



A Roadmap to Graduate Student Academic Rights and Responsibilities

SUMMARY

All members of the university community are responsible for securing and respecting the general conditions conducive to a graduate student's unique role as student, researcher, and teacher. In this spirit, the present document is proposed as a step in ensuring a positive and productive environment for current and prospective graduate students, while respecting the rights and responsibilities of faculty and staff members alike¹.

GRADUATE STUDENTS HAVE THE FOLLOWING RIGHTS

1. **Graduate students have the right to information about specific and concrete degree requirements as approved by the Graduate Council.**
 - a. These requirements shall be communicated clearly upon entrance to the graduate program.
 - b. Departments will make public "normative time to completion" within a specific graduate program, a program's student attrition rate, and a program's employment placement record.
2. **Graduate students have the right to an accurate description of the availability and the likelihood of financial and resource support within their programs.**
 - a. Departments shall provide descriptions of the requirements, qualifications, and applicable deadlines necessary for academic employment, training or financial support at the university.
 - b. Individual faculty members or departments, whichever and whenever appropriate, will notify graduate students of the likelihood of start or end of financial support at least 6 weeks prior to the event, or by the deadline for Teaching Assistant applications (6 weeks before the end of each quarter), whichever comes first.
 - c. Office, lab space, and any necessary materials for teaching and research, should consider the need for adequate graduate student space and resources.
 - d. Reciprocally, graduate students will comply with all University requirements for ensuring safety and health of their lab space, equipment, and personnel.
3. **Graduate students have the right to receive objective evaluations of progress based on criteria that are understood by the faculty advisor and the student.**

¹ This document is based upon a revised and updated version of the UC Davis Graduate Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities and the UCLA Graduate Student Academic Rights and Responsibilities.

- a. Evaluations shall be factual, specific, and shared with the student within a reasonable period of time.
 - b. Annual progress reports and reports of decisions on oral examinations should be in writing.
 - c. Graduate students should be given a fair opportunity to correct or remedy deficiencies in their academic performance, and the reasons for unsatisfactory performance on programmatic examinations shall be stated clearly to the student in a written evaluation.
 - d. Any intent to disqualify a student from a graduate program for academic reasons, or from a research group for any other reasons, must be preceded by specific, written notice of performance deficiency, well in advance of actual disqualification or dismissal.
 - e. When presented with the opportunity to evaluate their professors, graduate students have the right to do so without fear of retribution and with the assurance of confidentiality.
4. **Graduate students have the right to accurate information in selecting a research advisor and in recommending members of their thesis committee.**
- a. Graduate students have the right to change their advisors if necessary, without fear of retribution. Unless specific circumstances demand otherwise, students initiating a change of research advisor must give proper notice to their advisors and complete any reasonable work already agreed upon.
 - b. If a graduate student's major professor departs from the institution once the student's work is under way, the program shall strive to provide the student with alternative supervision, external to the institution if necessary.
5. **Graduate students have the right to expect reasonable training opportunities, and have the right to refuse to perform tasks if those tasks are not closely related to their academic or professional development, or within the time-frame of their employment as graduate research or teaching assistants.**
- a. The student's junior status, authority and/or experience should not be exploited to the personal advantage of a faculty member.
 - b. Graduate students have the right to accurate and timely information pertaining to the conditions of their employment at the university.
 - c. The School should strive to provide training and/or direct teaching experience appropriate for each student's career focus. Graduate students have a right to explore professional development opportunities for a range of academic and non-academic careers, not limited to research positions, and to expect access to accurate information about the job market and placement assistance.
6. **Graduate students have the right to co-authorship in publications involving significant contributions of ideas or research work from the student.**
- a. Where applicable, students shall receive "senior authorship" for publications comprised primarily of their creative research and writing. As early as possible, faculty and graduate students shall agree upon authorship positions commensurate with levels of contributions to the work. The quality and level of work for "senior authorship", and the forms of co-authorship shall be clearly communicated and understood among faculty and their advisees.
 - b. Ideas derived from seminar discussion or lab meetings should be treated as shared intellectual property between the faculty, postdoctoral scholars and students involved.

7. **Graduate students have the right not to be discriminated against**, based on a student's race, color, national origin, religion, political beliefs, economic standing, sex, gender identity, pregnancy (including pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions), disability, age, medical condition, ancestry, marital status, citizenship, sexual orientation, or status as a veteran or special disabled veteran in admissions and throughout their education, employment, and placement.
8. **Graduate students have the right to reasonable confidentiality in their communications with faculty and staff.**
 - a. The academic and scholarly performance of a graduate student shall not be discussed with other students by professors or staff. Discussion of the student's performance among faculty shall be of a professional nature, being limited to academic and scholarly performance.
 - b. In accordance with the Federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act, graduate students have the right to review their academic records and files, to know which authorized personnel have access to their file, and to seek amendments to their files.
9. **Graduate students have the right to appeal to the department or School for cause any decision affecting their academic standing, to file complaints against the graduate program or members thereof, and to petition for redress of grievances.**
 - a. Where a graduate student presents reasonable evidence regarding misconduct by a faculty member or probable cause that such misconduct took place, the School shall attempt to provide a way by which the student can avoid working directly with the accused faculty member.
10. **Graduate students have the right to form clubs and organizations** within their programs, colleges, ethnicities, shared interests, or any other constituencies, for the purposes of academic, professional, or social networking, sharing, and advocacy. Graduate student employees have the right to join a collective bargaining unit that has been authorized to represent them.

GRADUATE STUDENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FOLLOWING

1. **Graduate students have a responsibility to conduct themselves, in all educational activities, in a responsible manner.**
 - a. Graduate students' behavior should be a credit to themselves, the higher academic unit and the university. They have the responsibility to respect and uphold all relevant university policies regarding professional conduct, including but not limited to the Code of Academic Conduct and the University Policy on Nondiscrimination, Sexual Harassment and Student Records and Privacy. Graduate students have the responsibility to uphold and respect all of the aforementioned rights for fellow graduate students.
 - b. Graduate students have a responsibility to provide accurate and honest reporting of research results and to uphold ethical and confidentiality norms in research methodology and scholarship.
 - c. Graduate students are responsible for observing all deadlines imposed by the university, School, and their departments, as they pertain to their enrollment, academic standing, and teaching or research responsibilities. Specifically, such deadlines include those for adding and withdrawing from courses, which shall be strictly observed.
 - d. Graduate students are responsible for informing the university, of any changes in address, phone number, enrollment changes which might affect financial aid or assistantship awards, and/or any other circumstances which could affect satisfactory progress towards a degree.

2. **Graduate students have a responsibility to fulfill their teaching and/or research obligations to the best of their knowledge, training and ability.**
 - a. Graduate student employees should carry out their job responsibilities in a conscientious and timely manner. They have the responsibility to inform the university of any changes or circumstances that would prevent them from carrying out these obligations, and to do their best to ensure stability for faculty, programs and departments. Graduate student employees have a responsibility to seek accurate information about the conditions of their employment.
 - b. Graduate students holding Graduate Student Researcher (GSR) positions have a responsibility to maintain regular communication with their supervisor, to maintain integrity in their research activities and to perform their research duties as outlined and in accordance with institutional guidelines and policies. They have a responsibility to report any questionable or unethical research procedures.
 - c. Graduate students holding Teaching Assistant (TA) positions have a responsibility to maintain regular communication with the Instructor of Record. TA's have a responsibility to uphold the highest level of academic integrity in their teaching practices. This includes maintaining student confidentiality, avoiding any exploitation of student vulnerability, and avoiding personal relationships with students. TAs have a responsibility to foster academic integrity in their students, including timely and accurate reporting of any academic misconduct, and serving as mentors to undergraduates when possible and appropriate
3. **Graduate students are responsible for devoting an appropriate amount of time and energy toward achieving the advanced degree** within "normative time," except when special circumstances apply. They are responsible for attending class and completing all assignments in accordance with the expectations established by their instructors and programs of study.
 - a. Graduate students have a responsibility to take the initiative in asking questions that promote their understanding of the academic requirements and the financial particulars of their specific graduate program. They have a responsibility to take the initiative in accessing any necessary resources for mental and physical well-being, to optimize their academic achievement and their contribution to the university overall.
4. **Graduate students have a responsibility to understand their role in the development of the professional relationship between faculty mentor and graduate student, including having an awareness of time constraints and other demands imposed on faculty members and program staff.**
 - a. Graduate students should recognize that one faculty member may not be able to fulfill all of a student's mentoring needs, and have the responsibility to seek assistance from multiple individuals and organizations as needed. Furthermore, graduate students are responsible for communicating regularly with faculty mentors and advisors, especially in matters related to research and progress within the graduate program and/or for maintaining a mutually agreeable schedule of evaluative/supervisory conferences with their advisors.