

Appendix: Typical Role and Responsibilities of the Director of Graduate Studies

Sidebar

Governing Policies

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- [Doctoral Degree: Completion](#)
- [Doctoral Degree: Performance Standards and Progress](#)
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Questions?

Please use the contact section in the governing policy.

The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) serves as the faculty lead of graduate studies within a program, representing the graduate program to faculty governance bodies, taking a leadership role in maintaining program quality and effectiveness, and communicating with collegiate deans and/or the Graduate School about the program's larger concerns. Together with the graduate program faculty, department and collegiate leadership, and the Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC), the DGS shares responsibility for guiding and improving graduate education within the program(s) under the DGS's jurisdiction.

The DGS works in close partnership with the Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC), or other support staff, to coordinate the administration of the graduate program and to support student success. The division of roles and responsibilities between the DGS and GPC will vary across programs based on the administrative structure of the program and collegiate and/or departmental policies and requirements. This document is intended to provide guidance to programs to clarify and communicate the specific roles and responsibilities of the DGS and GPC in order to ensure consistency within the program and facilitate onboarding, transitions, and effective program administration. Program-specific responsibilities for the DGS should be included in the DGS [handbook](#).

Overview of Program-Level Responsibilities

College and University Support:

- Serve as the program's representative on collegiate and/or University governance committees, as appropriate.
- Serve as a liaison for the program faculty, college, and University administration. This may include:
 - Referring matters to the faculty or its committees as needed;
 - Informing the faculty of the college policies, deadlines, and programs as appropriate;
 - Forwarding recommendations, nominations, and other information from the faculty to the Collegiate Dean.
- Act as the liaison among the graduate students, program faculty, and the college and Graduate School administrations.
- Data and information management:
 - Provide periodic reports on the program and data to the collegiate dean(s), and the Graduate School, and/or the collegiate associate dean as needed;
 - Provide periodic reports on the program related to accreditation and/or program assessment, as requested by the collegiate dean(s), the Graduate School, and/or the Office of the Provost.
 - Provide direction to the GPC on data collection and report preparation as needed.

Program Administration and Governance:

- Supervise and coordinate the administration and governance of graduate studies within the graduate program for which the DGS is responsible;
- Organize and coordinate the admissions cycle for the program;
- Serve as authorized approver/signatory for the graduate program;
- Program development:
 - In consultation with graduate faculty in the program/department, recommend graduate course offerings and curricular revisions;
 - Assess the quality of the graduate program.
- Policy implementation:
 - Develop solid understanding of the University, Graduate School, and college policies and guidelines, consulting regularly with the GPC.
 - Set program-specific policies and procedures, in alignment with governing policies;
 - Work with the GPC on approving requests for leaves of absences, transfer of credits, exam committee requests, etc.
- Communication: Communicate and disseminate to the program/department information learned from central University committees and meetings.
- Program handbook: Oversee the process of updating the program handbook.
- Data and information management: Oversee data management with regard to the graduate student records, admissions data, financial information, and program

assessment. Coordinate with the offices of Graduate Student Services and Progress (GSSP), Office of the Registrar (OTR), Academic Support Resources (ASR), and the Graduate School as needed to collect data. To ensure consistency when transitioning out of the DGS role, ensure that data is accurately maintained, easily accessible, and used to inform decisions, initiatives, and onboarding of a new DGS.

- Set up a departmental email account shared with the DGS and GPC that will contain all correspondence and files saved on a shared Google Drive to ensure continuity and smooth transition of responsibilities.
- Faculty: Manage graduate program faculty membership, maintain accurate records of graduate faculty assignments, and perform regular reviews of graduate program faculty.
- Funds: Determine use of program funds, work with college and department on fellowships and funding for students.

Program Operations and Student Support:

All Students:

- Serve as a point of contact for graduate students enrolled in the program.
- Student advising and support:
 - Provide academic advising and support to graduate students helping them navigate the graduate program;
 - Facilitate opportunities for graduate students to develop skills, engage in research activities, attend conferences, and prepare for future careers;
 - Aid in the retention of diverse student populations by encouraging involvement in programs/units across the University;
 - As appropriate, the DGS may serve as a temporary or interim advisor.
- Funding:
 - Chair fellowship committees;
 - Nominate students for fellowships;
 - Provide students with information about funding opportunities.
- Advocacy:
 - Advocate for the needs of graduate students and for the graduate program.
 - Serve as an advocate for students who have accommodations recommended by the Disability Resource Center (DRC).
- Monitor progress:
 - Oversee program registration procedures, verify and track student enrollment;
 - Provide oversight for monitoring students' progress towards degree, including compliance with English language requirements if needed;
 - Oversee the annual student evaluation process.
- Communication:
 - Ensure that academic requirements are explicitly communicated to graduate students;
 - Forward graduate students relevant announcements from College and University;
 - Alert faculty when the program is not in compliance with College or University policies and provide information about consequences.

- Conflict resolution:
 - Mediate conflicts between graduate students and faculty, address grievances, and refer students to appropriate resources;
 - Serve as an interim advisor (when appropriate) for students experiencing conflicts in their advising relationship.
- Termination:
 - Decide on student progress and outcomes related to disciplinary procedures;
 - Oversee graduate students' dismissals from the program.

New Students:

- Recruitment:
 - Spearhead program's efforts in recruiting new students. This involves planning the recruitment strategy, holding information sessions, and working on building program reputation.
- Admissions:
 - Coordinate the admission of new students to the program;
 - Set admissions standards and work with the faculty admissions committee to make admissions decisions.
- Orientation: Set goals for and lead the orientation.

Advanced Students:

- Qualifying exams:
 - As appropriate by discipline, work with program faculty to ensure that the internal procedure of qualifying exams is being followed.
- Preliminary exams, dissertation defense, and graduation:
 - Review all preliminary and final oral exam committee requests for the program (if applicable) and authorize approval of committees that meet University requirements.

International Students:

- Understand international students' visa requirements for registration and employment and work with ISSS to ensure compliance. Provide support if needed to help international students' maintain their status.

As appropriate within the unit or department:

- Finalize graduate course offerings for the academic year.
- Work with the Department Chair to determine GA appointments.

Responsible Practices for Collaboration with a GPC

The DGS works in close partnership with the Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC) to coordinate the administration of the graduate program and to support student success. The division of roles and responsibilities between the DGS and GPC will vary across programs based on the administrative structure of the program and collegiate and/or departmental policies and requirements. The suggested responsible practices below intend to provide guidance to programs to clarify and communicate the specific roles and responsibilities of the DGS and GPC

in order to ensure consistency within the program and facilitate onboarding, transitions, and effective program administration.

Meetings and Communication:

- Set up an initial meeting to discuss their responsibilities and division of labor to ensure an efficient functioning of a graduate program.
- Set up ongoing check-in meetings.
- If the DGS is not the GPC's supervisor of record, it is recommended that the DGS, the GPC and the GPC's supervisor of record set up a meeting at least once per semester to ensure the GPC's supervisor is aware of the GPC's workload and performance.
- Discuss communications strategy to ensure timely response to/from faculty and graduate students. The DGS and the GPC often hear about news, updates, and changes happening at the college and university level from different sources, which is why it is important they coordinate closely to share the appropriate information with faculty and graduate students in a timely manner.
- The GPC often serves as the first point of contact for graduate students. It is recommended that the DGS and the GPC communicate frequently to ensure that comments, questions, and concerns related to the program are properly handled in a timely manner.

Responsibilities and Collaboration:

- Discuss and determine who has signature authority (i.e., ability to sign off on student requests) within the program;
- Discuss collaboration on all aspects of program management (e.g., student handbook, recruitment, admissions, orientation, registration, etc.).
- Both the DGS and the GPC share the responsibility of advocacy. It is important that they work closely as there might be situations where it is more appropriate and effective for the DGS to step in and some situations that can be handled by the GPC.
- Student termination requires specific and diligent documentation. Both the DGS and the GPC need to be working closely to ensure the issue is being handled according to University policies and procedures.