

Graduate Student Rights & Responsibilities

Draft — 2/12/16

Note to Readers: Please add policy URLs to any of the following points using the footnote function.

Iowa State University is committed to the excellence of graduate education and seeks to provide and sustain an environment conducive to the sharing, extending, and critical examination of knowledge.

Graduate students play an integral role in the ability of the University to fulfill both its research and teaching mission, contributing to the breadth and quality of an educational experience expected at an American Association of Universities (AAU) public university.

By their accomplishments and future promise, graduate students represent the University's best investment in producing a distinguished history and rich legacy. A graduate student experience marked by fairness and equitable treatment is the first step to forging a lifelong commitment to the University.

The following articles seek to summarize the rights and responsibilities of graduate students, especially as these rights and responsibilities are already guaranteed and outlined in University policies.

ARTICLE I: As students first, graduate students have the following rights and responsibilities.

1. The right to freedom from discrimination and harassment as guaranteed in ISU's "Policy on Discrimination and Harassment."¹
2. The right to professional treatment and reasonable confidentiality in their communications with professors.
 - Graduate student performance and behavior should only be discussed for professional purposes and in a collegial manner.²
3. The right to clear communication and fair consideration regarding academic requirements,³ including the following:
 - Clear articulation of graduate program degree requirements, time-to-degree expectations, changes to degree requirements, including the ability to opt-in or opt-out of new degree requirements.
 - Clear, timely, and transparent assessment free of discrimination regarding progress in coursework and overall degree requirements.
 - The right to request a change in graduate adviser or major professor.
4. The right to engage in a free exchange of ideas, including the ability to test received wisdom in accordance with guidelines established in the ISU "Student Disciplinary Code."⁴

¹ [Discrimination and Harassment](#) Policy

² [Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act](#) (FERPA) Policy

³ [Graduate College Handbook, Chapter 4: Degree Programs and Requirements](#)

⁴ ["Student Disciplinary Code"](#), (Articles 1 and 2)"

Graduate Student Rights & Responsibilities

Draft — 2/12/16

Note to Readers: Please add policy URLs to any of the following points using the footnote function.

5. The right to clearly defined official grievance procedures and informal complaint procedures at the program, department, and university levels, including clear guidelines for formal grade appeals.
6. The right to graduate student representation on committees making decisions and policies affecting graduate students at the department, college, and university levels.
7. Graduate students have the responsibility to pursue excellence in graduate study in accordance with the following best practices:
 - behave in a professional manner;
 - devote sufficient time and energy toward achieving academic success;
 - uphold ethical standards in research and scholarship;
 - communicate regularly with faculty, mentors, and advisers;
 - strive to participate in the campus community, contributing vision and energy to the mission of the public university.

ARTICLE II: As teaching and research assistants, graduate students have the following rights and responsibilities.

1. Recognizing that graduate students occupy a potentially vulnerable class as teaching and research assistants, supervisors will protect the rights of graduate students in the following ways:
 - Create fair and equitable working conditions with information about benefits and terms and conditions of the appointment clearly communicated at the outset of the appointment.
 - Clearly define and articulate the nature and limits of research- and teaching-related tasks a graduate student may assume in relation to assistantship appointment.
 - Carefully supervise and regulate demands on graduate student time commitments to meet assigned research and teaching assistantship goals.
 - Monitor nature of teaching, research, service, or professional development responsibilities to ensure that assigned tasks are appropriate to the graduate student's academic activities.
 - Ensure that graduate assistants who are not legally eligible to work due to VISA renewals or lapses in contracts are not assigned formal duties until their eligibility or contract status is resolved.
2. The right to assistantship appointments as defined in Chapter 3, Article 3.2 of the Graduate College Handbook.⁵
 - Work hours are understood to include only duties necessary for completion of teaching and/or research appointment responsibilities, excluding research time that directly contributes to the timely completion of a thesis or dissertation.

⁵ <http://www.grad-college.iastate.edu/handbook/chapter.php?id=3>

Graduate Student Rights & Responsibilities

Draft — 2/12/16

Note to Readers: Please add policy URLs to any of the following points using the footnote function.

3. The right to the best information regarding projected financial support for the duration of their study upon entrance into an academic program. Should this support change at any time during the course of study, graduate students must be informed in writing in a timely manner.
4. The right to safe, clean, and appropriate office and laboratory space.
5. Access to thorough training to ensure success as research or teaching assistants.
6. The right to request a change in teaching or research appointment supervisor. In such cases, the graduate program will make every reasonable effort to provide funding for a student who requests an alternative assignment.
7. The right to written performance reviews for graduate teaching and research assistants completed on a regular basis and conducted in a fair, transparent, and confidential manner.
 - Results of performance review should be shared with the graduate student, who will be given the opportunity and guidance to redress claims and/or remedy deficiencies in performance of teaching or research duties.
 - Except in extreme cases, such as those outlined in Chapter 9 of the Graduate College Handbook,⁶ funding shall not be denied to a student mid-semester or mid-contract.
8. Graduate students have the responsibility to pursue excellence as teaching and research assistants in accordance with the following best practices:
 - fulfill teaching and research obligations to the best of one's ability;
 - acknowledge deficiencies in knowledge or training and notify supervisor to address deficiencies;
 - seek out training to improve professional abilities;
 - complete job responsibilities in a conscientious and timely manner;
 - recognize that failure to perform job responsibilities in a satisfactory manner may constitute cause for disciplinary action or dismissal;
 - adhere to all relevant university, state, and federal rules and regulations in performance of duties.

ARTICLE III: Graduate students have the following rights and responsibilities as junior researchers.

1. The right to be treated respectfully, as potential future peers.

⁶ <http://www.grad-college.iastate.edu/handbook/chapter.php?id=9>

Graduate Student Rights & Responsibilities

Draft — 2/12/16

Note to Readers: Please add policy URLs to any of the following points using the footnote function.

2. The right to appropriate levels of credit as co-authors on publications and presentations to which graduate students have contributed significant content or research, consistent with the generally accepted standards of their fields of study.
3. Access to faculty members' time at reasonable intervals for consultation on coursework and research work.
4. Education and training regarding ethical, legal, and logistical issues facing researchers in their respective disciplines through workshops, seminars, or orientation programs.
5. Professional development and career training about publication opportunities, research grants, and potential job markets.
 - Graduate students shall be encouraged to attend professional development/career training seminar, workshop, and conferences.
 - Faculty mentors and supervisors shall make themselves available to serve as references, research collaborators, or informational sources for graduate students pursuing career opportunities after graduation.
6. Graduate students have the responsibility to pursue excellence as a junior researcher in accordance with the following best practices:
 - provide accurate and honest reporting of research results and to uphold ethical norms;
 - conduct oneself in a manner befitting an academic colleague;
 - understand one's role in the development of relationships with faculty mentors;
 - contribute to the public service mission of the university.