Establishing or Revising Graduate Program Handbooks.

Preamble

Graduate program handbooks are essential student guides because they bridge the gap between program-specific policies and the Graduate School's overarching policies. The primary focus of such handbooks is to assist students in keeping them on track with program expectations, guiding them through the requirements for essential milestones on the way to their degrees, and providing other useful information specific to their graduate program.

The Graduate School recognizes that programs have distinct requirements that can vary widely among programs, particularly for programs with specialized accreditation processes. The Graduate School recommends an annual program handbook review and update, if necessary to maintain relevance, accuracy, and to align with changes to applicable university policy.

To maintain the integrity of a student's degree program, the Graduate School advises that the curriculum presented in a program's handbook should remain consistent throughout any given academic year. However, in certain cases, and with the approval of the advisor and the graduate program director, a student may follow any updated curriculum requirements.

The guidelines below list essential sections to be included in a graduate program handbook. Note that graduate program requirements may be more prescriptive than the Graduate School Policy and Procedures, but not less so.

- 2021-2022 graduate program handbooks (link)
- Submit Graduate Program Handbooks

Handbook degree program coverage

Once the WSU Faculty Senate has authorized a graduate program to offer degrees, list each degree and specify the campuses where that degree is offered. For example, the Department of Physics and Astronomy graduate program may offer a Master of Science in Physics and a Doctor of Philosophy in Physics on the Pullman campus. As an additional example, the Department of Psychology graduate program may offer a Ph.D. Psychology with separate specializations (program plans) in Experimental Psychology and Clinical Psychology. Program plans are campus specific as well. For example, the PhD in Psychology (Clinical Psychology) is only offered on the Pullman campus whereas the PhD in Psychology (Experimental Psychology) is offered on the Pullman and Vancouver campuses.

Handbooks may be at the program level or plan level.

About department/school

Briefly describe the department or school offering the specific graduate degrees. Also, programs are required by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), the University's regional accrediting body, to include program objectives and student learning outcomes in the handbook as well as to be directly linked on the program's website.

Selected WSU Graduate School Policy and Procedures

Unless more prescriptive, the Graduate School encourages programs to point to current Policy and Procedure guidelines rather than duplicate them.

1. Admissions
2. Residency requirements
3. Required enrollment (full or part-time)
   a. Research credits (700, 702, 800)
4. Number of allowed undergraduate level (300- and 400-level) courses
5. Transfer course policy
6. ABD status, program expectations
7. Required training
   a. Community Standards (CCR)
   b. Research misconduct (OR)
   c. Discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual misconduct policy (HRS)

WSU Student Resources by Campus

Depending on which campus the degree is offered, the Graduate School encourages providing links to the following resources:

1. Health (CPS)
2. Financial
3. GPSA

Graduate Program Administration
Describe how the graduate program is administered and define the roles and duties of (at minimum) the following three positions:

1. Graduate Program Director/Director of Graduate Studies
2. Graduate Program Coordinator/Academic Coordinator
3. HR/Finance for appointments

Graduate Program Faculty

Define which graduate program faculty tracks—a table may suffice—may serve on student committees as reflected in the graduate program bylaws. For example,

<table>
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<th>Track</th>
<th>Sub-track</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Chair</th>
<th>Co-chair</th>
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</table>

Departmental Admission Requirements

1. The Graduate School and Office of the Provost discourage programs from requiring standardized entrance exams such as the GRE. If programs choose to require entrance exams, they must be announced in the program’s fact sheet. Programs must not use or list minimum scores for standardized tests (e.g., GRE, GMAT) as an admissions requirement.
2. If international students do not meet Option A, B, or C in the English Language Proficiency Requirements outlined in the Graduate School Policies and Procedures (https://gradschool.wsu.edu/international-requirements) and a program sets higher English language proficiency exam score requirements, these scores (or subscores) must be announced in the program’s fact sheet.
   a. Based on English language proficiency scores, some international students may be required to complete an International Teaching Assistant (ITA) exam. The results of this exam and how a student's scores map to assistantship duties should be stated.
   b. At the time of admissions and matriculation, programs cannot require English language proficiency exams or an ITA exam if a student meets options A, B, or C. However, the graduate program director may require an ITA exam at any later point if concerns arise.

Departmental policies and procedures

Describe program-specific policies and resources. Do not include policies on assistantships in this section.

1. Committee structure requirements
   a. Minimum number of committee members
   b. Committee composition (tenure track v. career track v. short-term track)
   c. Number of allowable committee members external to the program
2. Program-specific curriculum, milestones, and timeline
   a. Student Learning Outcomes by plan
   b. Number of required graded credits required for each degree
   c. Required and elective courses for each degree
   d. Timeline for selecting a committee
   e. Timeline for submission of a program of study
   f. Additional milestones, including (as appropriate)
      i. Clinic or practicum performance
      ii. Expectations in research
      iii. Lab rotations
      iv. Internships
      v. Outreach
      vi. Qualifying exam or cumulative exam policy
   g. Include consequences for not meeting program milestones and an appeal process associated with dismissal from the program.
   h. Preliminary exam requirements and timing
      i. Final Exam requirements and timing
         i. Per Graduate School policy, following the presentation during a final exam, a question-and-answer period may be open to the public or restricted to the student's committee or other faculty of the graduate program who choose to attend. Graduate programs are responsible for establishing a standard format for this portion of their final examinations, clearly communicating that format in the program's graduate handbook, and applying it consistently to all students in the graduate program.
3. Department/school IT policy
4. Program expectations for converting from MS/MA to Ph.D. or converting from Ph.D. to MS/MA
5. Expectations on maintaining a respectful workplace environment and commitment to equity

Satisfactory degree progress assessment
All students must have their academic and research progress evaluated and reported annually. Any situation that may negatively impact a student's timely progress to the degree must be promptly reported to the Graduate School. The handbook should specify the annual review process and timing.

**Academic policy, including appeals**

The Graduate School Policy and Procedures outlines processes where a student may appeal program dismissal based on academic criteria, including:

1. Appeal of course grades
2. Preliminary or final exam committee decisions
3. Earning two unsatisfactory research credit (700, 701, 702, 800) grades in subsequent terms
4. Failing below a cumulative GPA of 3.0

The handbook should clearly describe all program-specific required academic milestones and timelines. It is critical that students be provided regular academic feedback and offered improvement plans with demonstrable milestones and sufficient time to allow for and to document improvement. The handbook must explicitly state outcomes for failing to meet academic improvement expectations. For example, for a program that relies on a qualifying exam scored one through five, where a score of one makes the student ineligible to retake the exam (i.e., no academic route forward), the handbook must explicitly state the outcome will be a recommendation for dismissal from the program.

The handbook must include an academic dismissal appeal process that begins with the graduate program director. In some programs, it may be advisable to include a final appeal to the dean of the degree program's home college before the appeal moves to the vice provost of graduate and professional education. In all cases, a memo should be sent to the student that outlines the reasons for the dismissal recommendation and the steps necessary to appeal should the student so wish.

**Assistantship policies, including appeals**

Describe students' duties and expectations on research and teaching assistantships in this handbook section that corresponds to a 0.5 FTE, which is based on an average of 20 hours worked per week per term. Each student on assistantship must sign an offer letter (required for both initial appointments and renewals) that will be uploaded to Workday. Assistantships will not be processed without appointment letters. Letters must contain, at minimum, the following:

1. A general job description and work expectations associated with each position.
2. For a TA, list the courses the student will assist with during the term or year.
3. For a TA, note the course coordinator, primary instructor, or another supervisor (the TA cannot be a primary instructor with no supervision), if known.
4. For an RA, note the primary supervisor and the types of activities related to the grant or other funding source that will be completed (note that this time does not cover thesis/dissertation writing time unless specifically allowed by the research mentor).

Describe the improvement plans available to a student on assistantship if that student fails to meet job performance expectations outlined in the offer letter. The handbook should clearly separate academic expectations from employment expectations.

1. Focus improvement plans on the expectations listed in the appointment letter.
2. If, after being provided guidance, a TA or RA has not corrected performance-based behaviors, the handbook must provide a clear step-by-step appeal procedure, including reporting lines for appeals.
   a. For example, if a TA is continually late to the class with which they are assisting or continually falls behind in grading, the TA must be provided with a written letter of concern that includes an improvement plan. The student and their supervisor should sign the plan. If the behavior continues and the program determines the student should no longer be supported on an assistantship, the handbook must clarify corrective action different from an academic appeal policy.

**Facilities and responsibilities**

Schools and departments should point to or list graduate student resources such as:

1. TA or RA office space, program office resources, and physical mail policy
2. Computer, e-mail, and printer access
3. Shared equipment and instrumentation and expectations for use
4. Accessing shops and service centers
5. Available software