

NC State University's Commitment to a Positive Graduate Education Culture

Introduction

This compact is designed to promote a collegial, respectful, and academically productive environment among graduate students, administration, faculty, and staff at NC State University. by defining the role of graduate education within the institution. It aims to promote a supportive culture based on the rights, responsibilities, and approaches enumerated below. The graduate community should work collaboratively to fulfill the elements outlined in this document, as the compact provides a solid foundation from which faculty and students can effectively build a genuine and supportive environment. This document is not legally binding, but rather articulates a set of principles to promote effective and productive relationships among students, administration, faculty, and staff as well as serve as a source of guidance and support. Many of the items contained within this document are specified in greater detail in existing NC State policies, rules, and regulations as elucidated in individual provisions below.

This document aligns with several goals of the institution's strategic plan, Wolfpack 2030: Empowering the Extraordinary. In terms of direct impacts, these include: Goal 1: empowering students for a lifetime of success and impact, Goal 2: ensuring preeminence in research, scholarship, innovation and collaboration, Goal 4: championing a culture of equity, diversity, inclusion, belonging and well-being in all we do, and Goal 7: elevating the national and global reputation and visibility of NC State.

History of the Document

This document was developed by the Graduate Issues Task Force, a committee that was initially formed and charged in the Fall, 2020. One of the elements that was brought to the forefront is the fact that there were a range of issues associated with the graduate environment, especially as related to the interactions between graduate students and their faculty advisors. The committee worked starting in the Spring, 2021 semester to carefully craft this document starting with a review of documents developed at other institutions (e.g., UCLA [\[https://grad.ucla.edu/academics/graduate-study/graduate-student-academic-rights-and-responsibilities/\]](https://grad.ucla.edu/academics/graduate-study/graduate-student-academic-rights-and-responsibilities/), University of Colorado-Boulder [\[https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/sites/default/files/attached-files/graduate_student_bill_of_rights_and_responsibilitiesj.pdf\]](https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/sites/default/files/attached-files/graduate_student_bill_of_rights_and_responsibilitiesj.pdf)). After reviewing these documents, two important decisions were reached: 1) the document should not be so lengthy that its implementation and use would be discouraged; and 2) that it be focused not simply on the rights and responsibilities of graduate students, but more broadly reflects the graduate environment/culture that would create a positive approach to graduate education.

Once the initial draft was completed, it was circulated to a broad range of stakeholders, including graduate students, members of the Faculty Senate, Graduate Program Directors, Graduate Service Coordinators, for their input. Their comments resulted in various changes that are incorporated into the current document. The final element is the endorsement of this document by various bodies across the institution as outlined in Section 8.

Section 1 General Goals and Expectations

1. Each graduate student is a unique individual with varied experiences, backgrounds, and abilities that add to the diverse fabric critical to successful graduate education and each has the right to be valued with dignity and respect.
2. Graduate students have the right to be free from unlawful discrimination and harassment, based on race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, actual or perceived gender identity, age, national origin, disability, veteran status, genetic information, pregnancy, childbirth, parenting, and/or medical conditions (see in NC State Policy 04.25.05 [<https://policies.ncsu.edu/policy/pol-04-25-05/>]). Violations of this policy should be reported through the grievance process outlined in NC State Rule 11.36.02 (<https://policies.ncsu.edu/rule/rul-11-36-02/>).
3. Graduate students have the right to express their views, political positions, and opinions in venues across the University. NC State Policies, Rules, and Regulations, POL 04.25.01 <https://policies.ncsu.edu/policy/pol-04-25-01/>
4. Graduate students have the right to participate in the shared governance of the University through representation within Student Government and the Graduate Student Association. See Section 7 for additional details.
5. Discussions between faculty, staff, and graduate students should be on-going, collegial, respectful, timely, and transparent.
6. Graduate students have the right to be free from reprisals, both overt and covert, for exercising the rights claimed herein.

Section 2 Expectations for Graduate Supervision, Advising, and Mentoring

1. Graduate students have the right to professional and effective supervision, advising, and mentoring from faculty members.
 - a. Both faculty and graduate students must play an active role in the advising process.
 - b. Graduate students should play an active role and be actively encouraged to develop a mentoring network to promote their academic and post-graduation success.
2. Faculty members should only discuss graduate students' academics and then only within a professional context. These discussions should only occur among faculty members and not with other students.
3. Graduate students have the right to clearly articulated, written standards and expectations prior to entering into an advising relationship and/or being hired as a graduate assistant.
4. Graduate students have the right to refuse to perform tasks outside of these academic and employment standards and expectations that are not closely related to their degree progress/completion, the reasonable tasks of their assistantship, or professional development without retaliation.
5. Faculty members should not exploit graduate students for the faculty members' personal or professional gain.

6. Faculty and graduate students should discuss contributions to academic or scholarly work and students should be given the proper level of authorship in recognition of those efforts.
5. In accordance with the NC State's Responsible Conduct of Research Guidelines (<https://grad.ncsu.edu/professional-development/rcr/>) as well as the related university policies, graduate students will accurately and honestly report research results and will uphold ethical norms in research methodology and scholarship.
6. Graduate students should be afforded the opportunity to provide input into the composition of their committees.
7. Graduate students, faculty mentors and advisers, should frequently communicate, especially in matters related to research and progress within the graduate program. This helps to maintain a positive relationship and promotes effective solutions, including, where necessary, difficult conversations, to address potential conflicts.
8. Graduate students are navigating a range of needs and responsibilities both inside and outside of their academic program. As such, faculty and mentors should recognize the importance of a healthy work-life balance and the flexibility to adjust schedules to promote wellness and to accommodate needs.
9. Graduate students should work with their advisors to develop a Plan of Work to meet the degree requirements. The Plan of Work should be reviewed at least annually to assess degree progress and updated as needed. If the degree requirements change during a graduate student's enrollment, they may either retain the requirements in place at the time of matriculation or switch to the new ones. The financial implications of the plan should also be discussed.

Section 3 Provisions for the Degree

1. Average and maximum (<http://catalog.ncsu.edu/graduate/graduate-handbook/time-limits/>) allowed time to degree should be explicitly communicated to graduate students prior to and upon admission.
2. Information pertaining to a program's completion rate and, if available, the predominant reasons for which students choose to leave should be accessible to prospective graduate students. This information should in no way compromise the privacy rights of others.

Section 4 Provisions for Graduate Assistantships and Fellowships/Scholarships

1. Graduate students have the right to an accurate and complete description of the availability, likelihood, and duration of financial support within our programs at the time of admission and/or as articulated in the offer letter.
2. The employment contract will contain the criteria for and terms of employment as Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Research Assistants (RAs) including the stipend amount, bi-weekly or monthly disbursement, duration, and specific information related to tuition and health insurance as covered through the Graduate Student Support Plan (GSSP), prior

to beginning their appointment. The expectation is that graduate assistants are responsible for student fees as well as, where applicable, premium tuition.

3. Eligibility for continued financial support is based on satisfactory degree progress, satisfactory completion of work expectations, other academic criteria, adherence to the Code of Student Conduct (<https://policies.ncsu.edu/policy/pol-11-35-01/>), and availability of funds.
4. The University, departments, and programs should make every effort to enhance student financial support and other resources in support of graduate education.
5. Graduate assistants are allowed reasonable amounts of time off and should coordinate the timing and length of their requests with their supervisor. At a minimum, they should not be expected to work during all established University breaks and national holidays unless prior arrangements have been discussed relative to scheduling. In five words: be kind to each other!
6. Graduate students are entitled to parental leave according to NC State Regulation 02.15.08 (<https://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/req-02-15-08/>).

Section 5 Provisions for Evaluation

1. Departments/programs' will complete graduate student annual performance evaluations based on criteria clearly communicated in a timely manner to graduate students and the faculty, especially to graduate advisers and advisory committees (see . Furthermore, evaluations related to graduate milestones, such as decisions on preliminary and final written/oral qualifying examinations should be treated in an identical manner. Where either annual or milestone performance is deemed unsatisfactory, a specific and reasonable improvement plan should be provided in a written and timely fashion to the student and must be implemented prior to the severing of an advisor-advisee relationship.
2. Any program-initiated decision to terminate a student (in regular status not on academic probation or on provisional status) from a graduate program for academic reasons must be supported by evidence from written evaluations and, where applicable, improvement plans. This provision does not include dismissal based on violations of such policies as related to violations of the Student Code of Conduct and Responsible Conduct of Research Guidelines.

Section 6 Provisions for Professional Development

1. It is the responsibility of the University, departments/programs, faculty advisors, and mentors to provide students with meaningful opportunities for professional development. These include:
 - a. socialization into the norms of the discipline and the accompanying professions
 - b. information about relevant professional associations and conferences
 - c. preparation for and exposure to skills required for practitioners of the discipline
2. Graduate students should be encouraged to have the right to explore professional development opportunities both inside and outside the academy (e.g., <https://grad.ncsu.edu/professional-development/>). Graduate students should be able to

pursue these activities without retribution, but do so being mindful of how their choices might impact their time to degree.

Section 7 Shared Governance

1. The Graduate Student Association (GSA) and Student Government, typically through the graduate senators, serve as the main university bodies representing graduate student voices and engaging in shared governance at the university level.
2. Departmental Graduate Student Associations serve as an important link between the GSA and departments. All graduate students are encouraged to be active members as these groups serve as important change agents for elevating departmental issues that have implications across graduate education at NC State.
3. To promote shared governance, the department/program should include graduate student representation where possible, which could include attending and actively participating in faculty meetings and serving on search committees.
4. Graduate students should be included in communications and have representation in activities where their engagement and voices are relevant.

Section 8 Endorsement and Amendments

The endorsing bodies, listed below, have reviewed, commented on, and approved the initial document. Furthermore, the document should be revisited by these bodies every four years.

Graduate Student Association

Student Government

Administrative Board of the Graduate School

Graduate Operations Council

Staff Senate

Faculty Senate

Deans Council

Task Force Members

Co-chair and President of the Graduate Student Association Lexie Malico (2020-2021); Devesh Hariharan (2021-)

Co-chair and Dean of the Graduate School Peter Harries

President of the Student Senate Coleman Simpson (2020-2021) and current graduate student and member

Graduate Student Association Rep. Mason Hayes (History; 2020-2021); Miles Cazzini (Chemistry; 2021-)

International Graduate Student Rep. Rajshree Jain (Computer Science; 2020-2021)

Black Graduate Student Association Rep. Courtney Ray (2020-2021); and current Graduate Services Coordinator (College of Design) and member
Graduate Services Coordinator Rep. Natasha Dillon (Physiology and Poultry Science)
Associate Dean Rep. Melissa Pasquinelli (College of Natural Resources)
Director of Graduate Programs Rep. Kara Peters (Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering)
Faculty Senate Rep. Eileen Taylor (Accounting)