation of Performance

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The primary person responsible for evaluating the performance of the graduate program director will be the administrative supervisor as indicated in section A (above). It is expected that a portion of the annual faculty's evaluation of service will address their performance as graduate program director. The person responsible for the evaluation should seek as much input as appropriate to assist in the evaluation and should consult with the graduate faculty and academic dean, particularly when an additional term is considered.

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- 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
Revised November 5, 2010
Revised December 11, 2017
Revised May 1, 2020
Revised March 30, 2023