

GRADUATE MENTORSHIP AND THE ROLE OF THE GRADUATE MENTOR ACADEMY



This document is a summary of information contained in the Graduate School Policies and Procedures. To review these specific policies, please refer to the Graduate School's online [Policies and Procedures website](#).

OVERVIEW

High-quality graduate programs are those with notable faculty and systems for advising and mentoring graduate students who need sound advice during their early experiences in graduate school. These students deserve guidance from faculty whose interests go beyond the advisor-director role of teacher and mentor. All faculty advisors should be responsible for encouraging and ensuring effective mentorship for graduate students during the course of their studies.

This document covers the following topics for graduate mentors:

1. Responsibilities of Sound Mentorship
2. Purpose of the Graduate Mentor Academy
3. Mentor Academy Representation at Graduate Exams
4. Graduate and Professional Student Grievance Procedures
5. Contact Information and Resources from the Graduate School

RESPONSIBILITIES OF SOUND MENTORSHIP

A mentor assists scholarly development, contributes to intellectual stimulation, and fosters professionally enriching relationships with graduate students. A faculty mentor is a peer-to-be, one who encourages and supports independent development; one who, through insightful guidance, trust, and mutual respect, nurtures a rapid transition from graduate student to colleague. Students should expect that advisors/mentors will interact with them on a regular basis, providing the guidance, advice, and intellectual challenge necessary to help students complete their degree programs. Graduate students should expect that advisors/mentors will do the following:

- Interact in a professional and civil manner consistent with University policies governing nondiscrimination and sexual harassment.
- Create an ethos of collegiality in classroom, laboratory, or studio supervisory relations that stimulates and encourages students to learn creatively and independently.
- Develop clear understandings about specific research expectations and responsibilities, including timelines for completion of theses or dissertations.
- Provide verbal or written comments and evaluation of students' work in a timely manner.
- Discuss laboratory, studio, or departmental authorship policy with graduate students in advance of entering into collaborative projects.
- Acknowledge student contributions to research presented at conferences, in professional publications, or in applications for copyrights and patents.

PURPOSE OF THE GRADUATE MENTOR ACADEMY

In addition to guidance and support provided by general mentoring activities, graduate students often need additional support during challenging aspects of their program, including preliminary examinations and final defenses.

While most of these exams and presentations are uneventful, some have issues that can negatively impact graduate students. For example, if a graduate student has had miscommunications with their faculty advisor that has created tension within the faculty advisory committee, having a graduate mentor attend the preliminary exam might put the student more at ease. In cases in which the student fails the preliminary exam and must retake it, the participation of the graduate mentor ensures that the exam

process is completed fairly and according to policy. Thus, to provide oversight to these types of situations, the Graduate School established the Graduate Mentor Academy.

Members of the Graduate Mentor Academy serve in the following ways:

- Display outstanding skills in mentoring graduate students that other faculty – especially new faculty – can observe and emulate.
- Represent the Graduate School in examinations or defenses where academic issues may arise.
- Provide input to the Graduate School for improvement or modification of current practices and procedures that will lead to the advancement of graduate education at WSU.

MENTOR ACADEMY REPRESENTATION AT GRADUATE EXAMS

The Graduate School will assign a representative from the Graduate Mentor Academy to attend examinations or defenses where issues may arise. Any member of the WSU community may request a mentor attend a first attempt examination. This individual's name is held in confidence at the Graduate School. Mentor academy representatives are assigned to all second attempt examinations and defenses.

The Graduate School will provide the graduate mentor information about the student; the upcoming exam date, time, and location; and the committee membership. The mentor is expected to be present for the entire exam process, including the student's presentation, all discussion, and the balloting session. On the day of the exam, the mentor should arrive early to introduce themselves to the committee and to discuss the role they will play during the exam. *Unless the Graduate School requests the mentor only to observe and report on examination proceedings (generally during first attempt exams),* the mentor has several responsibilities. During the exam, the mentor should:

- Ensure that Graduate School policies and procedures are followed.
- Help clarify roles at the beginning of the exam (i.e., who is chairing the exam, who is voting, who is a member of the audience, etc.).
- Assist in creating a comfortable test environment for the student.
- Ensure that exam protocol regarding the test environment and process is followed.
- Address issues of fairness and consistency that may arise during the exam.
- Provide advice and input regarding the exam process and student's responses as requested by committee members.
- When a mentor is assigned to a second attempt examination, they are responsible for ensuring that the ballots are completed and must complete the ballot memo to certify the examination's outcome.
- After the examination, the mentor provides a written report to the Vice Provost for Graduate and Professional Education regarding the examination process, whether it was conducted according to Graduate School policy, and whether the student was treated fairly.

In situations in which the mentor identifies irregularities, inconsistencies, unfairness, and/or policies and procedures not followed, the mentor should bring the issue to the attention of the committee chair or the faculty responsible for conducting the examination.

If the mentor can address the issue with the student and audience present, the mentor should request an opportunity to speak and bring the issue to the attention of the committee chair. Every effort should be made to resolve the issue before the examination is resumed.

If the mentor cannot address the issue with the student and audience present, the mentor should ask the chair for a recess to privately address an issue of concern. Once the chair calls the recess and asks the student and audience to leave the examination room, the mentor should discuss the issue of concern and attempt to resolve it with the committee before resuming the examination.

Regardless of whether the issue is resolved or not, the mentor should describe the situation in their written report to the Vice Provost for Graduate and Professional Education, providing details about the conduct of the exam and with a recommendation regarding what should happen next immediately following the examination.

All requirements for preliminary and final examinations are detailed in the Graduate School's Policies and Procedures. The representative of the Graduate Mentor Academy should consult the appropriate chapter and familiarize themselves with the rules and requirements for the examination:

- [Masters final examinations](#)
- [Doctoral preliminary examinations](#)
- [Doctoral final examinations](#)

GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

The graduate student complaint and formal grievance process can involve several steps depending on the nature of the issue. There are many avenues available to Washington State University graduate students to resolve differences that might arise during pursuit of an advanced degree. If a graduate program has its own grievance procedures, these should be followed before turning to the Graduate School grievance procedures, available in [Chapter 12 of the Graduate School Policies and Procedures](#).

GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Please reach out if you have any questions regarding the role of the Graduate Mentor Academy representative at a preliminary and/or final examination:

- Tammy Barry, Vice Provost for Graduate and Professional Education – tammy.barry@wsu.edu
- Greg Crouch, Associate Vice Provost for Graduate and Professional Education – gcrouch@wsu.edu
- Arvin Sahaym, Associate Vice Provost for Graduate and Professional Education – arvin@wsu.edu
- Raymond Herrera, Associate Vice Provost for Graduate and Professional Education – raymond@wsu.edu
- Graduate School Programs Staff – gradschool@wsu.edu
- [Current Graduate Student Resources](#)
- [Graduate School Policies and Procedures](#)