

Graduate School

Guidelines for Good Practices in Graduate Education

WSU's graduate programs are marked by outstanding faculty, modern and challenging curricula, first-rate students, and support systems that enhance student and faculty development. The best support systems include staff, comfortable office or laboratory space, resources necessary for scholarship and research, and policies and written guidance for students to meet programmatic and University requirements. These guidelines focus on the responsibilities of students and the expectations of faculty advisors, mentors, programs and departments.

The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that WSU faculty members and graduate students share the responsibility for creating a supportive environment—one that is community-minded in purpose and conducive to learning. Good working relationships among faculty members and graduate students require that they recognize and honor their respective responsibilities to ensure high quality graduate education and an environment where everyone acts ethically and professionally at all times. The following guidelines are intended to promote an understanding of graduate students' responsibilities as members of the academic community of WSU.

Expectations of Graduate Students

WSU graduate students have a responsibility to:

1. Conduct themselves in a mature, professional, and civil manner in all interactions with faculty, staff, and other graduate or professional students, and undergraduates.
2. Learn the Graduate School's Policies and Procedures, including important program deadlines, requirements and grievance procedures (see: gradschool.wsu.edu).
3. Learn their specific program requirements and procedures as delineated by their academic program.
4. Learn the standards of academic and professional performance established by faculty and their respective professional groups.
5. Maintain integrity in academics, research, independent scholarship, and professional development.
6. Communicate regularly with faculty advisors on matters related to progress within their graduate programs.
7. Acknowledge contributions of faculty advisors and others in work leading to conference presentations and publications.
8. Respect time constraints of faculty, particularly in email correspondence.
9. Respect the responsibilities of faculty advisors to evaluate students' coursework and overall academic progress. Faculty, in turn, are responsible for monitoring the validity and quality of students' research, teaching, and other scholarly activities.

10. Fulfill, in a timely manner, the requirements of their program, as prescribed by their program and the Graduate School.
11. Assume the initiative in selecting committee members for thesis, dissertation, and qualifying exams.
12. Contribute positively to a collegial environment within the program and department.
13. Complete in a timely manner the Responsible Conduct of Research training.
14. Adhere to federal, state, University, and departmental rules and regulations regarding the use of animals, human subjects, dangerous and hazardous chemicals, biohazardous and radioactive materials or radiation in research.

Expectations of WSU Programs and Departments

Programs and departments play a key role in creating a positive and supportive environment for graduate students to success in their studies. Programs and departments have an expectation to:

1. Inform incoming graduate students of codes of professional and academic conduct expected of graduate students.
2. Inform graduate students about University and program requirements, including academic programs, committee formation and changes, and the nature and scope of theses and dissertations.
3. Evaluate graduate students yearly regarding their academic progress toward intended degrees, including notification in writing about satisfactory or unsatisfactory performance.
4. Encourage graduate students to participate in professional meetings, including the delivery of presentations of research or scholarly findings.
5. Assist graduate students in the timely completion of departmental or program requirements.
6. Provide students with a policy to guide collaborative projects and authorship.
7. Provide students with a graduate student manual or handbook that includes all departmental policies governing graduate student appointments, rights, and responsibilities as members of the academic community.

Expectations of Faculty Advisors and Mentors

High quality graduate programs are those with notable faculty and systems for advising and mentoring graduate students. Graduate students need advice and guidance during their early experiences in graduate school, especially from faculty whose interest goes beyond the advisor-director role to one of teacher and mentor. Departments and programs are responsible for

encouraging effective mentoring and for ensuring that graduate students receive advice and mentoring during the course of their graduate studies.

A mentor is a faculty person who assists scholarly development, contributes to intellectual stimulation, and fosters professionally enriching relationships with graduate students. A faculty mentor is a peer-to-be, one who encourages and supports independent development and who nurtures a rapid transition from graduate student to colleague through insightful guidance, trust, and mutual respect.

Students should expect that mentors will interact with them on a regular basis, providing the guidance, advice, and intellectual challenge necessary to complete their degree programs. If the mentor relationship is not a good fit, and another appropriate mentor is available, the student may change mentors at any time, without fear of reprisal.

Mentors and faculty advisors have an expectation to:

1. Interact in a professional and civil manner consistent with University policies. Particular attention should be paid to mentoring that involves diverse or nontraditional students.
2. Create an ethos of collegiality in classroom, laboratory or studio supervisory relationships that stimulates and encourages students to learn creatively and independently.
3. Develop clear understandings about specific research expectations and responsibilities, including timelines for completion of theses or dissertations.
4. Provide verbal and/or written comments and evaluations of students' work in a timely manner.
5. Discuss laboratory, studio, or departmental authorship policy with graduate students in advance of entering into a collaborative project.
6. Acknowledge student contributions to research presented at conferences, in professional publications, or in applications for copyrights and patents.
7. Prevent faculty rivalries from interfering with their duties as advisors, committee members, instructors or colleagues.
8. Ensure that a graduate student's assistantship experiences contribute to the student's professional development and does not impede his/her progress toward a degree.
9. Excuse themselves from serving on graduate committees when there is a potential conflict of interest or even an appearance of a conflict of interest (for example, a familial relationship between the student and the faculty).
10. Refrain from requesting students to do personal work without appropriate agreement and compensation (see also the WSU Faculty Manual - Faculty Code of Professional Ethics and Duties).

Expectations of Teaching Assistants (TAs)

Regardless of how their assignments are crafted, TAs have the responsibility to meet the goals and objectives of their teaching assignments as articulated by course instructors and departmental administrators. TAs should strive for the highest quality of instructional pedagogy and delivery of services to students. All grading responsibilities should be fulfilled thoughtfully and in a timely manner. TAs who experience any difficulties with their assignments should immediately discuss these difficulties with the course instructor and/or departmental chair.

Expectations of Research Assistants (RAs)

Employment as an RA involves commitments, not only to thesis and dissertation research, but also to the goals and objectives or deliverables of the sponsored project providing the salary support. RAs should exercise the highest integrity in their research efforts and also be aware of responsibilities attendant to the University's intellectual property and conflict of interest policies and procedures. Questions should be addressed immediately with the advisor and/or the principle investigator of the project.

Expectations of Research Fellows (RFs)

Recipients of research fellowships should understand and adhere to the goals and objectives of sponsoring programs. These goals and objectives may require completion of training modules or internships, the development of a scholarly document (e.g., thesis or dissertation), specific uses of support funds, and/or annual or quarterly reports. It is the responsibility of RFs to be aware of such expectations and to meet them as completely as possible within the specified deadlines.

Expectations of Staff Assistants (SAs)

Employment as an SA involves commitment to the unit providing the support. SAs should strive for the highest quality of service and responsibility in meeting the goals and objectives of their employing unit. Questions should be addressed immediately to the SA's supervisor.