

Expectations and Responsibilities for Faculty Mentors and Graduate Students

Student Life Committee: Policy Proposal

Upon matriculation at ESF, each graduate student and their faculty mentor should meet to review and discuss the following “Expectations and Responsibilities of Graduate Students and Faculty Mentors.” Graduate students should come to a clear understanding of these guidelines and potentially secure a written agreement with their Major Professor summarizing their collective expectations and understanding of the document. Changes and/or additions may also be mutually agreed and added with agreement of the student and mentor.

A. Expectations 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 should 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 should be knowledgeable about the requirements and deadlines of their particular graduate programs as well as those of the Graduate School.
3. Graduate students should 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.
4. Initiating and maintaining frequent and collegial communication with Major Professors and steering committee members is critical to a successful mentor-mentee relationship. Graduate students should provide their mentors with updates on their progress at least once each semester (or more frequently as appropriate). Students should be responsive to the advice and constructive criticism of their steering committee.
5. 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.

6. Graduate students should 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.
7. 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 should 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.
8. Graduate students should 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.
9. Graduate students should provide accurate and honest reporting of research results, and they should stringently uphold ethical norms in research methodology and scholarship.
10. 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.
11. Graduate students should, 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.
12. Graduate students working in laboratory based disciplines should 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 should be regularly submitted to the Major Professor, but students may maintain their own copies.
13. Graduate students should work to be good citizens within their labs, studios, and field stations. Students should take part in shared responsibilities and use collective resources carefully and frugally, and they should share in maintaining a clean and safe workplace. Students should also be respectful of, tolerant of, and work collegially with all student colleagues and college personnel.

B. Expectations and Responsibilities of Faculty Mentors

1. As role models for graduate students, faculty should maintain the highest standards of professionalism, ethical conduct, and collegiality, respecting and embracing the contributions of students, staff, and faculty colleagues.
2. Faculty should 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 should be supportive, equitable, accessible, encouraging, and respectful, and they should foster professional confidence and encourage critical thinking, skepticism, and creativity. They should

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 should 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. A Major Professor may withdraw from this relationship when a student has consistently demonstrated an inability or unwillingness to abide by the responsibilities and obligations noted herein.
5. Faculty should do their utmost to provide regular, timely, and constructive feedback to graduate students under their mentorship, and they should encourage the same from colleagues serving on graduate steering committees. Faculty should also be responsive to their student's queries to meet, critique their work, or answer general questions.
6. Faculty should be knowledgeable about, and guide the graduate student through, the requirements and deadlines of their graduate programs as well as those of the Graduate School.
7. Faculty should 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 should 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 should encourage graduate student participation in disciplinary meetings, conferences, seminars, and other extra-curricular learning experiences. They should 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 should recognize and respect the financial vulnerability of graduate students; they should not take advantage of this vulnerability to promote their own research and scholarship agendas, nor should 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 should 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.