

## 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 they are to be assured of an equal opportunity to compete for support.
  - i) 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.
  - ii) 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 College. They are to be assured that competition for any and all academic awards will be available to them 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 them 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 towards 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.
  - i) Graduate students and their thesis/dissertation director should arrive at and

maintain a mutually agreeable schedule of evaluative/supervisory conferences.

- ii) 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 Appeal 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. For further information, see the Appeals document from the Graduate Council, section III.
- 7) Graduate students have a right to freedom from discrimination in any actions, including those based on gender, race, age, sexual orientation, disability, 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 and informal complaint 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 (Constitutional of the Student Government Association, Art II Sec 4; MTSU Policies & Procedures Manual II:02:00, III:00:08).
  - i) In general, a professor should not discuss a student's performance or behavior with other students.
  - ii) Discussion of a student's performance among faculty 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, to include co-authorship of publications. Efforts and recognition should be determined prior to the project, whenever possible. In all instances involving intellectual property rights, graduate students are bound by the Tennessee Board of Regents Intellectual Property Policy 5:01:06:00.
- 11) Graduate students have a right to 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 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 Student Handbook and with the Student Handbook Part II: Rules and Part III: Policies.
- 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 (MTSU Student Handbook, Part II: Rules).
- 4) Graduate students have a responsibility to devote an appropriate amount of time and energy toward achieving the advanced degree within a reasonable timeframe, as specified by their graduate program.
- 5) Graduate students have a responsibility to uphold ethical norms and honesty in research methodology and scholarship (MTSU Student Handbook, Part II: Rules; MTSU Policies & Procedures Manual 1:01:24; "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 mentors and advisors, especially in matters related to research and progress within the graduate program.
- 7) Graduate students are encouraged to participate in public service aspects of the mission of a public university at a level appropriate to their ability and graduate program (see mission statement).
- 8) 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:
  - i) The academic development and the social environment of the department in which they are pursuing the advanced degree, and,
  - ii) Decision making relative to graduate student issues in the department, student, government, and University.

### **Acknowledgment:**

Modeled after the University of California, Davis, "Graduate Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities"