

Expectations and Responsibilities for Faculty Mentors and Graduate Students

Proposed ESF Graduate School Policies and Procedures

OIGS Policy Proposal 2014.1 – Graduate School Student-Mentor Compact

Proposed Policy

Each graduate student, upon matriculation at ESF, shall review the Commitments and Responsibilities of Graduate Students and Faculty Mentors (listed below) published on the ESF Graduate School with their Major Professor. Each graduate student shall subsequently submit a signed copy of the ESF Graduate School Student-Mentor Compact (Form 1), with the endorsement of their Major Professor, to the Office of Instruction and Graduate Studies within 30 days of their initial matriculation into a graduate degree program.

A. Commitments and Responsibilities of Graduate Students

1. Graduate Students hold the primary responsibility for the success of their education and the completion of their degree. They shall be committed to their education and to maintaining the high quality of their work and demonstrate this by their efforts in the classroom, the laboratory, the studio, and in the field by maintaining a high level of professionalism, self-motivation, engagement, scientific curiosity, and ethical standards.
2. Graduate students shall work with their Major Professors to select and form steering committees (including filing the appropriate Form 2A with the graduate school) within the first year of their graduate programs.
3. Initiating and maintaining frequent and collegial communication with Major Professors and steering committee members is critical to a successful mentor-mentee relationship. Graduate students shall provide their mentors with updates on their progress at least once each semester (or more frequently as appropriate). Students shall be responsive to the advice and constructive criticism of their steering committee.
4. Graduate students typically identify their preferred Major Professor as a part of the admissions process. They have the right to change Major Professors if they can demonstrate a reasonable justification for doing so, such as making changes in educational or career direction, or finding that their Major Professor is consistently unable or unwilling to abide by the responsibilities and obligations noted herein. Students who choose to pursue a change in their Major Professor are responsible for identifying a new faculty member willing to serve in this role, as well as potentially reconstituting the graduate steering committee; neither the graduate school nor the college has an obligation to provide a new major professor or steering committee members, and if a new MP cannot be found or a steering committee formed, a student may be administratively withdrawn from their program of study.

5. Graduate students shall work with their Major Professor and Steering committee members to develop their capstone, thesis, or dissertation projects including establishing a timeline for each phase of work.
6. Students are responsible for working with their steering committees to establish the “plan of study” (Form 3B) identifying all coursework, skill, and tool requirements to be met prior to conferral of their degree. This plan of study shall be completed within the first two semesters of study at the master’s level and within the first three semesters of study at the doctoral level.
7. Graduate students shall comply with both the letter and spirit of all Program, Department, Graduate School, and ESF institutional policies, including all safety, animal use, and human subject research policies.
8. Graduate students shall provide accurate and honest reporting of research results, and they shall stringently uphold ethical norms in research methodology and scholarship.
9. Graduate students holding assistantships are responsible for understanding and discussing the details of their appointments with their faculty supervisors including institutional policies on work hours, leaves, etc., as well as the specific demands and duties of their individual appointment.
10. Graduate students shall, as early in their academic program as possible, discuss college and departmental policies, as well as individual faculty preferences and practices concerning data ownership, intellectual property, authorship, and attendance/representation at professional meetings with their Major Professor. Graduate students should come to a clear understanding of these issues and potentially secure a written agreement with their Major Professor summarizing their collective expectations and understanding in conjunction with Graduate School Student-Mentor Compact (Form 1).
11. Graduate students working in laboratory based disciplines shall maintain a detailed, organized, and accurate record of their research as directed by their Major Professor. The original notes and research data are the property of SUNY ESF and/or the SUNY Research Foundation per the ESF Office of Research Programs - Data Ownership Policies (www.esf.edu/research/resources/orp_policy_10_data_ownership.doc), and shall be regularly submitted to the Major Professor, but students may maintain their own copies.
12. Graduate students shall work to be good citizens within their labs, studios, and field stations. Students shall take part in shared responsibilities and use collective resources carefully and frugally, and they shall share in maintaining a clean and safe workplace. Students shall also be respectful of, tolerant of, and work collegially with all student colleagues and college personnel.
13. Graduate Students shall agree, upon entering into a mentoring relationship with an ESF faculty member, to adhere to the commitments and responsibilities noted herein by endorsing a copy of the Graduate School Student-Mentor Compact (Form 1).

B. Commitments and Responsibilities of Faculty Mentors

1. As role models for graduate students, faculty shall maintain the highest standards of professionalism, ethical conduct, and collegiality, respecting and embracing the contributions of students, staff, and faculty colleagues.

2. Faculty shall strive to nurture both the intellectual and the personal development of graduate students by committing to fostering academic excellence, exemplary professionalism, cultural sensitivity, and a commitment to competence through life-long learning. They shall be supportive, equitable, accessible, encouraging, and respectful, and they shall foster professional confidence and encourage critical thinking, skepticism, and creativity. They shall aim to provide for every graduate student under their supervision an environment that is intellectually stimulating, emotionally supportive, safe, and free of harassment.
3. Faculty shall respect and encourage the chosen career paths of graduate students, including their choice of mentors.
4. Faculty select and accept individual mentees as part of the admissions process. After a student is admitted to the graduate school, the Major Professor is bound by the responsibilities noted herein for appropriately mentoring each of their accepted advisees. Faculty may withdraw from this relationship only when a student has consistently demonstrated their inability or unwillingness to abide by the responsibilities and obligations noted herein.
5. Faculty shall do their utmost to provide regular, timely, and constructive feedback to graduate students under their mentorship, and they shall encourage the same from colleagues serving on graduate steering committees. Faculty shall also be responsive to their student's queries to meet, critique their work, or answer general questions.
6. Faculty shall be knowledgeable about, and guide the graduate student through, the requirements and deadlines their graduate programs as well as those of the Graduate School.
7. Faculty shall encourage and provide graduate students with opportunities for progressive responsibility for the conduct of teaching, research, design, and other duties as appropriate to the student's discipline and their desired career path. They shall further encourage the training of the graduate student in additional skills needed for success, such as oral and written communication skills, grant writing, lab management, animal and human research policies, the ethical conduct of research, and scientific professionalism
8. Faculty shall encourage graduate student participation in disciplinary meetings, conferences, seminars, and other extra-curricular learning experiences. They shall ensure that students have sufficient time and latitude to pursue independent, self-directed learning essential for acquiring the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors required for successful practice.
9. Faculty shall recognize and respect the financial vulnerability of graduate students; they shall not take advantage of this vulnerability to promote their own research and scholarship agendas, nor shall they obstruct or delay the academic progress of a student to maintain an employment relationship not serving the best interests of the student.
10. Faculty shall discuss authorship policies with their graduate students and acknowledge their intellectual contributions to work in the laboratory, the field, and the studio. Faculty should further strive to work with their graduate students to publish their work in a timely manner prior to, and if necessary, after the student's graduation.
11. Faculty shall agree, upon entering into a mentoring relationship with a graduate student, to adhere to the commitments and responsibilities noted herein by endorsing a copy of the Graduate School Student-Mentor Compact (Form 1).