



Graduate Faculty Handbook

Academic Year 2026 - 2027



School of Graduate Studies
UtahStateUniversity

Summary of Changes Since Academic Year 2025-2026

- Student Financial Assistance
 - New section summarizing financial assistance now housed within the Handbook (Section 5).
- Grad Student Right to an Independent Party
 - Delineates who can serve as a third party for a student in a meeting (Section 3).
- Thesis/Dissertation Proposal Defense
 - New policy and accompanying forms require a proposal defense which is scheduled in advance with SGS and is either passed or failed (no deferral or suspension of a defense). The form for reporting the outcome includes necessary feedback for re-defense or subsequent work to complete the thesis/dissertation (Section 8).
- Graduate Assistantships policy
 - There is a new category of graduate assistant: Graduate Trainee for clinical and practical experience. Each category of assistantship has specific requirements for start/end dates, termination, etc.
 - Minimum graduate assistant (P03) stipend is \$6400 per semester at 0.5 FTE; minimum stipends must be scaled proportionately for lower FTEs. Hourly (P05) or lump sum (P07) employment for students is not affected by this policy.
 - Graduate teaching assistants, graduate instructors, and graders must adhere to the Consensual Relationships policy (Section 4).
- Concurrent Research Degrees and Supervisory Committees
 - Language clarifying supervisory committee policies for graduate students enrolled in two graduate programs concurrently (i.e., masters-masters, doctoral-masters, doctoral-doctoral) (Section 7).
- Completion of RCR CITI training now tracked on the initial SCAF form
 - Completion of the required RCR CITI training is now tracked on the initial Supervisory Committee forms for master's/doctoral students who are required to take the training. Must be completed before the approval of the SCAF form (Section 7).
- Proposal Defenses, Forms, and Approvals
 - Thesis and dissertation proposals must now be scheduled in advance with the School of Graduate Studies using newly developed forms, and TPA/ACCD forms are submitted after a successful proposal defense. Students must either pass or fail proposal defenses; they cannot be suspended. New forms include a mandatory field to document revisions needed prior to re-defense or study completion (Section 8).

- USU 7777 and Grace Semester
 - USU 7777 is no longer offered. Students who need to preserve enrolled status should use thesis/dissertation credits. Grace semester policy language to clarify that it is a time period for degree completion, independent of enrollment.
 - Thesis/dissertation edits after a successful defense must be minor and be completed by the end of the grace semester. If they are not, the student will need to register and re-defend (Section 8).
- Student Rights & Responsibilities now explicitly references USU's Respectful Workplace policy (Section 3).

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The policies in this handbook are largely derived from those stated in the USU Policy Library and the current USU Catalog. In some cases, different language or elaboration is used to add clarity or interpret the policy specifically in relation to graduate education. Any differences in language should be interpreted as School of Graduate Studies policy which operationalizes university policy.

Preface

The purpose of this handbook is:

- To serve as a navigational tool for graduate faculty members as they work with graduate students towards their academic success.
- To assist graduate faculty in understanding graduate student rights and responsibilities.
- To provide clarity on the rules and procedures necessary for serving as a member of the graduate faculty at Utah State University in the roles of major professor, supervisor of graduate assistants, and member of a thesis, project, or dissertation committee.

Utah State University (USU) is committed to maintaining a community environment that encourages mutual respect and facilitates collegial relationships. To build and promote trust, all USU community members are collectively responsible to set a positive example and to avoid behaving disrespectfully, including bullying, or any other behavior that would reasonably offend, intimidate, embarrass, or humiliate others, whether deliberately or unintentionally. University related interactions should be conducted with professionalism, courtesy, civility, decency, and a concern for personal dignity.

Section 1: Introduction to the USU School of Graduate Studies

1.1 About the School of Graduate Studies

- The School of Graduate Studies serves as the central administrative body that promotes, supports, and reviews graduate education to ensure consistency and excellence in all graduate degree programs at Utah State University.
- The School of Graduate Studies works closely and cooperatively with the Office of the Provost & Executive Vice President and the Office of the Vice President for Research, Colleges and Academic Departments, the Graduate Council, the Graduate Student Council, as well as the Graduate Student Senator, to provide the best possible intellectual and physical environment for graduate student education.

1.2 Staff Directory

- Please visit the [Grad School Directory page](#) for names, contact information of all staff, as well as a list of who does what in the School of Graduate Studies.

1.3 Who Does What in Helping Graduate Students

- For a complete overview of how faculty, staff, and the grad school work together to support graduate students, please review the [About Us page](#) of the School of Graduate Studies website.

Section 2: Graduate Faculty Membership Policy

Serving as a member of the graduate faculty is an additional valuable contribution to Utah State University that integrates the core faculty responsibilities of research, teaching, service, and/or extension. To formally supervise or mentor graduate students is a privilege that requires a robust commitment to the ethical and compassionate treatment of students in accordance with student rights and the policies of USU and the School of Graduate Studies. Good standing as a member of the USU Graduate Faculty is required to serve as a major professor; direct supervisor of a graduate assistant; chair, co-chair, or member of a student supervisory committee; chair, co-chair, or member of a thesis or master's project committee; and chair, co-chair, or member of a dissertation committee. Per USU Policy 1000C.4.4 (12), membership on the graduate faculty is jointly determined by the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies and the Dean of each college (i.e., the VPGS and Dean must concur regarding status for each faculty member). Deans take into account the input of their Department Heads (see Section 2.2).

2.1 Criteria

Faculty must be members of the graduate faculty in good standing to serve in any of the following roles:

- Major professor.
- Direct supervisor of a graduate research assistant, graduate teaching assistant, or graduate trainee.

- Chair, co-chair, or member of a student supervisory committee.
- Chair, co-chair, or member of a thesis or master's project committee.
- Chair, co-chair, or member of a dissertation committee.

To be a member in good standing of the graduate faculty, the following criteria must be met:

1. The dean of the faculty member's college must include the faculty member on the list of intended graduate faculty members. As a default standard, it is expected that any tenure-line faculty member with research designated as their area of excellence and teaching as an area of effectiveness will be included on this list from the beginning of their employment in this role with Utah State University.
2. The faculty member must be a full-time employee of Utah State University. Emeritus/a faculty, adjunct or other part-time faculty, and individuals from outside Utah State University may serve in limited roles supporting graduate students (e.g., thesis/dissertation committee member), but they are not considered members of the graduate faculty.
3. The faculty member must have completed the Learn Blue training associated with this handbook and agree to uphold its policies.
4. The faculty member must have no substantiated complaints or grievances against them for violation of policies related to the appropriate or ethical treatment of students. This includes complaints filed with the Office of Equity/Title IX, the Office of Human Resources, the School of Graduate Studies, or any college or department of Utah State University. Depending on the nature of a pending complaint or grievance, the School of Graduate Studies may deem a faculty member to not be in good standing prior to the completion of an investigation; this decision will be made in discussion with the dean of the appropriate college and/or provost. If (1) a pending complaint or grievance is resolved in favor of the faculty member and (2) the dean of the relevant college includes the faculty member on the list of intended graduate faculty members, the faculty member will immediately be placed in good standing.
5. The faculty member must not have received a sanction or reprimand for the violation of policies related to the appropriate or ethical treatment of students within the previous 3 years. If a formal sanction changes this default time period, the terms of the sanction will supersede the 3-year duration.

2.2 Submitting Graduate Faculty to the School of Graduate Studies

Current Full-Time Graduate Faculty (Annual Review)

1. SGS sends the current FT Graduate Faculty list to departments
 - Sent each June (exact timing to be finalized).
 - **Recipients will include Department Heads, Deans, and their Administrative Assistants.**
2. Departments review the list for accuracy
 - Confirm all listed faculty are correct.
 - Identify any faculty who need to be **added** or **removed**.
3. Departments submit corrections to SGS
 - Deadline is the **third Friday of June**.

New Full-Time Faculty (Not Yet on the Graduate Faculty List)

1. Department submits a ServiceNow request
 - Form is still in development.
 - Final workflow will clarify whether requests route to the **Department Head, Dean**, or directly to **SGS**.
2. SGS processes the request
 - SGS adds the new FT faculty member to **Learn Blue** for training and tracking.

External, Adjunct, Part-Time, or Non-USU Committee Members

1. Department submits the updated ServiceNow form
 - Form is currently being revised and tested.
 - This form is **attached to the student**, not the committee member.
2. Submit one form per student
 - A separate request is required for each student the committee member will serve.
3. Approval covers the student's full enrollment
 - Approval is valid for the entire duration of the student's program, not just one year.

2.3 Changes to Graduate Faculty Status

- Should the university or the School of Graduate Studies find that the commitment to uphold USU and SGS policies or rights of students is not met, the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies may determine that a faculty member is no longer in good standing and revoke their status as a member of the graduate faculty (see Policies 1000C.4.4[8] and 1000C4.4[12]).

- If a faculty member loses eligibility to serve on the graduate faculty for any reason or duration related to the mistreatment of graduate students, they cannot return to good standing without a written plan to monitor and ensure appropriate and ethical treatment of students under their supervision that is approved by their department head, the dean of their college, and the vice provost for graduate studies. This plan must remain on file with the School of Graduate Studies. Violation of the terms of this plan may revoke the good standing of the faculty member.
- If a faculty member disagrees with the School of Graduate Studies' determination of standing, the faculty member may appeal to the Utah State University provost with the concurrence of their college dean. The School of Graduate Studies and the disagreeing party will each have an opportunity to present relevant information and evidence to the provost, and the provost will render a final decision.
 - **Note:** Concurrence of the dean is required, because appointment to the graduate faculty requires a dean's approval on an annual basis. Appeal without a dean being willing to add the faculty member to the list of graduate faculty from their college would not produce a different outcome than the original SGS decision.

2.4 Definitions

- Pending complaints or grievances entail any credible allegation of a relevant policy violation, whether or not a formal grievance is filed. This includes complaints brought directly to the School of Graduate Studies by students or other members of the USU community related to improper conduct, which are considered of sufficient severity to prompt fact-finding efforts.
- Substantiated complaints or grievances entail any finding by the School of Graduate Studies, the Civil Rights & Title IX Office, another office or unit within the university, or a formal grievance process that policies related to the appropriate or ethical treatment of students have been violated by a faculty member.
- Sanctions and reprimands are formal consequences of policy violations attained through mechanisms established under USU Policy 4002, including both formal grievances and consequences for policy violations imposed by department heads, deans, the provost, or the president of Utah State University.

Section 3: Graduate Student Rights & Responsibilities

3.1. Graduate Student Rights per School of Graduate Studies Policy

In addition to the rights delineated under the USU Student Code of Conduct and the Faculty Standards of Conduct, the School of Graduate Studies policy provides Graduate Students with additional rights.

- None of the following rights supersede the USU Code of Conduct, other USU policies (including Policy 4002, commonly referred to as Faculty Code), or state or federal legislation or regulation.

3.1.1. Graduate Students Have the Following Rights:

- The right to clear and appropriate credit for assigned work in advance of the work being undertaken. Such credit can be provided in one or more of the following forms: financial compensation (e.g., hourly wage or assistantship stipend), student credit hours (e.g., independent study, registered supervised research), authorship (e.g., listed author or co-author on a publication).
- The right to have clarity and accuracy regarding when courses required for a degree or Program of Study will be offered.
- The right to have clarity on any mandatory costs imposed by a program in addition to standard tuition, insurance, and fees at the time of matriculation and (without a change in amount from initial notification) 6 months prior to the time of the expense.
- The right to have clarity regarding the process of changing advisors/major professor and committee members and the policy and process protections in place for doing so.
- The right to have an independent, impartial party from within the University community (i.e., student, faculty member, or staff member) present in any meeting regarding academic or degree progress, standing in program, or performance within an assistantship, internship, or practicum to serve as a witness to the discussion.
- The independent party's role is limited to serving as a witness to the discussion; this individual shall not advocate for either party, participate in decision-making, or engage directly in the substance of the discussion.
 - The independent party may not be a member of the student's immediate or extended family and generally should not be drawn from the same degree program/department as the student. These restrictions are intended to prevent conflicts of interest and preserve the neutrality of the observer.
 - Examples of appropriate individuals for this role include an officer of the Graduate Student Council or other student association, major professor, Graduate Program Coordinator, Associate Dean, or Associate Vice Provost for Graduate Studies.

3.1.2. Graduate Students Have the Following Rights in the Context of Research and Graduate Assistantships

- The right to have clarity on how authorship/contributor credit will be handled for scholarly works to which they contribute.
 - This clarity will be provided prior to their contribution, delineating how the extent of work aligns with the nature of credit (e.g., authorship order).
 - If actual contributions differ in scope from what was anticipated, authorship/contributor credit must change accordingly in a manner that is mutually agreed.
- The right to have clarity on hours to be worked and work schedule for a research assistantship, teaching assistantship, internship, practicum, or other formal responsibilities assigned—whether paid or unpaid—prior to the start of the work.
 - **Graduate students cannot be compelled to work more than their assigned hours (maximum of 20 hours per week as a 0.5 FTE graduate assistant).** Students may work up to 10 additional hours per week as an hourly employee if the School of Graduate Studies has granted a waiver. This restriction on hours does not apply if the student is a full-time employee of Utah State University related to their graduate program.
 - **Note:** This restriction does not apply to work performed in a voluntary capacity or for academic credit.
 - **Note:** A credit hour is a unit of measurement that represents the amount of work a student needs to complete to earn college credit. The federal definition of a credit hour is one hour of direct faculty instruction and two hours of student work outside of class per week for about 15 weeks. Thus, 3 credits for a course, independent study, or registered research credit should account for ~9 hours of work time per week.
 - Within 25%, hours may shift from week to week based on workload (e.g., working 15 hours in one week and 25 hours in a subsequent week) in keeping with the often-uneven pace of academic work. However, average hours per week within any given 1-month period must not exceed 20 hours per week (up to 30 hours with waiver). **Working hours cannot be accumulated from semester to semester. Hours not worked from an expected 20-hour week cannot be “banked” to the following semester or summer.**

- Assigned hours include all time required to perform assigned work, regardless of the location or timing of the work in relation to “office hours” or “scheduled work hours.”
- If actual hours to be worked or work schedule must change, that change must occur in a manner that is mutually agreed and does not violate total assigned hours.
 - **Note:** Depending on the specifics of formal responsibilities, contributing to scholarly publications may be considered an activity outside the scope of assigned responsibilities (i.e., independent/volunteer work in part or full). Accordingly, some or all time spent writing for publication may not be an assigned responsibility. Thus, writing time may or may not be compensated or subject to the 20-hour per week work restriction. The specifics of this arrangement must be specified and agreed to by the student and the supervising faculty member before the work is initiated.
- The right to clarity on these expectations is not affected by the recognition that scholarly writing may not occur as a formal responsibility and may in part or full be considered an independent, voluntary activity.
- The right to set reasonable boundaries around personal time, such that students can expect to not receive phone calls or text messages regarding their work responsibilities during their personal time.
 - “Reasonable boundaries” does not preclude one-off urgent or emergency communications. However, the conditions constituting such exceptions should be specified in advance. Inappropriate or excessive use of emergency communications is not permitted.
 - While email communications can be sent to students at any time, students can reserve the right to not reply during personal time.
- The right to have clarity on the amount, duration, and conditions of funding, including stipend or hourly rate, tuition, insurance, and fees.
 - Clarity includes both the details of individual funding and the average funding package and range of funding (smallest and largest funding package) within the department, normalized to 20 hours per week.
- The right to receive feedback or revision instructions on academic or scholarly work in a reasonable period of time.

- Specifically, actionable feedback must be provided within a period that will not change anticipated time to degree or relevant degree benchmark (e.g., dissertation proposal defense) as previously agreed to by both student and major professor.
- This right is conditioned on students providing sufficiently completed work products to the appropriate faculty member (e.g., major professor) within agreed upon timeframes.
- The right to be provided adequate and appropriate workspace and working materials necessary to accomplish assigned tasks as part of a research assistantship, teaching assistantship, or other form of student employment.

3.2 Student Rights per USU Code of Conduct

Pursuant to the USU Student Code of Conduct (Article II, Section II-2), students can reasonably expect the following:

- A. The right to a learning environment free of harassment and unlawful discrimination.
- B. The right to due process in all academic integrity and disciplinary proceedings, which means fundamental and procedural fairness in accordance with the provisions of this Student Code.
- C. The right to inquire, including specifically the right to engage in reasonable academic discussion and dissent within the framework of course material, with due regard to factors such as class size and the limits on the instructor's time for conferences.
- D. The right, to free expression and assembly as outlined within USU Policy 2105: Free Expression and Assembly.
- E. The right to meaningful representation in the formulation of University policies which affect students.
- F. The right to a proper academic evaluation through orderly procedures and announced criteria designed to prevent prejudice and capricious judgment.

3.3 Graduate Student Responsibilities

With these rights come responsibilities. Many, but not all, of the responsibilities below are drawn from the Student Code of Conduct (Article II, Section II-1):

- As members of the academic community at Utah State University, students share responsibility for its growth and continued well-being and for maintaining an environment which encourages free inquiry and expression.

- Students are expected to engage in reasonable and substantial preparation for their coursework, to follow course and class guidelines as set forth in syllabi and as enunciated by their instructors, and to complete all academic exercises with integrity.
- These responsibilities are the foundation of the University's Standards of conduct (Student Conduct--see: [Article V](#), Academic Integrity--see: [Article VI](#)).
- The University seeks to vest students with primary oversight of these responsibilities through their participation in hearings boards.
- Utah State University (USU) is committed to maintaining a community environment that encourages mutual respect and facilitates collegial relationships. To build and promote trust, all USU community members are collectively responsible to set a positive example and to avoid behaving disrespectfully, including bullying, or any other behavior that would reasonably offend, intimidate, embarrass, or humiliate others, whether deliberately or unintentionally. University related interactions should be conducted with professionalism, courtesy, civility, decency, and a concern for personal dignity (Adapted from Policy 3002 – Respectful Workplace).

3.4. Graduate Student Misconduct & Discipline Policies

- For questions about student misconduct & discipline, please refer to the [Student Code of Conduct – Article V](#).
- For questions about academic integrity, such as cheating, plagiarism, as well as disciplinary action, please refer to the [Student Code of Conduct – Article VI](#).

3.5. Academic Integrity – Cheating/Plagiarism/Discipline Policies

- Please review [Article VI – University Regulations Regarding Academic Integrity](#)

3.6. Graduate Faculty Responsibilities to Graduate Students per USU Faculty Code of Conduct (Policy 4002.2.3.1)

Note: Faculty code (Policy 4002) was originally written with a focus on courses. As graduate education has become a larger focus at USU, non-course learning experiences have become more central to student-faculty interactions. During the 2022-23 academic year, the Committee on Academic Standards, formally ruled that these policies apply not only to traditional courses, but to “graduate committee decisions, practicum or internship placements or evaluations, and other discipline-specific activities that impact the students’ academic record or progress.” To enhance clarity here, we have augmented or replaced references to classes in the original 4002 text with additional language in italics.

- Faculty members engage in reasonable and substantial preparation for the teaching of their courses, *mentorship/advisement, and supervision of*

assistantships/internships/practica, appropriate to the educational objectives to be achieved and consistent with the standards of the discipline.

- Faculty members meet scheduled classes and meetings related to *mentorship/advisement, and supervision of assistantships/internships/practica*. Schedules are altered or classes canceled only for valid reasons and only after adequate notice is given to students and the faculty member's direct academic supervisor.
 - Failure to meet a class without prior notice to students is excusable only for reasons beyond the control of the faculty member.
- Faculty members will select *course, assistantship, and other academic requirements* based on the legitimate pedagogical goals of the course, *assistantship, curricular activity*, etc. and discipline and inform students of the general content and evaluation criteria in the syllabus, *mentorship agreement*, or comparable documentation at the beginning of any *course/activity* they teach/supervise.
 - Faculty members evaluate student course or *supervised* work promptly, conscientiously, without prejudice or favoritism, and consistently with the criteria stated at the beginning of the course/*activity* in the course or *mentorship agreement* documentation and related to the legitimate pedagogical goals of the course/*activity*.
 - The documentation for the course/*activity* should identify, to the extent possible, the writings, lectures, films, presentations, performances, or other course/*activity* requirements in sufficient detail to allow the student to identify requirements that may conflict with the student's sincerely held core beliefs.
 - Faculty will not always be able to predict in advance requirements that may conflict with the sincerely held core beliefs of a given student or group of students.
 - If conflicts arise, Policy 4002.2.4: Procedures for Alternative Course Requirements Due to Conflicts with Sincerely Held Core Beliefs, provides guidance to students and faculty for the resolution of conflicts.
- Faculty members with teaching/*supervision/mentoring* responsibilities maintain regular office hours for consultation with students, or they otherwise assure accessibility to students.
- Faculty members do not plagiarize the work of students.
 - When faculty members and students work together, appropriate credit is given to the students.
 - Faculty members do not limit or curtail the right of any student to publish or otherwise communicate the result of the student's own independent scholarly activities.

- Faculty members do not use their positions and authority to obtain uncompensated labor or to solicit gifts or favors from students.
 - Faculty members do not ask students to perform services unrelated to legitimate requirements of a course unless the student is adequately compensated for such services.
- Faculty members do not reveal matters told to them in confidence by students except as required by law, Interim USU Policy 3012: Required Reporting of Sexual Misconduct, or issues related to safety and then only to persons entitled to such information by law or institutional regulation.
 - Faculty members may, however, report their assessment of a student's performance and ability to persons logically and legitimately entitled to receive such reports.
- Faculty members create and maintain environments in which students are provided the opportunity to do original thinking, research, creative work, and writing.
- Faculty members avoid the misuse of the classroom by preempting substantial portions of class time for the presentation of views on topics unrelated to the subject matter of the course.
 - Faculty members do not reward agreement or penalize disagreement with their views on controversial topics.
- Faculty members do not engage in the sexual harassment of students, or any other forms of harassment prohibited by USU Policies (2100 Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity, Interim USU Policy 2101: Discrimination based on Protected Characteristics, Interim Policy 2102: Title IX Sexual Misconduct in an Employment or Education Program or Activity and its sub-policies, and USU Interim Policy 2103: Non-Title IX Sexual Misconduct).
- Faculty members do not engage in discrimination against students (Policy 2100: Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity, and Interim USU Policy 2101: Discrimination based on Protected Characteristics).
- Faculty members do not intimidate, humiliate, or abuse students (for definitions, see Policy 3002: Respectful Workplace).
- Faculty members exercise Reasonable Care in meeting their commitments to the institution and to funding agencies where appropriate in research, publication, or other professional endeavors.
 - **Note:** Because faculty enact their professional obligations in mentoring students, supervising graduate assistants, and serving on committees that determine students' academic progress (e.g., dissertation committees), the School of Graduate Studies considers obligations to serve in these capacities as both obligations undertaken to students and obligations to the institution. Accordingly, the commitments cannot be reneged upon for a punitive or retributive reason.

3.6.1. Definition of Reasonable Care

This term, which is familiar to the law, means that the level of performance required of a faculty member is that which is recognized in the profession as reasonable in the light of the obligations which the faculty member has assumed, competing demands upon their energy and time, nature and quality of their work, and all other circumstances which the academic community would properly take into account in determining whether the faculty member was discharging their responsibilities at an acceptable level.

3.7. Graduate Student Rights Violations

3.7.1 How to Proceed if a Graduate Student's Rights are Violated

- If you feel that your rights as a graduate student may have been violated or you are unsure, please request a confidential consultation to explore options or receive guidance. You can do so by contacting the Associate Vice Provost for Graduate Studies through the online [Confidential Contact form](#).
- To file an academic grievance or learn more about the formal process for doing so, please review the [USU General Catalog Academic Grievances page](#).
- If there is a concern about rights being violated that relate to issues of race, age, gender, ability, or sexual orientation, please reach out directly to the [Civil Rights & Title IX Office](#).

Student Rights within the Student Code of Conduct can be reviewed starting in [Article II, Section II-2](#).

Section 4: Graduate Assistantships

Note: The policies and procedures in this section are referenced from the School of Graduate Studies Catalog Section 2. The catalog is the authoritative source of information. In some cases, different language or elaboration is used in this handbook section to add clarity. For example, the minimum stipend payment information for 0.5 FTE and 0.25 FTE assistantships is found within the SGS Handbook but not the Catalog.

A variety of assistantship opportunities are available to graduate students, and all are offered through individual colleges and departments (not SGS). All graduate assistantships (P03 positions within the university employment system) entail a stipend and typically also include

tuition support. However, different types of assistantships have differing elements, requirements, and restrictions, detailed below in Section 4.1.

Graduate students who receive their assistantship across more than one role (e.g., GTA and GRA) must have separate EPAFs (electronic personnel action forms) routed for approval to the School of Graduate Studies for each role (e.g., one for a 0.25 FTE GTA and one for a 0.25 FTE GRA). These roles should not sum to greater than 0.50 FTE (full time equivalent).

Minimum stipend or compensation requirements are determined by the School of Graduate Studies for P03 positions. **The current minimum stipend for a 0.5 FTE graduate assistantship (20 hours per week) is \$6400 per semester.** This amount must be scaled proportionately for lower FTEs (e.g., 0.25 FTE = 10 hours per week; minimum stipend is **\$3200 per semester**). Hourly (P05) or lump sum (P07) employment for students is not affected by this policy.

4.1. Graduate Assistantship Position Overview

Graduate Assistantships are broken down into a few different positions:

- Graduate Research Assistant
- Graduate Trainee (Clinical, Library)
- Graduate Teaching Assistant
- Graduate Instructor

Please note: A grader is not eligible for an assistantship (P03) position. All graders must be hired as hourly (P05) or lump sum (P07) workers. A position that entails only grading without instructional responsibilities is not eligible to be a graduate teaching assistant (GTA).

4.1.1. Graduate Research Assistant

A graduate research assistant is a graduate student assigned to work under faculty guidance on one or more research projects. Research assistantships are granted through departments. Payment is a living stipend for the period of training. It is not an hourly rate or compensation for work.

Responsibilities:

- Work on research projects under faculty guidance.
- Responsibilities cannot include clinical work or those expected of a teaching assistant, instructor, or grader.

Payment Structure and Performance:

- Lump sum stipend disbursed according to the university pay schedule.
- RAs demonstrating poor performance may be evaluated negatively. Supervisors must provide clear feedback on problematic performance and provide guidance for performance improvement. RAs cannot have their stipend or tuition support rescinded, cancelled, or modified, regardless of absences or performance quality. Further, work

associated with a research assistantship cannot be required past the semester of assistantship. However, a research assistantship does not need to be renewed following a semester of poor performance.

- If a GRA resigns or otherwise voluntarily initiates termination of their assistantship prior to the scheduled date of position completion for the semester, disbursement of stipend will stop on the date that the resignation or student-initiated termination takes effect. Beginning on the effective date, the student will no longer be considered a trainee, so their total stipend awarded to support living expenses during the training period will be recalibrated to reflect their proportionate participation.

Absence Policy:

- Excused absences mirror university hourly employee leave standards. A 0.5 FTE GRA is entitled to 12 hours of excused absences per semester. A 0.25 FTE GRA is entitled to 6 hours of excused absences per semester.
- Additional absences may be excused at the discretion of the supervisor provided that such decisions are made equitably for all assistants reporting to the supervisor.

Stipulations:

- Complete required trainings, including [Responsible Conduct of Research](#).
- Health insurance (auto-enrolled in subsidized plan).
- The research assistantship (P03) is limited to 20 work hours per week during the academic year; however, they can work a wage hourly (P05) to work up to 10 additional hours per week if granted a waiver by SGS.

Required Terms:

- Semester-based appointments only (Fall, Spring, Summer).
- First day of work = first day of semester; last day of work = last day of semester.
- NOT obligated to work during non-academic periods or university holidays.
- May choose to work more than required hours at own volition but cannot be negatively evaluated for choosing not to do so.
- Assistantship time and effort are separate from activities for which academic credit is received.
- Time and effort allocated to writing for publication may or may not be considered part of the assistantship. This should be determined in advance by the supervisor and the student.

4.1.2. Graduate Trainee

A Graduate Traineeship (GTR) is for a student to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world practice and gain hands-on experience. Work is done under the direction of an experienced faculty member. Payment is a living stipend for the period of training. It is not an hourly rate or compensation for work.

Responsibilities:

- Work is done under the direction of an experienced faculty member in a clinical setting for which supervised professional experience is a foundational component of training in the profession.
- Responsibilities cannot include research or the duties of a teaching assistant, instructor, or grader.

Payment Structure and Performance:

- Lump sum stipend disbursed according to the university pay schedule.
- Trainees demonstrating poor performance may be evaluated negatively. Supervisors must provide clear feedback on problematic performance and provide guidance for performance improvement. In consultation with the department head, trainees with extremely poor performance or poor performance that persists after good faith efforts at feedback and remediation by the supervisor are complete may not have their assistantship renewed for the following semester. Students do not need to repay either tuition or stipend.
- If a GTR resigns or otherwise voluntarily initiates termination of their traineeship prior to the scheduled date of position completion for the semester, disbursement of stipend will stop on the date that the resignation or student-initiated termination takes effect. Beginning on the effective date, the student will no longer be considered a trainee, so their total stipend awarded to support living expenses during the training period will be recalibrated to reflect their proportionate participation.

Absence Policy:

- Excused absences mirror university hourly employee leave standards. A 0.5 FTE GTR is entitled to 12 hours of excused absences per semester. A 0.25 FTE GTR is entitled to 6 hours of excused absences per semester.
- Additional absences may be excused at the discretion of the supervisor provided that such decisions are made equitably for all assistants reporting to the supervisor.

Stipulations:

- Complete required trainings.
- Health insurance (auto-enrolled in subsidized plan).

- The graduate traineeship (P03) is limited to 20 work hours per week during the academic year; however, they can work a wage hourly (P05) to work up to 10 additional hours per week if granted a waiver by SGS.

Terms:

- Department has discretion over start and end dates. May be required to start before semester and/or continue work after the semester.
- Start dates for a semester may be no earlier than the day following the last day of the prior semester, and end dates may be no later than the day prior to the first day of the following semester (e.g., a GTR for Fall semester can encompass, at maximum, dates from the day after the close of the preceding Summer semester to the day before first day of the Spring semester).
- Must report during assigned employment period.
- All university holidays apply.

4.1.3. Graduate Teaching Assistant

A graduate teaching assistant (GTA) is a graduate student assigned to assist one or more faculty with instruction. A GTA may lecture in a course occasionally, tutor students, or assist in some other teaching capacity, such as teaching a lab or recitation session under faculty supervision. **A position that entails only grading without instructional responsibilities (i.e., grader) is not eligible to be a GTA.**

Responsibilities:

- Assist faculty with instruction.
- Lectures occasionally, tutor students.
- Leads lab/recitation sessions under faculty supervision.
- Helps to prepare courses before semester begins.
- Responsibilities cannot include those of a research assistant or trainee.

Payment Structure and Performance:

- Paid according to the university pay schedule as an employee.
- TAs demonstrating poor performance may be evaluated negatively. Supervisors must provide clear feedback on problematic performance and provide guidance for performance improvement. In consultation with the department head, TAs with extremely poor performance or poor performance that persists after good faith efforts at feedback and remediation by the supervisor are complete may be removed from their position.

Removal will entail a stop in pay, but tuition support cannot be rescinded. Students do not need to repay either compensation already received or tuition in the event of termination.

Absence Policy:

- Excused absences mirror university hourly employee leave standards. A 0.5 FTE GTA is entitled to 12 hours of excused absences per semester. A 0.25 FTE GTA is entitled to 6 hours of excused absences per semester.
- Additional absences may be excused at the discretion of the supervisor provided that such decisions are made equitably for all assistants reporting to the supervisor.
- If absences are able to be anticipated (i.e., not used for illness or emergent medical issue), then they must be scheduled in advance with the supervisor and coordinated to ensure TAs' responsibilities are met to the greatest extent possible.
- If absences are not able to be anticipated (e.g., due to illness or other emergency), TAs will communicate with their supervisor as soon as possible to inform them of the absence and anticipated return.

Stipulations:

- Complete required trainings, including CEUS 7901 and 7902.
- Health insurance (auto-enrolled in subsidized plan).
- The graduate teaching assistantship (P03) is limited to 20 work hours per week during the academic year; however, they can work a wage hourly (P05) to work up to 10 additional hours per week if granted a waiver by SGS.

Terms:

- Department has discretion over start and end dates. May be required to start before semester (e.g., for class preparation).
- Start dates for a semester must be after the last day of the prior semester, and end dates must be no later than the deadline for submitting course grades.
- Must report during assigned employment period.
- Teaching Assistant Consensual Relationship Policy applies (see section 4.3 below).
- All university holidays apply.
- Can be suspended or terminated.

4.1.4. Graduate Instructor

A graduate instructor (GI) is a graduate student who is the instructor of record for one or more courses for an entire semester.

Responsibilities:

- Teaches a course (1) at the undergraduate level; or (2) at the master's level if, and only if, the instructor holds a master's degree at the time of instruction.
- Responsibilities cannot include those of a research assistant or graduate trainee.

Payment Structure and Performance:

- Paid according to the university pay schedule as an employee.
- Graduate instructors demonstrating poor performance may be evaluated negatively. Supervisors must provide clear feedback on problematic performance and provide guidance for performance improvement. In consultation with the department head, graduate instructors with extremely poor performance or poor performance that persists after good faith efforts at feedback and remediation by the supervisor are complete may be removed from their position. Removal will entail a stop in pay, but tuition support cannot be rescinded. Students do not need to repay either compensation already received or tuition in the event of termination.

Absence Policy:

- Excused absences mirror university hourly employee leave standards. A 0.5 FTE GI is entitled to 12 hours of excused absences per semester. A 0.25 FTE GI is entitled to 6 hours of excused absences per semester.
- Additional absences may be excused at the discretion of the supervisor provided that such decisions are made equitably for all assistants reporting to the supervisor.
- If absences are able to be anticipated (i.e., not used for illness or emergent medical issue), then they must be scheduled in advance with the supervisor and coordinated to ensure GIs' responsibilities are met to the greatest extent possible.
- If absences are not able to be anticipated (e.g., due to illness or other emergency), GIs will communicate with their supervisor as soon as possible to inform them of the absence and anticipated return.

Stipulations:

- Complete required training, including CEUS 7901, 7902, and 7903.
- Health insurance (auto-enrolled in subsidized plan).
- The graduate instructor (P03) is limited to 20 work hours per week during the academic year; however, they can work a wage hourly (P05) to work up to 10 additional hours per week if granted a waiver by SGS.

Terms:

- Department has discretion over start and end dates. May be required to start before semester (e.g., for class preparation).
- Start dates for a semester must be after the last day of the prior semester, and end dates must be no later than the deadline for submitting course grades.
- Must report during assigned employment period.
- Teaching Assistant Consensual Relationship Policy applies (see section 4.3 below).
- All university holidays apply.
- Can be suspended or terminated.

4.2. Eligibility

- To be eligible for a 20 hour/week (0.5 FTE) assistantship, full-time enrollment is required (6+ credits during coursework; 3+ after coursework with Full Time at 3 Credits form).
- To be eligible for a 10 hour/week (0.25 FTE) assistantship, full-time enrollment is not required.

4.3. Conditions & Stipulations

Students with Multiple Assistantships

Students may hold multiple assistantships at once as long as the total hours per week across all positions does not exceed 20. Each assistantship must be processed separately with its own Electronic Personnel Action Form (EPAF). For example, a student with both 0.25 FTE (10 hours weekly) of GRA and 0.25 FTE (10 hours weekly) of GTA would have two separate EPAFs submitted by the supervising department(s)—one for the GRA and one for the GTA. A waiver from SGS can permit a student to work up to 10 hours per week as a P05 (hourly employee) or P07 (lump sum) in addition to no more than 20 hours per week of graduate assistantship (P03).

Graduate Student Health Insurance

All graduate students on a 0.5 FTE assistantship are required to have health insurance. Utah State University automatically enrolls students on a 0.5 FTE assistantship in a subsidized health insurance plan. Students may request to waive out of the subsidized graduate insurance if they have their own insurance coverage that has been approved by the Student Health Insurance Coordinator.

Students who do not opt out by the deadline will be required to pay the premiums for the duration of the plan. Please contact the Student Health Insurance Coordinator at ship@usu.edu for more information.

All Graduate Research Assistants, Graduate Trainees, Graduate Teaching Assistants, and Graduate Instructors must work at least one month during the semester to qualify for the

graduate health insurance plan. If a student's assistantship or traineeship ends before the completion of one month, the student does not qualify for the plan, and no premium is assessed to either the student or the department. Once a student meets the 1-month minimum, they are eligible for coverage for the entire semester, and both the student and the hiring department are responsible for the full semester premium. If a department terminates a GTA or graduate instructor before the end of the semester, the department remains responsible for its full portion of the premium. If a student resigns or self-terminates before the end of the term, the department is still obligated to pay the full departmental share for that semester. Departments that require students to sign a Subsidized Graduate Insurance Agreement may recover the departmental portion directly from the student; however, the School of Graduate Studies does not collect these funds on behalf of departments.

Credit Limit

Graduate students with assistantships cannot register for more than 12 credits per semester.

Teaching Assistant, Grader, & Graduate Instructor Consensual Relationship Policy

- Based on USU Policy 4006.9.1, the university's educational mission is promoted by professionalism. Professionalism is fostered by an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. Actions that harm this atmosphere undermine professionalism and hinder fulfillment of the university's educational mission. Trust and respect are diminished when those in positions of authority abuse or appear to abuse their power. Those who abuse or appear to abuse their power in such a context violate their duty to the university community.
- Graders, graduate teaching assistants, and graduate instructors exercise power over students, whether in giving them praise or criticism, evaluating them, making recommendations for their further studies or their future employment, or conferring any other benefits on them. Amorous relationships between graders, graduate teaching assistants, or graduate instructors and other students are not acceptable to the university when the grader, graduate teaching assistant, or graduate instructor has professional responsibility for the student. Such situations greatly increase the chances that the grader, graduate teaching assistant, or graduate instructor will abuse their power and sexually exploit the student. Voluntary consent by the student in such a relationship is suspect, given the fundamentally asymmetric nature of the relationship. Moreover, other students and faculty may be affected by such unprofessional behavior because it places the grader, graduate teaching assistant, or graduate instructor in a position to favor or advance one student's interest at the expense of others and implicitly makes obtaining benefits contingent on amorous or sexual favors. Therefore, the university will view it as unprofessional conduct if graders, graduate teaching assistants, or graduate instructors engage in amorous relations with students in certain situations, even when both parties appear to have consented to the relationship.

- No grader, graduate teaching assistant, or graduate instructor shall have an amorous relationship (consensual or otherwise) with a student who is enrolled in a course in which the grader, graduate teaching assistant, or graduate instructor has responsibilities related to any of those roles.

Section 5: Graduate School Financial Assistance

- Applications for graduate assistantships (See SGS Catalog Section 2), fellowships, and other financial aid should be made through departmental offices.
- Utah State University is party to a resolution of the Council of Graduate Schools that establishes April 15 as the deadline for acceptance of offers of financial assistance.
- If a student accepts an offer before April 15 and then wishes to withdraw, a resignation of the appointment may be submitted in writing at any time prior to April 15.
 - However, after April 15, a student is not to accept another offer without first obtaining a written release from the institution to which a commitment has been made.
- Students who are awarded waivers, fellowships, and/or scholarships must be full-time students enrolled in approved graduate-level coursework and meet the requirements for the duration of the given semester.
- Assistantship waivers are supposed to start running the first week of August and run twice a day until the third week of class.
 - The In-State Portion of Grad Assistantships are applied by the individual departments and are often not applied until the first week of the semester.
- The graduate school does not offer graduate assistantships. **All inquiries about assistantships should be directed to the program itself.**
- The graduate school does not offer or control scholarships. **All inquiries must be directed to the Scholarship Office.**
- For questions about residency, please contact the main **USU Admissions Office**.

5.1. Graduate Tuition Waivers

- Graduate students may be eligible to receive graduate tuition waivers for the resident and/or nonresident portion of tuition.

- Most of these waivers are coordinated through the admitting college, department, and program.
- Domestic students are required to obtain Utah residency before the start of their third semester to minimize the cost of non-resident tuition.
 - o For further information regarding Utah residency requirements, please see the [Utah Residency for Tuition Purposes page](#).

Western Regional Graduate Programs (WRGP)

NOTE: Online programs are ineligible for the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) Waiver.

- Incoming nonresident graduate students who meet the School of Graduate Studies admission criteria and are a resident of participating states may enroll in graduate programs approved as [Western Regional Graduate Programs \(WRGP\)](#) by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) without paying nonresident tuition.
- The funding amount is the nonresident portion of tuition. The duration is unlimited.
- **NOTE: The WRGP Waiver is added to the student's account when the waiver is approved.**
 - o It can take 5-7 workdays from the time of submission date for applications to be approved.
 - o The student's account will **continue to show as Non-Resident**.
 - o The student will be charged the resident tuition rate, which they can check by reviewing the most up to date [Tuition and Fees Table](#).
 - o Students will be sent an email to the email address associated with their A# notifying them that the waiver has been approved.
- Graduate students may apply through the [School of Graduate Studies website](#).
- Signatures from the student's Department Head and the Associate Vice Provost of Graduate Studies are required.

- **The application deadline is no later than 5 days before the start of the student's incoming semester.**

The information for the WRGP can also be found in the [USU General Catalog](#)

Alumni Legacy Nonresident Scholarship

- The Alumni Legacy Nonresident Scholarship is available to incoming nonresident students whose parent earned an associate's degree or higher from Utah State University and is enrolled as a first-time graduate student at USU.
- Qualifying students will have the nonresident portion of tuition waived for their first year while they gain Utah residency.
- To qualify, a student must:
 - o Be admitted into a graduate program.
 - o Be enrolled as a first-time graduate student at Utah State University.
 - o Have at least one parent (biological, step, or legal guardian) who earned an associate degree or higher from USU.
 - o Remain in good standing.
- Time spent in Utah on the scholarship can be counted toward establishing Utah residency for tuition purposes.
- Students who do not establish Utah residency for tuition purposes after the second semester of this award will be charged nonresident tuition.
 - o Please visit [Tuition and Financial Aid](#) for more information.
- Graduate students may apply through [Student Financial Support](#).

For any questions, please contact:

- scholarships@usu.edu
- 435-797-0173

Nonresident Tuition Waiver for Excellence

- This waiver is available to students in any graduate degree program.

- **NOTE: Not allowed for students in programs that are strictly online and not on campus.**
- USU may waive the nonresident portion of tuition for the first year of any incoming graduate student who has an admission GPA above their college average and meets the criteria of excellence as defined by their college and/or department.
- Meeting GPA requirements is not a guarantee of receiving the waiver as a limited number of students may receive the waiver.
- The non-resident portion of tuition will be waived for two semesters for any incoming graduate student who has an admission GPA above the college average and meets the definition of excellence outlined by each college.
 - College averages for admission GPA will be computed each October, based on students who are enrolled for the fall semester; those averages will determine waiver eligibility the following academic year.
- Colleges will nominate students for this award.
- The Colleges must submit the request for the Excellence Waiver in ServiceNow.
- Students should contact their department or [graduate program coordinator](#) for more information.
- The Nonresident Tuition Waiver for excellence is applied by the SGS Business Manager **within the first 2 weeks from the start of the semester.**

Research Nonresident Tuition Waivers

- Students who are in an M.S. Plan A program or a Ph.D. program and hold a 0.5 FTE graduate assistantship (Teaching or Research) for the entire semester (from the first day of classes through the last day of finals) are eligible for the Research Waiver of non-resident tuition for that semester.
- Eligibility for this waiver is verified using information supplied by the department to the School of Graduate Studies.
- There is an expectation that students will gain residency after one year.
 - Students who cannot gain residency (e.g., international students) may receive the waiver beyond one year if they continue to meet eligibility requirements.

- Students should contact their department or [graduate program coordinator](#) for more information.

Utah Immigration Nonresident Tuition Exception (HB 144)

[HB 144](#) is a House Bill that was passed in 2002 in the state of Utah that allows qualifying undocumented students to pay in-state tuition if they attend a Utah college or university. To qualify for this waiver, students must meet the following criteria:

- Attended a Utah high school for at least 3 years.
- Graduated from a Utah high school with a diploma or G.E.D.
- Must not be registered as an entering student at a Utah college or university before the fall semester 2002.
- Filed an application to legalize immigration status or will file an application as soon as eligible to do so.

This exemption of nonresident tuition will not be considered until you are an admitted student to Utah State University. If you do not attend Utah State University as an undergraduate student, you must provide high school transcripts showing your graduation date.

The duration of this waiver is unlimited.

Students should apply through the [Utah State University Scholarships Office](#).

5.2. Other Financial Assistance Opportunities for Graduate Students

Fellowships and Scholarships

- Fellowship and scholarship awardees must be matriculated; full-time students enrolled in approved graduate-level coursework.
- Applications for fellowships and scholarships are submitted to and awarded by the individual departments.

Federal College Work-Study Assistance

- Graduate students may apply for Work-Study by completing the online [FAFSA](#) application.
- For more information about Work-Study or if you have questions about the application, contact the [Financial Aid Office](#).

Other Financial Assistance

- Students who are not employed in assistantships or fellowships may receive financial assistance by working for departments or other campus units.
- Students with graduate assistantships are generally not employed by the University for more than 20 hours per week.
 - Employment beyond 20 hours per week must be approved by the student's advisor, degree program department head, and the Vice Provost of Graduate Studies. Students with .5 FTE graduate assistantships who want to work more than 20 hours per week must submit a [Work 20+ Hours form](#).
- In addition, graduate students may apply for Federal Stafford Loans, Federal Perkins Loans, Federal Supplemental Loans for Students (SLS), Emergency Loans, and Federal College Work-Study through the Financial Aid Office.
 - More information can be found through the [Financial Aid Office](#).
 - Some students may be eligible for GI Bill®* Benefits and should contact the [Veterans Resource Office](#).

***GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#).**

Section 6: Graduate Student Mentorship & Advising

6.1 USU Policy Statements

- The following USU policy statements regarding faculty can be [referenced directly](#):
 - USU faculty code does not directly address the relationship between graduate students and their faculty advisors, but there are sections in Policy 4002, notably section 4002.2.3.1, that are relevant.
- It is important to note that as of the 2023-2024 academic year, these policies apply not only to traditional courses, but to “graduate committee decisions, practicum or internship placements or evaluations, and other discipline-specific activities that impact the students’ academic record or progress,” (see the archived Academic Grievances section in the [2023-2024 General Catalog](#), which details the grievance process if a concern arises).
- *The mentoring relationship between faculty and graduate students* **does** constitute a discipline-specific activity that impacts students’ academic progress.

- Accordingly, for any of the language below, when the word “course” is used, it can be read as any of the above activities.
- Because faculty enact their professional obligations in mentoring students, supervising graduate assistants, and serving on committees that determine students’ academic progress (e.g., dissertation committees), the School of Graduate Studies considers obligations to serve in these capacities as both obligations undertaken to students and obligations to the institution.

6.2 Expectations on Graduate Student Mentorship

- The School of Graduate Studies requires that all members of the Graduate Faculty engage in the supervision and mentoring of students using best professional practices that support student learning, cultivate professional identity development, and safeguard emotional well-being.
- As a core element of the university’s mission, these responsibilities constitute obligations undertaken both to individual students and to the institution as a whole and must be undertaken with diligence and reasonable care.

6.3 Responsibilities of Faculty to Students per USU Faculty Code Standards of Conduct (Policy 4002.2.3.1)

Note: Faculty code (Policy 4002) was originally written with a focus on courses. As graduate education has become a larger focus at USU, non-course learning experiences have become more central to student-faculty interactions. During the 2022-23 academic year, the Committee on Academic Standards, formally ruled that these policies apply not only to traditional courses, but to “graduate committee decisions, practicum or internship placements or evaluations, and other discipline-specific activities that impact the students’ academic record or progress.” To enhance clarity here, we have augmented or replaced references to classes in the original 4002 text with additional language in italics.

- Faculty members engage in reasonable and substantial preparation for the teaching of their courses, *mentorship/advisement, and supervision of assistantships/internships/practica*, appropriate to the educational objectives to be achieved and consistent with the standards of the discipline.
- Faculty members meet scheduled classes and meetings related to *mentorship/advisement, student committees, and supervision of assistantships/internships/practica*. Schedules are altered or classes canceled only for valid reasons and only after adequate notice is given to students and the faculty member’s direct academic supervisor.
 - Failure to meet a class/*committee* without prior notice to students is excusable only for reasons beyond the control of the faculty member.

- Faculty members will select *course, assistantship, and other academic requirements* based on the legitimate pedagogical goals of the course, *assistantship, curricular activity*, etc. and discipline and inform students of the general content and evaluation criteria in the syllabus, *mentorship agreement*, or comparable documentation at the beginning of any *course/activity* they teach/supervise.
 - Faculty members evaluate student course or *supervised* work promptly, conscientiously, without prejudice or favoritism, and consistently with the criteria stated at the beginning of the course/*activity* in the course or *mentorship agreement* documentation and related to the legitimate pedagogical goals of the course/*activity*.
 - The documentation for the course/*activity* should identify, to the extent possible, the writings, lectures, films, presentations, performances, or other course/*activity* requirements in sufficient detail to allow the student to identify requirements that may conflict with the student's sincerely held core beliefs.
 - Faculty will not always be able to predict in advance requirements that may conflict with the sincerely held core beliefs of a given student or group of students.
 - If conflicts arise, Policy 4002.2.4: Procedures for Alternative Course Requirements Due to Conflicts with Sincerely Held Core Beliefs, provides guidance to students and faculty for the resolution of conflicts.
- Faculty members with teaching/*supervision/mentoring* responsibilities maintain regular office hours for consultation with students, or they otherwise assure accessibility to students.
- Faculty members do not plagiarize the work of students.
 - When faculty members and students work together, appropriate credit is given to the students.
 - Faculty members do not limit or curtail the right of any student to publish or otherwise communicate the result of the student's own independent scholarly activities.
- Faculty members do not use their positions and authority to obtain uncompensated labor or to solicit gifts or favors from students.

- Faculty members do not ask students to perform services unrelated to legitimate requirements of a course unless the student is adequately compensated for such services.
- Faculty members do not reveal matters told to them in confidence by students except as required by law, Interim USU Policy 3012: Required Reporting of Sexual Misconduct, or issues related to safety and then only to persons entitled to such information by law or institutional regulation.
 - Faculty members may, however, report their assessment of a student's performance and ability to persons logically and legitimately entitled to receive such reports.
- Faculty members create and maintain environments in which students are provided the opportunity to do original thinking, research, creative work, and writing.
- Faculty members avoid the misuse of the classroom by preempting substantial portions of class time for the presentation of views on topics unrelated to the subject matter of the course.
 - Faculty members do not reward agreement or penalize disagreement with their views on controversial topics.
- Faculty members do not engage in the sexual harassment of students, or any other forms of harassment prohibited by USU Policies (2100 Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity, Interim USU Policy 2101: Discrimination based on Protected Characteristics, Interim Policy 2102: Title IX Sexual Misconduct in an Employment or Education Program or Activity and its sub-policies, and USU Interim Policy 2103: Non-Title IX Sexual Misconduct).
- Faculty members do not engage in discrimination against students (Policy 2100: Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity, and Interim USU Policy 2101: Discrimination based on Protected Characteristics).
- Faculty members do not intimidate, humiliate, or abuse students (for definitions, see Policy 3002: Respectful Workplace).
- Faculty members exercise Reasonable Care in meeting their commitments to the institution and to funding agencies where appropriate in research, publication, or other professional endeavors.
 - Note: Because faculty enact their professional obligations in mentoring students, supervising graduate assistants, and serving on committees that determine

students' academic progress (e.g., dissertation committees), the School of Graduate Studies considers obligations to serve in these capacities as both obligations undertaken to students and obligations to the institution. Accordingly, the commitments cannot be reneged upon for a punitive or retributive reason.

6.3.1 Definition of Reasonable Care

This term, which is familiar to the law, means that the level of performance required of a faculty member is that which is recognized in the profession as reasonable in the light of the obligations which the faculty member has assumed, competing demands upon their energy and time, nature and quality of their work, and all other circumstances which the academic community would properly take into account in determining whether the faculty member was discharging their responsibilities at an acceptable level.

6.4 Graduate Program Coordinators

- Graduate Program Coordinators are a student's first point of contact with their department.

6.5 Academic Nepotism

- A faculty member is not to participate in admission or graduate assistant employment decisions, serve as major professor, or serve on the supervisory committee of a relative, including a person with whom the faculty member has or has had an amorous relationship.
- Graduate students may enroll in classes taught by a relative only under special conditions.
- For information, contact the department head or the School of Graduate Studies.

The policies regarding academic nepotism in this handbook section are copied from the School of Graduate Studies Catalog Section 4.11.

6.6 Matriculated Graduate Students

- A **matriculated graduate student** has been accepted by a department, with the approval of the Vice Provost of Graduate Studies, into a graduate degree program and enrolled at the University.
- A student may be accepted on a **conditional** basis when:
 - (1) information, such as official undergraduate transcripts, has yet to be received by the School of Graduate Studies, or
 - (2) when a missing prerequisite or academic deficiency must be remedied.
- The conditions and time limit for remedying these deficiencies must be specified to the student in writing at the time of admission.

- If the conditions are not met as specified, the student's participation in the degree program may be terminated.
- A **full-time matriculated graduate student** must be one of the following:
 - Registered for 9 or more graduate credits.
 - Registered for 6 or more graduate credits if employed as a 0.5 FTE (20 hours per week, typically) graduate assistant.
 - Registered for 3 graduate credits* meeting one of the following:
 - All required coursework is completed and only the research component of the degree remains.
 - The semester of final thesis or dissertation defense.
 - The last semester of coursework required on the student's Program of Study for non-thesis students.

**Students registered for 3 credits must have an approved Program of Study and an approved Full-Time at 3 Credit form.*

- **NOTE: For questions about matriculated students below full-time status and the effect on student loans, please contact the USU Financial Aid Office for further assistance.**
 - A **matriculated probationary graduate student** may be placed on Academic Warning or Probation due to inadequate progress in their degree program.
 - Individual departments are responsible for determining and communicating the conditions to be met and the time limit for meeting them.
- These conditions must be specified to the student in writing at the time the student is placed on probation by the supervisory committee or program advisor and approved by the department head.
- If the conditions are not met as specified, the student's participation in the degree program may be terminated.

NOTE: The academic policies regarding matriculated graduate students in this handbook section are copied from the School of Graduate Studies Catalog Section 3.1.

Section 7: Supervisory Committees

Note: The policies and procedures in this section are referenced from the School of Graduate Studies Catalog Section 6. The catalog is the authoritative source of information. In some cases, different language or elaboration is used in this handbook section to add clarity.

All faculty and staff at USU eligible to serve on Supervisory Committees must be members in good standing of the USU graduate faculty.

Individuals who are affiliated with other institutions or have limited USU affiliations (e.g., adjunct instructors, emerita and emeritus faculty) can be appointed to serve as committee members on an ad hoc basis through a separate process, which requires approval from the appropriate Department Head and the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies.

7.1. Master's Plan A & Plan B ONLY

A completed initial [Supervisory Committee Approval](#) form should be submitted to the School of Graduate Studies for final approval **by the end of the student's second semester**.

- As part of the initial Supervisory Committee Approval (SCAF) form, completion of [Responsible Conduct of Research \(RCR\) CITI Training](#) is required for all MS/A (thesis), MA, and MFA students.
- It is also required for all students funded by NIH, NSF, or USDA-NIFA.
- If a Plan B paper/project requires research, the student's Committee will require completion of the RCR CITI Training.
- The School of Graduate Studies does not require proposal defenses for Plan B papers/projects **that do not include empirical research**.
- Additionally, the training may be recommended for any master's student if their committee determines it is appropriate for the student's thesis or project.
- RCR CITI Training must be completed **before** the initial SCAF form is submitted.
- **NOTE:** If the SCAF form does not have all required committee roles filled and the completed RCR training (if required), it will be denied.

See SGS Catalog Section 5.1.1., for further information about the Responsible Conduct of Research requirement or contact [Research Integrity and Compliance](#).

A master's degree supervisory committee must include **at least three members** who hold a master's degree or higher and are members of the USU Graduate Faculty. If the degree is a Plan A, all members must have completed a thesis or dissertation.

- **The major professor must be from within the student's department. At least one member** must represent the student's area of specialization, **and at least one member** must be from outside the home department or specialization area and a member of the USU Graduate Faculty in good standing.
- **NOTE:** For special accommodations, the department must receive approval from the Vice Provost of Graduate Studies.
- It is permissible for one member of the committee to be affiliated with an outside institution, affiliated with USU on a part-time basis (e.g., adjunct faculty), or an emeritus or emerita; this individual can only be added to a committee with the permission of the appropriate Department Head and the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies.

While it is the expectation that all members of a thesis or Plan B paper/project committee uphold these values, the specific role of the outside member of a thesis or Plan B paper/project committee is to ensure the success of the thesis/Plan B paper or project process for the student with regard to three primary goals:

- A fair, ethical, and humane process for the student.
- Rigorous academic and intellectual experience that yields meaningful insights accessible to the disciplinary and broader communities.
- And safeguarding against “group think” or tacit expectations that may not be intuitive or evident to the student.

Within School of Graduate Studies and departmental requirements, the supervisory committee for a master's degree does the following:

- Determines courses for the student's Program of Study.
- Conducts any required departmental qualifying examinations.
- Supervises the student's thesis research, Plan B paper/project, or other degree project.
- Conducts the defense or final examination.

NOTE: The defense or final examination must be scheduled through the School of Graduate Studies. The major professor, who serves as the chairperson of the committee, usually directs the thesis, Plan B paper/project, or other degree project.

- A faculty member should not serve on a supervisory committee if, for any reason, they will not be available for committee meetings.
- All committee members must attend the defense at the date and time registered with the School of Graduate Studies.

- Members of the committee are permitted to participate remotely with both audio and video interaction. Students should work with their committee members to arrange defense participation and details prior to submitting an [Appointment for Thesis/Project/Dissertation Defense \(AFD\) form](#).
- Changes to a supervisory committee must be documented and approved by submitting a Supervisory Committee Revision form to the School of Graduate Studies and **cannot be made during the six weeks prior to the defense** without a written request from the Department Head and approval of the Vice Provost of Graduate Studies.
- No committee member should agree to proceed with a defense until they have carefully read and agreed with the defensibility of the thesis or Plan B project. The final defense should be scheduled by the student after all courses and the thesis or Plan B project are completed.
 - Note: A defensible thesis or Plan B paper/project is not guaranteed to pass but does reflect a reasonable and complete product.
- Co-Chairs can be from any department but cannot also serve as the committee member from outside the department or specialization area.
- After the final defense of a Plan A thesis, the student should submit their finalization paperwork and finished manuscript to the School of Graduate Studies for review.
- Plan B papers/projects **are defended but are not formally reviewed** by the School of Graduate Studies, nor signed by the Vice Provost of Graduate Studies. Instead, they must be submitted directly to [USU Libraries](#) and uploaded to the **institutional repository**. See [Plan B Report/Creative Project Submission Form](#). Once accepted, **USU Libraries personnel will notify** both the student and the School of Graduate Studies.
- Once approved, the manuscript will either be uploaded to USU's institutional repository or, if the student wishes to [embargo](#) their work, submit their physical manuscript to USU Libraries. USU Libraries personnel will notify the student and the School of Graduate Studies once the manuscript is accepted.

7.2. Doctoral Degrees

A completed initial [Supervisory Committee Approval](#) form should be submitted to the School of Graduate Studies for approval **by the end of the student's third semester**.

- As part of the initial Supervisory Committee Approval (SCAF) form, completion of [Responsible Conduct of Research \(RCR\) CITI Training](#) is required for all doctoral students and any master's student whose committee deems it appropriate for their student to take.
- It is also required for all students funded by NIH, NSF, or USDA-NIFA.
- RCR CITI Training must be completed **before** the initial SCAF form is submitted.
- **NOTE:** If the SCAF form does not have all required committee roles filled and the completed RCR training will be denied.

See SGS Catalog Section 5.1.1., for further information about Responsible Conduct of Research requirement or contact [Research Integrity and Compliance](#).

- A doctoral supervisory committee must include **at least five members** who hold a terminal degree (e.g., Ph.D., other doctorate, or terminal master's degree such as an M.F.A.). The committee must consist of a major professor from inside the student's department, and at least **three members from within the student's department** and **at least one member who is a member of the USU Graduate Faculty with an appointment outside either, the department or, interdepartmental degree-granting program, in which the student is enrolled; all of these individuals must be members in good standing of the USU graduate faculty.**
- **NOTE:** For special accommodations, the department must receive approval from the Vice Provost of Graduate Studies.
- It is permissible for one member of the committee to be affiliated with an outside institution, affiliated with USU on a part-time basis (e.g., adjunct faculty), or an emeritus or emerita; this individual can only be added to a committee with the permission of the appropriate Department Head and the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies.
- All committee members must have completed a dissertation or thesis requirement similar to that which the graduate student is completing.

While it is the expectation that all members of a dissertation committee uphold these values, the specific role of the outside member of a dissertation committee is to ensure the success of the dissertation/thesis process for the student with regard to three primary goals:

- A fair, ethical, and humane process for the student.
- Rigorous academic and intellectual experience that yields meaningful insights accessible to the disciplinary and broader communities.

- And safeguarding against “group think” or tacit expectations that may not be intuitive or evident to the student.

Within the School of Graduate Studies and departmental requirements, the doctoral supervisory committee does the following:

- Determines courses for the student’s Program of Study.
- Oversees any qualifying examinations and comprehensive examination, unless another departmental or program procedure is in place¹.
- Approves the dissertation proposal.
- Supervises the student’s research and preparation of the dissertation.
- Participates in or conducts departmental annual reviews.
- Conducts the final oral examination.

NOTE: The major professor is the chairperson of the committee and usually directs the student’s research. Continuation in a doctoral program is contingent upon the availability of a major professor.

- A faculty member should not serve on a supervisory committee if, for any reason, they will not be available for committee meetings. All committee members must attend all defenses (e.g., proposal, final, any re-defense) at the date and time registered with the School of Graduate Studies.
- Members of the committee are permitted to participate remotely with both audio and video interaction. Students should work with their committee members to arrange defense participation and details prior to submitting an [Appointment for Thesis/Project/Dissertation Defense \(AFD\) form](#).
- Changes to a supervisory committee must be documented and approved by submitting a Supervisory Committee Revision form to the School of Graduate Studies and **cannot be made during the six weeks prior to the defense** without a written request from the Department Head and approval of the Vice Provost of Graduate Studies.

¹ Some departments or interdepartmental programs administer qualifying examinations. Each program has the responsibility of administering comprehensive examinations. The School of Graduate Studies does not have a policy regarding the nature of student comprehensive exams. Departments may dictate their own policies on this matter, provided that they do not violate University and School of Graduate Studies policies.

- No committee member should agree to proceed with a defense until they have carefully read and agreed with the defensibility of the dissertation. The final defense should be scheduled by the student after all courses and the dissertation are completed.
 - Note: A defensible dissertation is not guaranteed to pass but does reflect a reasonable and complete product.
- After the final defense of a dissertation, the student should submit their finalization paperwork and finished manuscript to the School of Graduate Studies for review.
- Once approved, the manuscript will either be uploaded to USU's institutional repository or, if the student wishes to embargo their work, submit their physical manuscript to USU Libraries. USU Libraries personnel will notify the student and the School of Graduate Studies once the manuscript is accepted.

7.3. Concurrent Research Degrees and Supervisory Committees

- Students doing concurrent graduate degrees will have two supervisory committees, one for each program (please see SGS Catalog Section 4.5.4. for concurrent master's-master's degree programs, Section 4.5.5. for concurrent doctoral-master's degree programs, and Section 4.5.6. for concurrent doctoral-doctoral degree programs, for further information about concurrent degree programs and supervisory committees).
- The major professor for each degree program must be a member of the supervisory committee for the other program. The other committee members for the two supervisory committees need only follow SGS and program guidelines and faculty may serve on both supervisory committees.
- The Supervisory Committee form and Program of Study must be in accordance with the School of Graduate Studies and program requirements.

7.4. Committee Members from Outside of the Department

- The role of "Outside Member" must be filled by a member in good standing of the Graduate Faculty.
- It is the expectation that all members of a thesis/Plan B paper or project/dissertation committee uphold these values, the specific role of the committee member from outside of the department is to ensure the success of the thesis/Plan B paper or project/dissertation process for the student with regard to three primary goals:
 - A fair, ethical, and humane process for the student.
 - A rigorous academic, and intellectual experience that yields meaningful insights accessible to the disciplinary and broader communities.
 - And safeguarding against "group think" or tacit expectations that may not be intuitive or evident to the student.

- **NOTE:** The role of committee members from outside the department can only be filled by a member of the USU graduate faculty in good standing. While an individual from outside USU may be added to the committee, they are not eligible to fulfill the formal “outside committee member” role. All committee members, including members from outside of the department, must be approved by the Dean of the College, Department Head, and the Vice Provost of the School of Graduate Studies.

7.5. Committee Members from Outside the University

- Committee members from outside the university may serve as a member at large of the committee.
- They are not eligible to serve as a committee chair or outside member.
- All committee members, including members outside the university, must be approved by the Dean of the College, Department Head, and the Vice Provost of the School of Graduate Studies.

7.6. Adjunct Faculty

- An adjunct faculty member may serve as a member at large of the committee with approval from the Dean of the College, Department Head, and the Vice Provost of the School of Graduate Studies. **Adjunct faculty may not fill the role of “Outside Committee Member.”**

7.7. Emeritus/Emerita Faculty

- Emeritus faculty may continue to serve as committee members or major professors on any committee they are on at the time they become emeritus.
- Emerita/emergitus faculty may shift from chair to member after they leave their normal faculty role, but they may not shift from member at large to chair or shift from member at large to outside member.
- They may serve as committee members on committees formed after they become emeritus, but not as chair/major professor or outside member.
- **NOTE: The Department is responsible for ensuring that Emeritus/Emerita faculty retain an A# and IT access.**

7.8. Faculty Who Leave USU for Another Academic Institution or Job

- Faculty who leave USU for another institution may continue to serve as committee members on graduate student committees upon the request of the department and with approval from the Vice Provost of Graduate Studies. The faculty member is responsible for updating their email in Banner, in order to receive notifications.
- On graduate student committees where the departing member is major professor, there must be a new major professor or a co-major professor who is a member of the graduate faculty in good standing at USU.

- **NOTE: Departments are responsible for ensuring that these committee members retain an A# and IT Access.**
 - The Department's Business Services can submit a request for an A# for the committee member if necessary.
 - The committee member can also be set up with IT Opt-In, which can also be obtained with the assistance of the department's Business Services Team.

Section 8: Thesis, Plan B Paper, & Dissertation

Note: The policies and procedures in this section are referenced from the School of Graduate Studies Catalog Section 12. The catalog is the authoritative source of information. In some cases, different language or elaboration is used in this handbook section to add clarity.

A graduate student does not automatically graduate with their degree once they defend or submit their thesis, dissertation, or Plan B paper/project. All other program and university requirements must be successfully fulfilled (for reference, please see SGS Catalog Section 8 for Master's Degrees or Section 10 for Doctoral Degrees). The deadline for completing degree requirements is the last day of the semester at 5:00pm. Students with further questions, may contact their [Graduate Program Coordinator](#).

8.1. Publication Requirements

Before beginning work on a thesis, dissertation, or Plan B paper/project, graduate students should review the [School of Graduate Studies Publication Guide](#) and are encouraged to attend a [Thesis and Dissertation Information Session](#), held in-person and via Zoom.

Master's Plan A and PhD students need to have a citation style guide/formatting guide/target journal for the overall paper or for each chapter. A citation style guide/manual is contingent on academic discipline. It dictates the information necessary for a citation and how the information is ordered, as well as punctuation and formatting.

Theses, projects, or dissertations may be prepared in either monograph or multiple-paper format.

- **Monograph Format:** This, the 'traditional' format, consists of a multi-chapter document that uses the same style throughout.
- **Multiple-Paper Format:** A thesis or dissertation using this format consists of at least two chapters, typically written as independent papers, preceded by an introductory chapter that sets the context for the research, and followed by a summary and conclusions chapter that integrates all the studies.

The content of a thesis, project, or dissertation must be approved by the student's supervisory committee in two (2) stages: a proposal defense and a final defense.

- A thesis/project/dissertation proposal delineates the scope of scholarly work for a thesis, project, or dissertation. Once the committee approves the proposal in the proposal defense, the document is considered a binding agreement between the student and the committee regarding expectations for the final thesis, project, or dissertation.
- A thesis/project/dissertation defense consists of a student delivering a presentation on the substance of their final thesis, project, or dissertation document and responding to questions or concerns raised by the committee. Following a successful defense, only minor edits to the document might be expected.
- As thesis/project/dissertation proposals and final documents are developed, drafts of sections should be submitted periodically to the major professor for critique.
- Committee members should be consulted, especially on sections that involve their special expertise.
- Preparation of a Plan A thesis, Plan B paper/project, or dissertation is the culminating learning experience for a graduate student.
- The quality of the manuscript or project, which should represent the student's own best work, is the responsibility of the student.
- Monitoring the quality of the Plan A thesis, Plan B paper/project, or dissertation and mentoring the student in writing are responsibilities of the major professor, with the assistance of the supervisory committee.
- Editing by anyone other than the major professor and the supervisory committee should be limited to mechanics, such as spelling and grammar.
- Publications or manuscripts of which the student is a co-author may be included if the committee determines that the student made a substantial intellectual contribution to the work.
- Permission to include a publication or manuscript in a thesis, project, or dissertation does not depend on the order of authorship.
- Any included publication or manuscript must be a logical component of the overarching theme or themes addressed by the entire thesis, project, or dissertation, which, as a whole, must represent the student's individual and original effort.

- When reprint permission is required, the student is responsible for obtaining said permission from the copyright holder for any published works included as part of the thesis, project, or dissertation, and the manuscript must adhere to stated attribution and citation requirements.
- **NOTE:** A program may require manuscripts to be submitted for publication as part of its degree completion requirements. However, actual publication of a manuscript cannot be a degree requirement, and time to degree cannot be extended to accommodate publication of a manuscript.

8.2. Proposal Defense Requirements

Any proposal defense held without following the proper procedures may be invalid. All committee members **must** attend the proposal defense at the date and time registered with the School of Graduate Studies **for the full duration of the meeting**. While in-person defense is preferred and recommended, members of the committee may participate remotely with both audio and video interaction.

Students should work with their committee members to arrange defense participation and details prior to submitting an [Appointment for Thesis/Project/Dissertation Proposal Defense \(AFP\) form](#). **The form must be submitted at least 10 workdays prior to their proposal defense.**

- If the Appointment for Thesis/Project/Dissertation Proposal Defense (AFP) is not fully approved before the date of defense, the defense is not official and will need to be rescheduled.
- If necessary, an appeal can be made to the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies.
- Once an Appointment for Thesis/Project/Dissertation Proposal Defense (AFP) has been approved by the committee and the School of Graduate Studies, any changes to the date, time, and/or location require the submission and approval of a new Appointment for Thesis/Project/Dissertation Proposal Defense (AFP).

A proposal defense must include a vote to either pass or fail a proposal. Any changes made to the scope of the proposal during the proposal defense must be recorded in writing prior to the vote of the committee. If the proposal passes, it is considered to include the written change of scope. The student and all members of the committee must retain a copy of the text documenting a change in scope. **Once a proposal passes, it represents a formal agreement between the committee and the candidate regarding the scope of work for the thesis, project, or dissertation.**

Proposal defenses cannot be suspended or cancelled once underway. The only possible outcomes of the proposal defense are a pass or fail decision by the committee. If the student fails the proposal defense, they may schedule a second defense in coordination with their major

professor once the feedback from the supervisory committee during the first defense is addressed in a revised proposal document.

The results of the proposal defense and any additional requirements are recorded on the [Record of Thesis/Project/Dissertation Proposal Defense \(ROP\) form](#), which is submitted to the School of Graduate Studies by the student's Graduate Program Coordinator.

All **Master's Plan A and Plan B students** should submit a [Thesis/Project Approval \(TPA\) form](#) to confirm they have successfully defended their thesis or Plan B paper/project proposal with committee approval before the final defense. **NOTE: The School of Graduate Studies does not require proposal defenses for Plan B papers/projects that do not include empirical research.**

- This form is also used to document that the student has obtained any necessary regulatory approvals (IRB, IACUC, etc.) (see SGS Catalog Section 5.1 above) and completed any safety trainings necessary. The form should therefore be submitted after the student's committee approves the thesis/project research proposal, and prior to the student conducting their research.
- For updates on IRB regulations and to determine whether a student's research requires IRB approval, view [USU's IRB webpage](#).
- Verification of regulatory approval must be submitted to the School of Graduate Studies before the student's Thesis/Project Approval (TPA) can be approved.
- The student, their major professor, Committee Members, Department Head, and IRB/IACUC (if needed) will receive an email notification from ServiceNow, to review and approve the Thesis/Project Approval form. Once all signatures are obtained electronically, all parties will receive a final email from Service Now with a completed form.
- The student's thesis or Plan B paper/project defense is scheduled after the Thesis/Project Proposal Approval form is accepted.

Master's Plan A and Plan B students are encouraged to submit the Thesis/Project Approval (TPA) form **by the end of their second semester, after submitting and receiving approval for the Supervisory Committee Approval Form (SCAF) and the Program of Study (POS)** (see SGS Catalog Section 6.1., for information about the SCAF form, and SGS Catalog Section 7.3., for information about submitting the POS form), **a successful thesis/project proposal defense, all regulatory approval is in place, and any other required forms for the proposal defense have been submitted and accepted.**

For **doctoral students**, the submission of the [Application for Candidacy \(ACCD\) Form](#) is a significant point in the student's program because the Major Professor, Supervisory Committee,

and Department Head thereby attest that the student is ready to conduct independent dissertation research—although successful completion is not guaranteed.

- This form is also used to document that the student has obtained any necessary regulatory approvals (IRB, IACUC, etc.) (see SGS Catalog Section 5.1 above) and completed any safety trainings necessary. The form should therefore be submitted after the student's committee approves the dissertation research proposal, and prior to the student conducting their research.
- For updates on IRB regulations and to determine whether a student's research requires IRB approval, view [USU's IRB webpage](#).
- Verification of regulatory approvals must be submitted to the School of Graduate Studies before the student's Application for Candidacy can be approved.
- Students are permitted to enroll in dissertation credits in their last semester of coursework after they have successfully passed their comprehensive exams and received final approval for their application for candidacy.

Doctoral students are encouraged to submit this form **by the end of their second year, as soon as their dissertation proposal is approved, all regulatory approval is complete, the student passes their comprehensive exams, and any other required forms for the proposal defense have been submitted and accepted.** NOTE: The Supervisory Committee Approval Form (SCAF) and the Program of Study (POS), should already be submitted and approved **by the end of the doctoral student's third semester** (see SGS Catalog Section 6.2., for information about the SCAF form, and SGS Catalog Section 7.3., for information about submitting the POS form).

- The student, their Major Professor, Committee Members, Department Head, and IRB/IACUC (if needed) will receive an email notification from ServiceNow, to review and approve the Application for Candidacy form. Once all signatures are obtained electronically, all parties will receive a final email from Service Now with a completed form.
- **NOTE:** The Application for Candidacy (ACCD) Form should be submitted **at least three months prior to the student's final defense.**

8.3. Final Defense Requirements

Any final defense held without following the proper procedures may be invalid. All committee members **must** attend the final defense at the date and time registered with the School of Graduate Studies **for the full duration of the meeting.** Full-time students must be registered for **at least 3 credits** during the semester in which they defend their thesis, dissertation, or Plan B paper/project.

Domestic students may be registered for 1 credit during their defense semester; however, they will hold part time status. Students receiving financial aid are likely to be required to maintain full time status, so it is strongly advised to check with the [Office of Student Financial Support](#) before electing to take only 1 credit.

International students must be registered for 3 credits if they defend in Fall or Spring semesters with an approved [Full-Time at 3 Credits \(FT3\) form](#). However, they may register for 1 credit if they are defending in the summer semester with an approved [Reduced Course Load \(RCL\) form](#) in their SEVIS record, and their program's policy allows for it.

- **NOTE: A Reduced Course Load (RCL) form can only be used one time and therefore cannot be used after the completion of the grace semester (see SGS Catalog Section 4.8.).**
- If International Students have any questions about the Full-Time at 3 Credits (FT3) form or the Reduced Course Load (RCL) form, they should contact the [Office of Global Engagement](#).

When the final defense is scheduled during a semester break, the student must enroll for at least 3 credits the following semester.

All defenses are public. While in-person defense is preferred and recommended, members of the committee may participate remotely with both audio and video interaction. Students should work with their committee members to arrange defense participation and details prior to submitting an [Appointment for Thesis/Project/Dissertation Defense \(AFD\) form](#).

Students should review their official committee to make sure it is correct. **Changes in the membership of a supervisory committee cannot be made during the six weeks prior to the defense without a written request from the department head and approval of the Vice Provost of Graduate Studies.** For questions about Supervisory Committees, please review SGS Catalog Section 6.

No committee member should agree to proceed with a defense until they have carefully read and agreed with the defensibility of the thesis, Plan B paper/project, or dissertation. The final defense should be scheduled by the student after all courses and the thesis, Plan B paper/project, or dissertation are completed.

8.4. Before the Final Defense

Students should determine when they need to have their degree in hand. The student should work with their Major Professor, Committee, and GPC, to determine a timeline for their thesis, Plan B paper/project, or dissertation completion. The submission deadline and the degree conferral date can be reviewed on the [Graduate School Deadlines page](#).

- In order to meet the deadlines, students should submit their documents no later than 3 weeks before the last day of the semester if they intend for the degree to be conferred in the same semester as the defense.
- We cannot guarantee that paperwork will be processed in time to award a degree in the current semester if all materials are not submitted in final form by the submission deadline.

- All graduate degrees will be awarded within 45 days of the degree conferral date.

Students should submit their thesis, plan B paper/project, or dissertation to each committee member at least 4 weeks prior to their defense date for review.

Students should meet with their GPC to review and do the following:

- Conduct a final review of their official forms to make sure they are correct.
- [SCAF](#) and [POS](#) forms are approved and accurate.
- Discuss any departmental requirements.
- Review their official degree and plan type and ensure they are correct in Banner.
- Discuss how the defense room is reserved.
- Reserve a room.

Students must submit their [Appointment for Thesis/Project/Dissertation Defense \(AFD\) form](#) **at least 10 workdays prior to their defense.**

- When students fill out the AFD form, they will need to review their official committee to make sure that it is correct.
- Students should check on the progress of approvals for their AFD by following up with their GPC and/or committee members to make sure it is approved in a timely manner.
- If the Appointment for Thesis/Project/Dissertation Defense (AFD) is not fully approved before the date of defense, the defense is not official and will need to be rescheduled. If necessary, an appeal can be made to the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies.
- Once an Appointment for Thesis/Project/Dissertation Defense (AFD) has been approved by the committee and the School of Graduate Studies, any changes to the date, time, and/or location require the submission and approval of a new Appointment for Thesis/Project/Dissertation Defense (AFD).

8.5. During the Final Defense

Students must be registered for at least 3 credits the semester they first defend a thesis, Plan B paper/project, or dissertation, or take final oral examinations.

The oral examination of the thesis, Plan B paper/project, or dissertation is a defense of a final document.

- **Only minor changes, usually editorial, should be required following the defense. These changes must be completed by the end of the grace semester. Changes that take longer than the duration of the grace semester to complete will be assumed to be major and require a new defense.**

- If all revisions are not complete by the end of the grace semester following a successful defense, then the major professor, with support of all members of the supervisory committee, may submit an appeal to the Vice Provost of Graduate Studies, justifying why the student should not be required to defend the thesis, Plan B paper/project, or dissertation a second time.
- **If major changes are required, a defense of the revised document should be held. The student must be registered for at least 1 credit during the semester of a new defense.**
- During the defense, the student defends their thesis, Plan B paper/project, or dissertation and answers questions about the research or related topics.
- The results of the final defense and any additional requirements are recorded on the [Record of Thesis/Project/Dissertation Defense \(ROD\) form](#), which is submitted to the School of Graduate Studies by the student's Graduate Program Coordinator.

Any final examination held without following the proper procedures may be invalid.

- If all degree requirements are not complete by the end of the grace semester following a successful defense, then the major professor, with support of all members of the supervisory committee, must submit an appeal to the Vice Provost of Graduate Studies, justifying why the student should not be required to defend the thesis, Plan B paper/project, or dissertation a second time.
- Students must register for at least 1 credit the semester of their second defense.

8.5.1 Votes on Graduate Student Supervisory Committees

- To be considered successful, it is expected that all members of a supervisory committee will approve the Ph.D. dissertation proposal or M.S. thesis proposal during a proposal defense. Likewise, it is expected that all members of the supervisory committee will approve the final Ph.D. dissertation, M.S. thesis, or Plan B paper/project for the final defense to be considered successful. However, for the final defense of a doctoral dissertation, a defense can be successful with a vote of 4 members in favor and 1 against or abstaining.
- In all cases, the vote of each member of the committee during the defense constitutes their approval or disapproval of the proposal, thesis, Plan B paper, or dissertation. **All members of the committee are required, as a condition of committee membership, to sign the forms associated with a successful defense, regardless of the member's individual vote.** Committee members' signatures reflect concurrence that all policies and procedures of the thesis, Plan B paper/project, or dissertation proposal or final process were followed.

- Any instances of a thesis or Plan B paper/project receiving only 2 votes in favor (out of 3) or a dissertation receiving 3 votes in favor (out of 5) that cannot be resolved by discussion of the committee shall be referred to the Vice Provost of Graduate Studies for resolution.

8.6. After the Proposal or Final Defense

- The student should be informed of the defense results at the conclusion of the defense. The major professor or designated committee member should inform the GPC of the results of the defense as soon as possible. The GPC will then submit the [Record of Thesis/Project/Dissertation Proposal Defense \(ROP\)](#) or [Record of Thesis/Project/Dissertation Defense \(ROD\)](#) in ServiceNow, and the committee will verify the results of the defense. The student should discuss the ownership of data and authorship rights with their committee. Master's Plan A and Doctoral students should review and submit the [Format & Style form](#) and [Authorship & Copyright form](#), and [Title Page](#).

8.6.1. Grace Semester

- Master's and doctoral students will be given until the last day of the next semester (spring, summer or fall) following a successful defense to complete remaining degree requirements.
- This is the “grace semester” and does not require students to be registered for credits. **It is a period of time allotted to complete degree requirements for conferral and is separate from the taking of credits. The grace semester can be completed from any geographic location.**
- If an international student wishes to utilize the grace semester while remaining in the United States, they will need to remain compliant with F-1 or J-1 visa criteria. Accordingly, they may need to register for additional thesis/dissertation credits during the grace semester. **NOTE:** International students who have questions about F-1 or J-1 visa criteria, should contact the [Office of Global Engagement](#).