



# **School of Graduate Studies**

## Student Rights & Responsibilities



School of Graduate Studies  
UtahStateUniversity

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# Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities

## Section 1: Graduate Student Rights & Responsibilities

### 1.1 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, 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 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.

## 1.2 Student Rights per USU Code of Conduct

According to the [USU Code of Conduct](#), 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.

## 1.3 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).

## 1.4 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](#).

## 1.5 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 [Academic Grievances catalog page](#).
- 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](#).

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