

# WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL GRADUATE MENTOR ACADEMY 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 to one 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. Representation on Graduate Exams and Examination Failure
4. Graduate and Professional Student Grievance Procedures for Academic Progress and other Complaints
5. Exceptions to Policy, Appeal Procedures, Petition Process, Accommodations
6. Contact Information and Resources for the Graduate School

## **1. 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.

## **2. PURPOSE OF THE GRADUATE MENTOR ACADEMY**

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

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outside faculty participant from a different unit in these academic activities. However, when the university eliminated the formal category of “graduate faculty,” this change de facto eliminated outside participants from sitting in during preliminary exams and 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 miscommunication with his or her faculty advisor that has created tension within the 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.

### **3. REPRESENTATION ON GRADUATE EXAMS AND EXAMINATION FAILURE**

**Responsibilities of the Graduate Mentor when Attending an Exam.** 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, the discussion, and the balloting session. On the day of the exam, the mentor should arrive early to introduce himself/herself to the committee members and to discuss the role he/she will play during the exam. 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.
- Provide feedback to the Graduate School regarding the conduct of the exam.

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

1. 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

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committee chair. Every effort should be made to resolve the issue before the examination is resumed.

2. 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 the examination is resumed.
3. Whether the issue is resolved or not, the mentor should file a written report about the conduct of the exam with a recommendation regarding what should happen next to the Dean of the Graduate School immediately following the examination. Email should not be used to communicate a confidential academic issue.

### **General Exam Environment and Process.**

- Examinations are to be held in an academic environment.
- Examinations will be held only during academic sessions.
- Final examinations shall be held during regular working hours either on the Pullman or branch campus, or by videoconference over Academic Media Services (AMS). **If held over AMS, at least two committee members must be physically present in the room with the student.**
- All faculty wishing to vote must be in attendance during all of the examination. If a faculty member wishing to vote must leave the room during the examination, the examination is to be recessed until said member returns.
- The student and members of the public may not attend the balloting session of the exam.
- A student, graduate program chair, committee member, or any other concerned party may request that the Graduate School provide an independent observer to be present at any preliminary or final oral defense. This request will be held confidential. All such requests will be fulfilled by drawing upon a group of faculty designated as the Graduate Mentor Academy that has agreed to serve in this role and has received training to do so. All repeat examinations or defenses will have such an independent, outside representative.

**NOTE:** Exceptions to this policy regarding the examination environment and presence of faculty must be requested well in advance of the exam and will be made by the Dean of the Graduate School only under unusual circumstances.

**Final Master's Examination.** A final examination and/or balloting meeting is required of all master's candidates. This examination is intended to test the candidate's ability to carry out a critical dialogue integrating and interpreting material in the major and supporting fields with emphasis on the work presented in the thesis or special problem. Non-thesis master's degree students may not have a formal examination; however, the committee must hold a ballot meeting, scheduled by the Graduate School, to determine if the student has satisfactorily met all of the program requirements.

The student must have completed or be enrolled in all the required course work and be registered for a minimum of two credits of 700 (thesis option) or 702 (non-thesis option) for the semester or summer session in which the final examination is to be taken. The scheduling form must be

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submitted to the Graduate School 10 (ten) or more working days prior to the anticipated examination. The candidate must present a draft copy of the thesis, complete in format, with the scheduling form. The [Application for Degree](#) form must be submitted to the Graduate School and the graduation fee must be paid before the final exam is scheduled.

### **Master's Final Exam Requirements:**

- Final examinations for thesis master's students are public. All faculty members, regardless of discipline, are encouraged to attend. Although any member of the public at large may attend a final examination, only faculty members may ask questions and vote.
- The examining committee shall include the members of the master's committee, whose chair presides, and any other member of the faculty in attendance. All members of the master's committee must attend and vote.
- A member of the student's Committee will be appointed by the Graduate School to serve as the Graduate School liaison regarding the final examination process (balloting, etc.). The Graduate School liaison will return all ballots and paperwork to the Graduate School. In situations in which faculty participate over AMS or videoconference, actual signed ballots may be sent to the Graduate School liaison immediately following the exam via confidential fax or emailed as a pdf file. No other format is acceptable. The Graduate School liaison should include these ballots in the packet for the Graduate School.

**NOTE:** Under extraordinary circumstances, on the recommendation of the student's committee and upon the advice of the Graduate Studies Committee, the Dean of the Graduate School may approve alternate arrangements regarding voting and ballot processing.

- The examination should not exceed two-and-one-half hours (including the student's presentation). The candidate shall "pass" if the number of affirmative votes is equal to or greater than the minimum listed in the table below.

**Table of Master Final Exam Votes**

<b>Number of Examiners Qualified to Vote</b>	<b>Minimum Number of Examiners Voting to Pass</b>
3	2
4	3
5	4
6	4
7	5
8	6

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### **Preliminary Doctoral Examination.**

The preliminary doctoral examination is designed to determine the fitness of the student for pursuing a doctoral program in the field in which a degree is desired. A preliminary examination is required of each doctoral student for advancement to candidacy for the doctoral degree. The examination is intended to cover both major and minor disciplines (if a minor is declared). The major examination may be written or oral or both, at the discretion of the major program. The minor examination (when applicable) may be written or oral or both, or may be waived, at the discretion of the minor program. When the minor examination is waived, the member of the committee from the minor program shall vote with the major program. The minor program is notified if the student has less than a 3.0 grade point average on the student's minor work when the minor examination has been waived.

The student is responsible for scheduling the preliminary examination (oral exam and/or balloting meeting for written exam). It may be scheduled using the [Preliminary Examination Scheduling Form](#), only after program requirements have been satisfied, after the Program of Study has been approved, after a substantial portion of the required course work has been completed, and when the student or committee chair believe the student is prepared for the examination. The student must be registered for a minimum of two hours of 800 as a regular graduate student at the beginning of the semester or summer session in which the preliminary examination is to be taken, and have at least a 3.0 cumulative grade point average and a 3.0 grade point average or higher on the program courses already taken before the preliminary examination may be scheduled. The preliminary examination must be scheduled with the Graduate School at least 10 working days before the examination is held.

### **Preliminary Exam Requirements:**

- All members of the doctoral committee must be physically present in the room at the oral examination or at the balloting meeting if a written exam is given, and all must vote.
- Any other members of the faculty from the major program or minor program (unless the minor program has waived the examination) may be present and may vote.
- At the discretion of the major program chair, members of the faculty from other programs be present, may ask questions, but shall not vote.

**NOTE:** Exceptions to this policy regarding the examination environment and presence of faculty must be requested well in advance of the exam and will be made by the Dean of the Graduate School only under unusual circumstances.

- The content and conduct of a preliminary examination is the responsibility of the faculty of the degree-granting program and should be administered by the chair of that program or someone delegated by the chair.
- The chair shall be responsible for conducting a fair and searching examination and for affording a reasonable opportunity during the oral portion for all examiners to question the student.
- There is no time limit for either the written or oral portions of the examination, but all aspects of the examination must be completed within 30 days from the beginning.

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- At the conclusion of the oral exam, or at the balloting meeting if only a written examination is given, the candidate's total performance on the examination should be discussed and ballots cast on the basis of the entire examination. The candidate shall pass if a minimum of three-fourths of those voting so indicate (see Table of Doctoral Preliminary and Final Exam Votes below).
- In situations in which faculty participate over AMS or videoconference, actual signed ballots may be sent to the major program chair immediately following the exam via confidential fax or emailed as a pdf file. No other format is acceptable. The major program chair should include these ballots in the packet for the Graduate School.

### **Final Doctoral Defense Examination.**

A candidate for a doctoral degree must pass a final oral examination that primarily shall be a defense of the dissertation but may cover the general fields of knowledge pertinent to the degree. The student must register for a minimum of 2 (two) hours of 800 credit at the beginning of the semester or summer session in which the final examination is to be taken. Final examinations will include discussion of the completed dissertation (which is suitable in format and content for submission to the library). Under extraordinary circumstances, on the recommendation of the student's committee and upon the advice of the Graduate Studies Committee, the Dean of the Graduate School may approve alternative arrangements.

The candidate's committee is responsible for approving all aspects of the final dissertation before students may schedule the final examination. When committee members sign the [Dissertation Acceptance/Final Examination Scheduling](#) form, they indicate that a typed (or electronic) dissertation, suitable in format and content for submission to the Library has been given their approval; they also indicate their acceptance of the date, time, and place of the final examination.

### **Final Doctoral Exam Requirements:**

- The examining committee shall include the doctoral committee and any other members of the faculty in attendance.
- The chair of the student's committee will chair the final examination and be responsible for its conduct.
- A member of the student's committee will be appointed by the Graduate School to serve as the Graduate School liaison regarding the examination process (balloting, etc.).
- All final examinations are public, and all faculty members, regardless of discipline, are particularly encouraged to attend those of interest to them.
- Although any member of the public at large may attend final examinations, only faculty members may ask questions and vote.
- All members of the doctoral committee must attend and vote.
- The final doctoral examination should not exceed two and one-half (2 ½) hours (including the student's presentation). There is no separation into major and minor fields; all examiners vote on the total examination.
- The candidate shall pass if a minimum of three-fourths of those voting so indicate (see Table of Doctoral Preliminary and Final Exam Votes below).
- In situations in which faculty participate over AMS or videoconference, actual signed ballots may be sent to the Graduate School liaison immediately following the exam via

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confidential fax or emailed as a pdf file. No other format is acceptable. The Graduate School liaison should include these ballots in the packet for the Graduate School.

**Table of Doctoral Preliminary and Final Exam Votes**

<b>Number of Examiners Qualified to Vote</b>	<b>Number of Examiners Voting to Pass</b>
3	3
4	3
5	4
6	5
7	6
8	6

**Examination Failure.** A student, Department Chair, or Committee member may request an independent observer from the Graduate School for any graduate student examination. All such requests will be fulfilled and will draw on faculty (Graduate Mentor Academy) who have agreed to serve in this role and have received appropriate training. If no external Graduate School representative is present at an oral or written preliminary exam/ballot meeting or at a final examination/ballot meeting for a master’s or doctoral student, a student who fails is automatically granted a second examination. The Graduate School will send a member of the Graduate Mentor Academy to preside over the second examination to protect the rights of the student, faculty, and program.

- In the event of a failed examination, a second and final attempt may be scheduled after a lapse of at least three (3) months. When scheduling for a second exam, the scheduling form must be submitted at least 15 working days in advance of the exam day. A member of the Graduate Mentor Academy will be appointed by the Graduate School and must be present for a re-examination. The entire committee must be present and vote.
- A student who has failed two preliminary examinations may not become a candidate for the doctorate and the student’s enrollment in the Graduate School will be terminated. A student who has failed two final examinations will be terminated from the Graduate School. The only exception to this reexamination policy is if a member of the Graduate Mentor Academy (appointed by the Graduate School) presided over the student’s first exam and agrees that a re-examination is not an appropriate disposition of the case.
- A minimum of four (4) months must elapse between the successful completion of a preliminary examination and the scheduling of a final examination.

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### **4. GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES FOR ACADEMIC PROGRESS AND OTHER COMPLAINTS**

The graduate student grievance process may involve several steps depending on the nature of the grievance. There are many avenues available to Washington State University graduate and professional students to resolve differences that may arise during the pursuit of an advanced degree. In general, the operational principal that should be followed is to maintain open communication at the most immediate point of access and to work upwards from there when appropriate. This means that the student should work with their major professor or advisor to resolve matters if possible. The next level would be the Department Chair or School Director. There are cases, of course, where this is difficult. In these cases, graduate and professional students should make an appointment with one of the Associate Deans of the Graduate School for further advice. An important role of the Graduate School is to serve as an impartial arbitrator in these matters and to provide advice to both students and faculty that will result in the student continuing in good academic standing.

#### **Preliminary Grievance Procedures**

- 3.1 Students are encouraged to first consult with their faculty advisor.
- 3.2 If the advisor is unable to resolve the problem the student is encouraged to discuss the problem with the department/program chair, director, and/or faculty liaison.
- 3.3 If the grievance cannot be resolved at the department or program level, the student should contact one of the Associate Deans of the Graduate School, or any person of the Graduate School designated by the Dean to hear student grievances (the Dean's designee).
- 3.4 The Associate Dean or Dean's designee will review the grievance and, at his or her discretion, will recommend possible actions for resolution to the student as well as to the department/program chair, director, and/or faculty liaison. If the student is not satisfied with the resolution, he/she may file a formal grievance.

#### **Formal Grievance Procedures**

In some instances such as those related to academic and employment issues (e.g. failed examinations, termination of assistantship, etc.), the student may wish to appeal a specific academic decision made by the departmental or program faculty.

- 3.5 The student must make a formal grievance request to the Dean of the Graduate School in writing, with signature (email is not sufficient). Formal appeals must be filed within 15 (fifteen) calendar days following a notice of decision or within 15 calendar days after completing the Preliminary Grievance Procedures. The original decision will be held in abeyance while under appeal.
- 3.6 The Dean will assign these formal appeals to one of the Associate Deans for full consideration and recommendation.
- 3.7 If the Associate Dean deems it appropriate, the matter will be referred to an independent Committee on Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities (CGSRR)

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for consideration and formulating recommendations of action to the Dean of the Graduate School. The CGSRR will operate with due respect to the rights of graduate students, faculty, and administrators including the conduct of interviews, the right of all parties to review and address allegations, and the right to a fair hearing. The CGSRR will deliberate and render a recommendation to the Dean of the Graduate School or the Dean's designee within 60 days of being formed.

- 3.8 Recommendations for resolution of formal grievances will be acted upon by the Dean or the Dean's designee. A final decision will be made by the Dean of the Graduate School. The decision made by the Dean on academic matters is final.

### **Appeals**

The graduate or professional student may appeal the final decision of the Dean of the Graduate School to the Provost if the appeal is based on procedural irregularities. The Provost will not reopen cases for the purpose of re-investigating the grievance. The student can seek judicial review within 30 days from the date of the final decision pursuant to the Administrative Procedures Act, RCW 34.05.010 *et. seq.*

### **Professional Student Grievances**

Professional students within the College of Veterinary Medicine and the College of Pharmacy will follow College policies and procedures for the review of academic issues. Appeal of College level decisions can be made to the Graduate School.

#### *College of Veterinary Medicine Policies*

<http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/academic/studentsCurrent.aspx>

#### *College of Pharmacy Policies*

<http://www.pharmacy.wsu.edu/administration/AcademicPoliciesandProceduresfinal.5.10.06.pdf>

Other programs also may have their own grievance procedures that should be followed before utilizing the Graduate School's grievance procedures.

## **5. EXCEPTIONS TO POLICY, APPEALS PROCEDURE, PETITION PROCESS, ACCOMMODATIONS**

Any request for an exception to policy for an individual student should be submitted in writing through the major professor and chair of the major graduate program to the Dean of the Graduate School, who may then act upon the request, or refer it to the Graduate Studies Committee. A petition process is available for a graduate student to petition for changes in course enrollment and academic calendar deadlines for his or her individual program. A petition form is available on the Graduate School forms website: <http://www.gradsch.wsu.edu/current-students/formsfordegree.html> .

Any decision by the Graduate School concerning the academic status of a student may be referred to the Graduate Studies Committee for review upon request of the student, graduate

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program chair, or committee chair. Additional information on student rights of appeal can be found in the Graduate School Policies and Procedures, Chapter 12, Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities.

Graduate students with disabilities are encouraged to ask for reasonable accommodation and assistance through the Disability Resource Center, the graduate program, and the Graduate School. See Chapter 12, Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities.

### 6. GRADUATE SCHOOL CONTACT INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Howard Grimes, Dean of the Graduate School and Vice President for Research  
[grimes@wsu.edu](mailto:grimes@wsu.edu), 335-6412

Debra Sellon, Associate Dean  
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Lori Wiest, Associate Dean  
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Pat Sturko, Associate Dean  
[psturko@wsu.edu](mailto:psturko@wsu.edu), 335-7718

Donna Blacker, Senior Academic Coordinator  
[blacker@wsu.edu](mailto:blacker@wsu.edu) , 335-1337

Mary Ohnemus, Academic Coordinator  
[mohnemus@wsu.edu](mailto:mohnemus@wsu.edu), 335-1218

Graduate School forms and deadlines: <http://www.gradsch.wsu.edu/current-students/forms/>

Graduate School policies and procedures: [http://www.gradsch.wsu.edu/current-students/2008\\_updatedpolicies/](http://www.gradsch.wsu.edu/current-students/2008_updatedpolicies/)