

# Graduate Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities

---

The Graduate Council and the College of Graduate Studies have approved in principle the document *Graduate Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities*.

## Rights

1. Graduate students have a right to be respected as individuals of merit and as junior colleagues of faculty. The student's vulnerability must not be exploited in any way by faculty, administration, or staff. (Reference: Faculty Handbook, Ethics Guidelines, Section IV, I.B., I.C.2, page 2)
2. Graduate students have a right to an accurate and timely description of the availability and the likelihood of financial and resource support within their program and within the University and will be given an equal opportunity to compete for support for which they are eligible.
  - a. Prospective and currently enrolled graduate students should be provided a thorough description of the requirements and qualifications necessary for holding teaching assistantships, graduate assistantships, and receiving financial support from the University.
  - b. Prospective and currently enrolled graduate students should be provided a thorough description of the requirements and qualifications for all academic and financial awards in their program and in the Graduate Catalog. They are to be assured that competition for any and all academic awards will be available to eligible graduate students and that evaluation for such awards will be fair and objective. They also should be informed of the procedures for evaluating applicants.
3. Graduate students have a right to be informed of specific requirements for achieving an advanced degree. Each department should communicate clearly these requirements to its students, and it should notify current enrolled students in writing of any changes. Prospective and currently enrolled graduate students have a right to know of the "normal time to complete a degree" within a specific graduate program.
4. Graduate students have a right to a non-biased evaluation of their progress toward achieving an advanced degree (Constitution of the Student Government Association, Art II Sec 3). The criteria should be clearly understood by the graduate advisor and student.
5. If a graduate student requests an explanation, reasons for unsatisfactory performance on qualifying or comprehensive examinations should be given in writing.
6. Graduate students have a right to substantive feedback and regular guidance concerning their academic performance.
  - a. Graduate students and their thesis/dissertation director should arrive at and maintain a mutually agreeable schedule of evaluative/supervisory conferences.
  - b. Graduate students must be notified in writing of unsatisfactory performance before any attempt begins to dismiss them from a graduate program. Only the dean of the College of Graduate Studies can dismiss a student from a graduate program for **academic reasons and normally only** upon **the recommendation of the program**. Graduate students have the right to appeal **for cause** any decision affecting their academic standing as a graduate student. **Cause** excludes grade appeals, which are under the purview of the MTSU Grade Appeals Committee. The burden of responsibility rests with the appellant to provide a timely, cogent, and convincing written documentation of the facts upon which the appeal is based. Further information may be obtained from the appeals document from the Graduate Council, Section III.
7. Graduate students have a right to freedom from unlawful discrimination in any actions, including those based on gender, race, age, sexual orientation, disability, and religious or political beliefs. (Constitution of The Student Government Association, Art II Sec 1.2.6; MTSU Policies and Procedures Manual III:00:09, IV: 07:06, IV:07:16:i). University grievance procedures should be available upon request at the Graduate College. Opportunities for informal resolution should also be explained to the student when appropriate.
8. Graduate students have a right to reasonable confidentiality in their communications with professors. (Constitution of the Student Government Association, Art II Sec 4; MTSU Policies and Procedures Manual II:02:00)
  - a. In general, a student's performance or behavior should not be discussed by a professor with other students.
  - b. Discussion among faculty of a student's performance should be of a professional nature and should be limited to the student's academic performance and fitness as a graduate student: the substance of the communication should be based on a need to know relevant information.
9. Graduate students have a right to refuse to perform tasks if those tasks are not closely related to their academic or professional development.
10. Graduate students have a right to receive fair recognition for their efforts and contributions to cooperative research projects, including co-authorship of publications. Efforts and recognition should be determined prior to the project whenever possible.
11. Graduate students should be represented in the decision-making process relative to graduate issues in their department and program; however, the representation is program specific, possibly taking many different forms. Graduate students should have the opportunity annually to evaluate their professors in writing, without fear of retribution.

12. Graduate students have a right to review vitae of faculty members within their degree program/departments who are qualified/eligible to serve on their graduate committee. These vitae should be made available at the time the students are accepted into their program to aid them in selecting their committee members.

## Responsibilities

1. Graduate students have a responsibility to read and become familiar with the Graduate Catalog and the Student's Rights and Responsibilities booklet.
2. Graduate students have a responsibility to complete and submit all documents required for admission to the College of Graduate Studies and to their department.
3. Graduate students have a responsibility to conduct themselves in all academic activities in a manner befitting the professorate. Graduate students' behavior should be a credit to themselves, the degree program/department, and the University. (Student Rights and Responsibilities booklet)
4. Graduate students have a responsibility to devote appropriate time and energy toward achieving the advanced degree within a reasonable time frame as specified by their graduate program.
5. Graduate students have a responsibility to uphold ethical norms and honesty in research methodology and scholarship. (Student's Rights and Responsibilities booklet; MTSU Policies and Procedures Manual I:01:24; "A Statement of Graduate Students' Research Rights and Responsibilities at MTSU's College of Business")
6. Graduate students have a responsibility to communicate regularly with faculty members and advisors, especially in matters related to research and progress within the graduate program.
7. Graduate students are encouraged to participate in the campus community to the extent that they are able and to enrich the campus in whatever ways possible, including contributing to:
  - a. the academic development and the social environment of the department in which they are pursuing the advanced degree and
  - b. decision making relative to graduate student issues in the department, student government, and university.