



School of Graduate Studies

Faculty Handbook



School of Graduate Studies
UtahStateUniversity

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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 at Utah State University to ensure consistency and excellence in all graduate degree programs.
- The School of Graduate Studies works closely and cooperatively with the central administration, the [Graduate Council](#), the [Graduate Student Council](#), [colleges and academic departments](#) to provide the best possible intellectual and physical environment for graduate student education.

1.2 Core Values

- These values are established to assist the School of Graduate Studies in accomplishing the mission of Utah State University.

Service

- The School of Graduate Studies provides administrative, financial, and professional support for graduate programs and graduate students in all disciplines and on all USU campuses.

Integrity

- Scholarship and training should be conducted with the highest ethical and regulatory standards. This is particularly important in graduate programs, as they prepare students to serve in professional and leadership roles.

Individual Capacity Development

- Faculty, graduate students, and staff should continue to learn how best to conduct research and scholarly activities, to mentor others, and to support graduate education.

Student Engagement

- Students will have better educational experiences, leading to better outcomes, if they are fully engaged in their graduate programs, and in their professional, university, and civic communities.

Inclusive Excellence

- In the School of Graduate Studies at Utah State University, we firmly believe that a variety of opportunities, interactions, and approaches can strengthen an individual's ability to actively participate in a pluralistic society.
- The School of Graduate Studies is committed to cultivating inclusive excellence by ensuring accessibility for students from a broad range of backgrounds and lived experiences that include, but are not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, age, and ability.

Transparency

- As a public institution, all USU stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, and the public, should have access to a clear understanding of Graduate School functions and operations.

The information above can be referenced directly on the [SGS website](#).

1.3 Staff Directory

- Please visit the [Grad School Directory page](#) for names, photos, and contact information of all staff in the School of Graduate Studies.

1.4 Who Does What in Helping Graduate Students

<p>Graduate Faculty:</p> <p>Academic and Research Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching & Mentoring: Guide students through coursework, supervise research, and offer career advice. • Research Supervision: Oversee student research, assist with grant writing, and serve on dissertation/thesis committees. • Academic Administration: Contribute to program development, admissions, and serve on various academic committees. • Professional Development: Help students with networking, provide teaching opportunities, and offer career guidance. 	<p>Graduate Program Coordinators & Staff:</p> <p>Administrative and Student Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative Support: Manage student records, course schedules, and assist with admissions and registration processes. • Student Services: Provide academic advising and help students navigate their graduate experience. • Financial Aid & Funding: Assist students with financial aid, scholarships, grant applications and finding assistantships. • Student Support: Monitor student progress and ensure students meet graduation requirements. 	<p>School of Graduate Studies:</p> <p>Institution-Wide Governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Oversight: Ensure programs adhere to university-wide academic standards, program quality, and accreditation, and provide support. • Admissions: Manage the application process, review admissions criteria, and attract qualified candidates. • Professional Development: Organize workshops, seminars, and networking events to enhance students' skills and career readiness. • Policy Implementation: Enforce university policies related to academic standards, ethics, and student conduct.
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The information in subsection 1.4 above can be referenced on the [SGS website](#).

1.5 New Graduate Student Orientation

- New Graduate Student Orientation is designed to introduce new graduate students to graduate education at Utah State University.
 - **In-Person Orientation**

- At the in-person orientation, students will hear from faculty, staff, and the Vice Provost of Graduate Studies on how to make the best of their time in graduate school. The in-person session includes light breakfast foods, lunch, and cross-disciplinary networking opportunities.
 - The in-person orientation event is held in August each summer, on the Thursday before school starts.
 - Please visit the [SGS New Graduate Student Orientation page](#) for more information.
- **Online Orientation Course**
 - This orientation provides an overview of graduate education at USU, a checklist for new students, grad school best practices, and campus resources.
 - Students are encouraged to complete all the modules before the beginning of the semester, but all materials will remain accessible throughout their time at USU.
 - Students should contact their [Graduate Program Coordinator \(GPC\)](#) with any questions.
 - Please visit the [SGS New Graduate Student Orientation page](#) for more information.

1.6 Graduate Studies Senator

Graduate students at Utah State University are represented by their respective college senator and a Graduate Studies Senator who represents them as a voting member on both the USUSA Academic Senate and Executive Council. The Graduate Studies Senator is assisted by the Directors of Graduate Research and Graduate Campus Affairs.

- To find and contact the Graduate Studies Senator, please visit the [USUSA website](#).

1.7 Graduate Student Council

- The Graduate Student Council is comprised of one graduate representative from each of the nine colleges on campus, one to two statewide graduate student representatives, the Graduate Student Senator, and the Graduate Studies Director.
- The council meets monthly throughout the school year to discuss graduate student concerns, review and promote resources available to graduate students, increase sense of community among graduate students, and help improve campus climate and graduate student well-being.

For a list of Graduate Student Council members, and meetings, please visit the [Graduate Student Council site](#).

1.8 Graduate Council

The Graduate Council establishes regulations and standards for graduate study with the approval of the Faculty Senate and advises the vice provost of graduate studies on policy. Graduate Council members assist with:

- **Reviewing graduate program curriculum proposals:** Proposals for new curricula or revisions to existing curricula (R401s) are reviewed and approved by the Graduate Council.
- **Reviewing changes to Graduate School policy:** Changes to Graduate School requirements (e.g., admission requirements) are reviewed by the Graduate Council.

To view Graduate Council Members, meeting minutes, meeting times, or to submit agenda items, please visit the [Graduate Council page](#).

Section 2: Graduate Student Responsibilities & Rights

2.1 Student Responsibilities

- 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.
- All interactions with faculty members, staff members, and other students shall be conducted with courtesy, civility, decency, and a concern for personal dignity.
- 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.

Student Responsibilities within the Student Code of Conduct can be reviewed starting at Article II, Section II-1 the following link: <https://www.usu.edu/student-conduct/student-code/article1#a2>

2.2 Student Rights per USU Code of Conduct

According to the USU Code of Conduct (<https://www.usu.edu/student-conduct/student-code/article1#a2>), students can reasonably expect the following:

- The right to a learning environment free of harassment and unlawful discrimination.
- 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.

- 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.
- The right, subject to time, place, and manner restrictions, to [engage in free expression as described in Interim USU Policy 541: Free Expression and Assembly](#).
- The right to organize and the freedom of association in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies.
- The right to publish and the freedom from censorship.
- The right to meaningful representation in the formulation of university policies which affect students in regulations, and policies.
- The right to a proper academic evaluation through orderly procedures and announced criteria designed to prevent prejudice and capricious judgment.
- The right to confidentiality of records and due limitation of disclosure of personally identifiable information in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

2.3 Responsibilities of Faculty to Students per USU Faculty Code Standards of Conduct (Policy 403.2.3.1)

- **Note:** Faculty code (Policy 403) 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 403 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 403.4, 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 340: 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 (303 Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity, Interim USU Policy 305: Discrimination based on Protected Characteristics, Interim Policy 339 Sexual Misconduct in an Employment or Education Program or Activity and its sub-policies, and USU Interim Policy 339A: Non-Title IX Sexual Misconduct).

- Faculty members do not engage in discrimination against students (Policy 303, Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity, and Interim USU Policy 305: Discrimination based on Protected Characteristics).
- Faculty members do not intimidate, humiliate or abuse students (for definitions, see Policy 321, Respectful Workplace).

2.4 Graduate Student Rights per SGS 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 403, commonly referred to as Faculty Code), or state or federal legislation or regulation.
- **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 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

personal support and/or witness to the discussion. This individual may not serve in an advocacy capacity.

- Examples of appropriate individuals for this role include an officer of the Graduate Student Council or other student association, major professor, Graduate Program Coordinator, and Associate Dean or Associate Vice Provost for Graduate Studies.
- **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, unless the School of Graduate Studies has granted a waiver, or the student is a full-time employee of Utah State University related to their graduate program).** 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 a 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 considered 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 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 normalizes 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.

2.5 How to Proceed if a Student's Rights are Violated

- If you feel that your rights as a student have been violated, and would like to file a grievance, please do so using the following link: <https://catalog.usu.edu/content.php?catoid=38&navoid=30451>.
- If you are unsure or if you would like to request a confidential consultation to explore options or feedback, please contact the Associate Vice Provost through the online form at <https://gradschool.usu.edu/confidential-contact>.

Student Rights within the Student Code of Conduct can be reviewed starting in Article II, Section II-2 at the following link: <https://www.usu.edu/student-conduct/student-code/article1#a2>

Section 3: Graduate Student Advising

3.1 Graduate Program Coordinators

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

[GPC Directory](#)

3.2 Supervisory Committees (Master's Plan A, Plan B ONLY)

- When a student is accepted to a master's degree program, the department head appoints a temporary advisor.
- During the first semester following matriculation, the student should meet with the temporary advisor to discuss the appointment of a supervisory committee.
- Supervisory committee members should hold a degree equivalent to or higher than the one the graduate student is seeking and have completed a dissertation or thesis requirement similar to that which the graduate student is completing.
- A master's degree supervisory committee **must include at least three faculty members who hold a master's degree or higher and are members of the Graduate Faculty.**
 - **At least one member must represent the student's area of specialization, and at least one must be from outside the specialization area.**
- A faculty member should not serve on a supervisory committee if, for any reason, they will not be available for committee meetings.
- Ideally, all members should be present for the final defense, and the defense should be scheduled accordingly.

- 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 Examination.
- 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.

2.1 Outside Committee Members

- While it is the expectation that all members of a thesis/dissertation committee would uphold these values, the specific role of the outside member of a thesis or dissertation committee is to ensure the success of the dissertation/thesis process for the student with regard to three primary goals:
 - 1) a fair, ethical, and humane process for the student;
 - 2) a rigorous academic, and intellectual experience that yields meaningful insights accessible to the disciplinary and broader communities; and
 - 3) safeguarding against “group think” or tacit expectations that may not be intuitive or evident to the student.
- All outside Committee Members will first require prior approval by the Vice Provost for the School of Graduate Studies.

2.1.1 Committee Members from Outside the University

- Committee Members from outside the university may serve as a member at large of the committee.
- Committee Members from outside the University may not fill the role of “Outside Committee Member.”
- **NOTE: Committee Members from Outside the University – Departments are responsible for setting up these Committee Members with an A# through Service Now.**

2.2 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.
- They may serve as committee members on committees formed after they become emeritus, *but not as major professor*.

2.3 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.
- 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 faculty member at USU.

3.3 Supervisory Committees (Doctoral)

- When a doctoral student is admitted, the department head appoints a temporary advisor to work with the student until a supervisory committee is formally established.
- A doctoral supervisory committee **must include at least five faculty who hold doctoral degrees and are current members of Graduate Faculty.**
 - The committee must consist of three members from within the student's department and at least one member who is outside either the department or interdepartmental degree-granting program in which the student is enrolled.
- Within School of Graduate Studies and departmental requirements, the supervisory committee
 - (1) determines courses for the student's Program of Study;
 - (2) oversees any qualifying examinations and comprehensive examination, unless another departmental or program procedure is in place*;

- (3) approves the dissertation proposal;
- (4) supervises the student's research and preparation of the dissertation;
- (5) participates in or conducts departmental annual reviews*;
- (6) conducts the final oral examination.

- 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.
 - **Some departments or interdepartmental programs administer qualifying examinations. Each department or program has the responsibility of administering comprehensive examinations.*
- Supervisory committee members should hold a degree equivalent to or higher than the one the graduate student is seeking and have completed a dissertation or thesis requirement similar to that which the graduate student is completing.
- A faculty member should not serve on a supervisory committee if, for any reason, they will not be available for committee meetings.
- Ideally, all members should be present for the final defense, and the defense should be scheduled accordingly.
- 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 Examination.
- 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.

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 - 1) a fair, ethical, and humane process for the student;
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- Committee Members from outside the University may not fill the role of “Outside Committee Member.”
- **NOTE: Committee Members from Outside the University – Departments are responsible for setting up these Committee Members with an A# through Service Now.**

3.2 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.
- They may serve as committee members on committees formed after they become emeritus, *but not as major professor.*

3.3 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.
- On graduate student committees that the departing member is major professor, there must be a new major professor or a co-major professor who is a faculty member at USU.

Information regarding Supervisory Committees can be referenced in the [SGS Catalog Section G.1.a.](#)

3.4 Faculty Advisors & Supervisors of Graduate Students

4.1 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 403, notably section 403.2, 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 [Academic Grievances section](#) from the 2023-2024 General Catalogue, 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.

3.5 Responsibilities of Faculty to Students per USU Faculty Code Standards of Conduct (Policy 403.2.3.1)

- **Note:** Faculty code (Policy 403) 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 403 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 403.4, Procedures for Alternative Course Requirements due to Conflicts with Sincerely Held Core Beliefs, provides guidance to students and faculty for the resolution of conflicts.
- **Note:** “Evaluation criteria in the syllabus or comparable documentation at the beginning” applies to any benchmark assessment such as supervised research, a comprehensive examination, thesis, or dissertation defense (i.e., “graduate committee decisions, practicum or internship placements or evaluations, and other discipline-specific activities that impact the students’ academic record or progress”). This means that evaluation criteria must be provided to students in writing well in advance of the assessment in one or more formats, such as a program handbook or mentoring agreement. Sample mentoring agreements are available on the [SGS website](#).
- 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.
 - **Note:** This policy explicitly forbids blocking a student from moving their research products forward to submission for publication. This is especially important for programs that have requirements for students to submit papers for publication to make progress toward their degree.

- 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.
 - **Note:** This applies to any work requested of students outside the explicit scope of their graduate assistantship, paid hourly position, and/or academic work for credit.

- Faculty members do not reveal matters told to them in confidence by students except as required by law, [Interim USU Policy 340: 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 (303 Affirmative

Action/Equal Opportunity, Interim USU Policy 305: Discrimination based on Protected Characteristics, Interim Policy 339 Sexual Misconduct in an Employment or Education Program or Activity and its sub-policies, and USU Interim Policy 339A: Non-Title IX Sexual Misconduct).

- Faculty members do not engage in discrimination against students (Policy 303, Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity, and Interim USU Policy 305: Discrimination based on Protected Characteristics).
- Faculty members do not intimidate, humiliate or abuse students (for definitions, see Policy 321, 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.

2.3.5 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.

3.6 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.

See [SGS Catalog Section D.8](#)

3.7 Mentorship Resources

The School of Graduate Studies has put together some resources for [mentoring best practices](#).

3.8 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.

3.9 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 completed and only the research component of the degree remaining.
 - 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.

This information can be referenced in the [SGS Catalog Section C](#).

Section 4: Thesis/Dissertation

4.1 Publication Requirements

- Before beginning work on a thesis, dissertation, or plan B paper, graduate students should review the [School of Graduate Studies Publication Guide](#) and attend a [Thesis and Dissertation Information Session](#).
 - Request the style manual or journal approved by the supervisory committee and/or department, and watch or attend a thesis/dissertation information session.
 - These resources will guide students in the proper preparation of their manuscript.
- Theses and dissertations may be prepared in either monograph or multiple-paper format.
 - One article or an article-manuscript may not be submitted by itself as an entire thesis or dissertation.
- The content of a thesis or dissertation must be approved by the student's supervisory committee.
 - 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 thesis, plan B paper, or dissertation is the culminating learning experience for a graduate student.
 - The quality of the product, which should represent the student's own best work, and is the responsibility of the student.
 - Monitoring the quality of the thesis, plan B paper, 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.

Coauthoring requirements are listed in the Graduate School Catalog (section G2).

4.2 Defense Requirements

- Any final defense held without following the proper procedures as listed in the [graduate catalog](#) may be invalid.
- All defenses are public.
- **All committee members must attend the defense at the date and time registered with the School of Graduate Studies.**
- While an 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 Examination.
- **No committee member should agree to proceed with a defense until they have carefully read and approved the thesis, dissertation, or plan B paper.**

4.3 Defense Preparation & Process

Before the Defense

- Students should review the [steps to degree completion](#) for their degree.
- Students should review their official committee to make sure it is correct.
 - NOTE: 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.
- 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/dissertation completion.
 - Graduate Student deadlines for final defense, graduation, and degree posting can be reviewed on the [Graduate Studies Deadlines page](#).
 - In order to meet the deadlines, students should submit their documents no later than 4 weeks before the dates listed on the deadlines page.

- Students should submit their thesis, plan B paper, or dissertation to each committee member prior to their defense date.
- **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](#), [POS](#), and [TPA](#) or [ACDD](#) forms 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 Examination](#) (AFE) **at least 10 business days prior** to their defense.
 - Students should check on the progress of approvals for their AFE, follow up with GPC and/or committee members to make sure it is approved in a timely manner.
 - If the Appointment for Examination 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 Examination 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 Examination.
- Students generally must be registered for 3 or more credits in the semester they defend their dissertation, M.S. Plan A thesis, or M.S. Plan B project.
 - U.S. students may register for 1 credit in the semester they defend but will not be considered as full-time students in that semester.

- International students must be registered for 3 credits if they defend in Fall or Spring semesters but may register for 1 credit if they are defending in the summer session.

After the 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 Examination in ServiceNow, and the committee will verify the results of the defense.
- Discuss the ownership of data and authorship rights with your committee. Review and submit the [Format & Style form](#) and [Authorship & Copyright form](#).
- If desired, submit an [embargo request](#).

4.4 Votes on Graduate Student Supervisory Committees

- It is expected that all members of a supervisory committee will approve the Ph.D. dissertation or M.S. thesis or Plan B paper for the defense to be considered successful.
 - However, for doctoral dissertations, 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 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, or dissertation process were followed, including a favorable vote of 3-0 for an M.S. thesis or Plan B paper defense, or 5-0 or 4-1 vote for a Ph.D. dissertation defense.

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

4.5 Submission Process

- After the defense, the following documents should be submitted in Service Now:
 - (All forms can be found on the Service Now platform)
 - [Dissertation/Thesis Format and Style/ETD form](#)
 - [Authorship and Copyright form](#)
 - [Embargo Request form](#) (if desired)
 - [Title Page](#)
- Students should also review final semester information for other deadlines and requirements.
 - Once a student's thesis, dissertation, or plan B paper has been finalized by the School of Graduate Studies and/or the Library, the School of Graduate Studies will verify that all degree requirements have been met.
 - The School of Graduate Studies will contact you to let you know if anything on the Completion Checklist is incomplete.

4.6 Thesis & Dissertation Review

- When the student is completely done editing their thesis/dissertation, they should have their GPC or departmental reviewer submit it for review to the School of Graduate Studies.
- Their paper **cannot** be checked into the School of Graduate Studies queue for review until **all the required forms are submitted and approved**, their GPC has uploaded their completed thesis/dissertation to your review file, and their GPC has emailed the reviewer indicating that everything is in their file.
 - All papers in the queue are **processed in the order in which they are added**.
 - **Students should allow at least three weeks for the initial review of their thesis or dissertation once it has been added to the queue (time to the initial review will vary based on the number of papers in the queue).**

- If the student formatted chapters in accordance with a particular journal, please also submit to the School of Graduate Studies a sample(s) of target journal styles in PDF format.
- If the student wants their thesis/dissertation embargoed, they must submit an [Embargo form](#), and a physical copy of your final approved paper to the library along with a binding fee once it has passed the School of Graduate Studies review.
- Once their thesis or dissertation has passed the School of Graduate Studies review, it will be submitted to the library for publication.
 - **No further edits can be made at this point!**
 - Library personnel will notify the student and the School of Graduate Studies once the manuscript is accepted.

4.7 Plan B Papers & Projects

- Plan B papers and projects are defended but not formally reviewed by the School of Graduate Studies or signed by the Vice Provost of Graduate Studies.
- Instead, once a student has successfully defended their plan B and their committee has approved the final version of their report/creative project, students will submit their papers or projects directly to the Merrill-Cazier Library and uploaded to DigitalCommons.
- Library personnel will notify the student and the School of Graduate Studies once the plan B paper or project is accepted.

Please review the [SGS Catalog Section G](#) the [USU Libraries Theses & Dissertations page](#), as well as the [SGS Thesis & Dissertation Information page](#) for further information and policies regarding Theses and Dissertations.