

Rackham Handbook for Faculty Directors of Graduate Programs



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Preface

This handbook provides a reference for faculty members who act as the primary chair or director for Rackham programs. It has been developed with generous contributions by Rackham associate deans and many experienced faculty leaders who have served as graduate chairs. Rackham uses the term graduate chair to refer to the faculty member designated as leader of the graduate program by a department, school or college. Departments and programs may use other labels and in some cases this role is shared by two or more people who must communicate and coordinate efforts to see that the full range of responsibilities is met.

The role of the graduate chair is critical to the success of the graduate program. Although the tasks of the graduate chair vary with the aims and requirements of the program, all programs share certain common goals and face common challenges. This handbook will help the graduate chair to understand and prioritize tasks and to manage responsibilities. It provides a list of additional resources for this purpose.

The responsibilities of the graduate chair typically include:

- Providing leadership to promote excellence in graduate education
- Leading a faculty graduate committee
- Recruiting and admitting students, and assisting their transition to graduate study
- Advising and mentoring students and defining program procedures
- Providing information to students and faculty about internal and external funding opportunities
- Providing information to students about career options and job opportunities
- Assisting students and faculty in problem solving and resolution of conflict
- Monitoring progress of students and cohorts throughout the program
- Overseeing communication and coordination with the school/college and with Rackham
- Collaborating with the primary staff person supporting the graduate program

Rackham offers an orientation each fall for graduate chairs that includes an overview of resources available to assist them in their important leadership roles. For further information, or to make suggestions or corrections for this handbook, contact [Assistant Dean John Godfrey](#) in the Rackham Dean's Office.

Part 1: Leading the Graduate Program

The Challenge to Promote Quality

The graduate chair provides leadership to promote excellence in graduate education. This includes:

- Managing the formation of the annual student cohort that is:
 - of high quality, with scholarly interests aligned to those of the faculty and committed to scholarly or professional pursuits
 - diverse in demographic backgrounds and intellectual interests
- Supporting students academically and promoting successful completion of the degree by:
 - providing effective and regular mentoring that includes continuity during faculty leaves
 - working with program or department chair(s) (and appropriate dean) to assure the uninterrupted availability of courses in the program curriculum
 - maintaining a clear, fair, and effective process for preliminary or qualifying examinations
 - assuring that students receive regular written feedback about their academic progress, including coursework, exams, research, and thesis or dissertation
 - assisting students who wish to change advisors
- Supporting students financially by:
 - allocating financial support at the time of admission
 - seeing that students are supported at each stage of study
 - overseeing a fair process for nominating students for external and internal fellowship and grant opportunities
 - ensuring that GSI and other departmental assignments are made in a fair and timely way
 - providing information to all students about funding for research, travel, and professional development opportunities
- Assisting in the successful placement of graduates (jobs, postdoctoral fellowships, etc.) and aiding and tracking their careers by:
 - providing opportunities to help students consider potential career paths
 - circulating information about job and postdoctoral openings
 - tracking the career success of graduates and making this information available to current and prospective students

Collaboration in Meeting the Responsibilities of the Graduate Chair

The graduate chair works closely with the chair of the department or program, the faculty graduate committee, the graduate coordinator(s), and the associate dean for graduate education in the school or college. The graduate coordinator is responsible for the regular administrative work that supports graduate students in the program—a good working relationship between the graduate chair and graduate coordinator is indispensable for effective management of the program. In addition, the graduate chair works closely with other faculty and with administrators in other units, particularly the Graduate School.

Many units designate a [faculty ally for diversity in graduate education](#). Faculty allies work with the Graduate School on issues of recruitment, admissions, retention and completion, and are contacts about diversity issues for students in their programs.

Leadership and staff at the Rackham Graduate School collaborate with graduate chairs and provide assistance for programs, faculty, and students. We offer an arena where graduate students can interact more widely with students and faculty from across the university.

Leading the Program's Graduate Committee

The graduate chair leads the faculty graduate committee. This committee's responsibilities vary but often include:

- Setting priorities (cohort size, diversity, selectivity, recruitment, resource allocation, rigorous program assessments, etc.) and promoting program quality
- Overseeing orientation for new students and for students as they enter each stage of graduate study
- Overseeing regular review of student academic progress and ensuring that all students receive feedback at least annually
- Overseeing the administration of qualifying and/or preliminary examinations
- Assuring training of students in standards of academic and professional integrity and the responsible conduct of research and scholarship
- Maintaining transparent and equitable funding policies
- Ensuring that the curriculum is well-planned and that course information is current and accurate
- Organizing events to build a strong student-faculty community
- Overseeing the program's procedures when a student is failing to make satisfactory academic progress
- Handling issues of student misconduct
- Advocating for space and facilities that benefit graduate students
- Keeping information on the program website and graduate handbook up-to-date and accurate

Communications

The graduate chair sees that prospective students, students, faculty and others have easy access to accurate and up-to-date information about the program. You should be sure to keep graduate students informed about important matters that affect them, including changes in program requirements and policies, curriculum, facilities, etc.

Create a Graduate Handbook for Your Program

It is helpful to work with graduate coordinators to produce a program handbook and update it annually. A handbook is a useful way to ensure that uniform information about the program and its policies and procedures is available to students, faculty and administrators. It provides an overview of the organization of the program and its place within larger structures of the department, school/college, and the Graduate School. It contains course and program requirements, including those for examinations; describes processes for the selection of faculty advisors; and provides information about

other program-specific policies and processes. The handbook should outline a typical course of study from entry through graduation that includes expectations and milestones for each year. It is good practice to include a checklist of annual student tasks and deadlines. Other information may include:

- Internal and external funding opportunities, including GSI/GSRA appointments and funding from the department, school/college, and Rackham
- For LSA programs, explanation of the Ten-Term Rule for teaching assistantships
- Overview of Rackham academic policies with links to relevant sites
- Jobseekers file (including student profiles)
- Annual form for assessing student progress

Maintain the Program's Website

The program's website is its front door. Out-of-date websites create confusion and are ineffective. Prospective students examine your website carefully as they decide whether to apply. If it is well-maintained, your students will use it often. Including information about accomplishments and job placement of graduates will make it of interest to your alumni.

Build a Sense of Community

Fostering a sense of community promotes productive interactions among students and faculty. As graduate chair, you can make sure that graduate students are included in departmental and other activities and organize events to encourage interaction among students and between students and faculty.

Part 2: Building the Graduate Cohort

Your program should have a recruiting plan. Recruiting the best students is a year-round process. It is increasingly competitive even for the most highly-ranked programs. Attracting, selecting, and enrolling the best prospects are critical to academic reputation, improved completion rates, and appropriate time to degree. Careful enrollment planning is also needed to develop suitably-sized, focused and diversified cohorts that takes into account available funding, research and teaching needs, and the anticipated job market for graduates. The Rackham website offers [guidance and information about resources for recruiting](#).

Rackham Resources for Recruiting Prospective Students

Your faculty and current graduate students are the best recruiters for your program. But don't forget that Rackham staff are ready to collaborate with you and have a number of resources to facilitate your efforts. Our resources fall into these general categories: funding, prospective student data, promising practices, summer research programs, and general information about U-M and applying to graduate school.

Funding

Grants are available through the Deans Office to supplement recruitment activity in your program. We provide application fee waivers for participants in many national organizations. Rackham staff engage in

other activities to facilitate recruiting for all Rackham programs; for more information contact Emma Flores at emxf@umich.edu or 615-3692. [The Rackham Merit Fellowship](#) is the single largest source of funding from Rackham for incoming students who meet the eligibility requirements. There are other smaller targeted fellowships; full descriptions are in the [Funding section of Rackham's website](#).

When you are making offers to prospective students, we encourage you to include reference to funding resources available from Rackham to all graduate students for attendance at professional conferences and for student research.

Prospective Student Data

We provide a subscription to the GRE Search Service which allows searches on a wide range of criteria. We also have access to numerous national databases including McNair Scholars and National Name Exchange and are happy to share those with you. Rackham's website has a registration page for prospective students. That information is routinely loaded into M-Pathways. Our staff will show you how to use the systems to search on prospects and to send targeted communications. Contact Emma Flores at 615-3692 or emxf@umich.edu.

Promising Practices

We have examples of successful recruiting practices drawn from research, national projects and Rackham's Program Review and are in the process of developing a way to make these easily available. Rackham staff are ready to meet with you to review your current activity, other promising practices, and possible strategies for successful recruiting. Contact Ida Faye Webster at 615-5670 or idafaye@umich.edu.

Summer Programs

Our Summer Research Opportunity Program provides the opportunity to bring promising undergraduate prospects to campus for the summer to work with your faculty on current research. For more information contact Emma Flores at 615-3692 or emxf@umich.edu. There are dozens of other summer research programs on our campus.

Other Recruiting Materials

We provide brochures with general information about the admissions process and services provided by Rackham. Additionally we provide information on summer research opportunities for undergraduates and resources designed to assist with the application process. This will support your recruiting efforts when students have broader questions about applying to graduate school and Rackham. [Send your request to Rackham staff](#).

The Role of the Graduate Chair in Admissions

One of the most important and time-consuming responsibilities for the graduate chair is overseeing the admissions process, putting together funding packages for admitted applicants, and following through to encourage admitted applicants to come to the University of Michigan. In most programs, admitted candidates come to visit the Ann Arbor campus and the graduate chair is often responsible for organizing events to showcase the strengths of the program and the University. Though it's easy to forget, not all admitted applicants are familiar with the variety of ways in which they might fund their

graduate educations, so it is highly desirable to provide each admitted student with full information. All admitted Ph.D. students should be offered multi-year funding packages, and these should be explained explicitly.

The graduate chair works closely with faculty through the admissions season. The graduate chair:

- Understands, promotes and upholds Rackham Graduate School policies to insure the integrity of the admissions evaluation process
- Establishes the timeline that guides the evaluation and decision making process in the program
- Ensures that all application data are protected and kept confidential

The graduate chair's leadership is crucial to ensuring a consistent and systematic process for the review, short listing and selection of graduate students. Central to this is a holistic evaluation process—proven to be the most effective way to determine which applicants, on the basis of their preparation, skills and interests are the best match or fit with program or departmental resources. By carefully weighing strengths, achievements, and the ways in which an applicant might contribute to the educational environment of the graduate degree program, evaluators increase the likelihood that they will offer admission to those most likely to succeed. Rackham has [provided a detailed description of holistic review](#), and examples from U-M graduate programs that use this process.

Maintaining personal contact with admitted students can substantially improve acceptance rates. Personal contact with those who have received (from the graduate chair, appropriate program faculty, program administrators, and current graduate students) will make it much more likely that students will accept your offer of admission. Such efforts may include e-mail, social media, or personal phone calls to discuss graduate life at the University of Michigan and to answer any questions.

Promoting Diversity

One of the very important ways in which you as the graduate chair provide leadership is in the active recruitment of graduate students from groups underrepresented in your graduate student population. You may use a variety of strategies, including encouraging broad departmental involvement in outreach to attract applicants from underrepresented backgrounds, inviting prospective students to campus, attending relevant events on campus or nationally, and identifying faculty and current graduate students who are interested in helping you to recruit underrepresented students. And of course graduate chairs in all disciplines have the opportunity to nominate incoming Ph.D. students for Rackham Merit Fellowships.

As we described earlier, many departments and programs have designated a faculty member who serves as a [faculty ally for diversity](#) in graduate education. The faculty allies work with the Graduate School at the program level on issues of recruitment, admissions, retention and completion, and serve as contacts on diversity issues for students within their own programs.

Our website also can direct you (and prospective students) to [U-M diversity resources](#). Included on our page of [program statistics](#) is information about the demographics of your current students, which may be of interest to some candidates.

International Students

The International Center has services to acclimate and assist students, and a variety of workshops aimed at international students. Faculty need to be mindful that, for students from different cultures, attention may be needed to address views regarding mental health concerns and varying cultural norms regarding interpersonal contact, research integrity, and other cultural differences that may affect the institutional climate for international graduate students.

Assistance from the Graduate School in Admissions

The Rackham Graduate Admissions Office works with programs to facilitate the best possible service to each applicant from the submission of the application materials to the registration for classes. Rackham Graduate Admissions supports the process in the following ways:

- Advises applicants, graduate program staff and faculty on policy and campus wide procedure and university services
- Insures a systematic approach to the collection of application materials
- Processes the application materials which includes confirming transcript authenticity, accreditation of the institutions, and evaluating international transcripts
- Manages the application data and decisions using the M-Pathways student administration system
- Issues the immigration forms required by international students who seek to enroll using a F-1 or J-1 visa

Pre-Appointment Student Background Checks

The University of Michigan requires a pre-appointment background check for graduate students appointed as Graduate Student Instructors, Graduate Student Staff Assistants and Graduate Student Research Assistants. Background checks are conducted as a part of the appointment process for master's students. Ph.D. students complete their background check during the summer, prior to their first registration. More information may be found in the University's [Policy on Background Screening](#). Questions should be directed to [Academic Human Resources](#), which administers the background check process

Getting Students Started

The graduate chair plays a central role in helping students through graduate study. In academic matters, he or she encourages effective advising among faculty, fair distribution of funding, clear enunciation of program requirements, consistent mentoring, and the development of academic skills and knowledge of ethical standards. One of the best ways to ensure this is to offer an appropriate orientation at each stage of study, including career development and placement.

Orientations for New Students

Nearly all graduate programs have a tradition of orienting new graduate students in order to get them off on the best start. These are done in many different ways and most useful when the activities are well designed and up-to-date. Remember, too, that many are new to the University, and most new to graduate education. What's familiar to those in your program may be baffling to those beginning the

first year. Many programs have full outlines of their orientation programs on their University of Michigan website. This allows participants to get the information they need and be ready to ask questions.

For International Students

[The International Center](#) has services to acclimate and assist new students, including Mandatory Immigration Check-Ins, the International Center Summer Orientation, and a variety of workshops aimed at international students. For students from different cultures, attention may be needed to address:

- English Language strengths and weaknesses (the [English Language Institute](#) [ELI] is a helpful resource).
- How research and originality in science are paramount to the Ph.D., beyond grades or performing to stated measures
- Norms and standards regarding research integrity

Often graduate chairs are called upon to give guidance in personal matters such as health and wellness, conflict resolution and personal development when a graduate student is moving into the next stage of study, research, or career advancement. There are many at the University who can assist you; see the resource listing in Appendix A.

Part 3: Guiding Students Through Their Degree Programs

Developing Good Mentoring Relationships

Maintaining effective mentoring relationships is a priority in graduate education; graduate chairs are critical to the initial matching of students to advisors and overseeing the creation and maintenance of effective mentoring relationships. The graduate chair is positioned to guide the process of identifying and assigning advisors for graduate students. Both faculty and students seek guidance to understand their respective responsibilities in the mentoring relationship. The graduate chair can assist by helping to set standards and clear definitions in matters such as how they will communicate with each other and how often, and how mentors and students can resolve conflicts and make use of available resources.

One of the most valuable methods of establishing and maintaining a good mentoring relationship is the use of a shared plan or agreement between faculty and student. Such an agreement lays out a set of responsibilities and expectations for both parties in the mentoring relationship. Discussing the creation of such a written agreement early in the relationship can help to identify students who may not be a good fit for the research and personality of a faculty member. For examples of these plans and other advice on mentoring, two Rackham guides are available: [How to Mentor Graduate Students](#) for faculty and [How to Get the Mentoring You Want](#) for students.

Another resource on our campus for building and sustaining these relationships is [the MORE initiative](#). This was designed by faculty here to develop tools and provide guidance with advising and mentoring graduate students. MORE sponsors workshops and programs, and has a helpful website that addresses a range of relevant topics.

Guiding Professional Development

Both in Master's programs and doctoral programs, graduate education benefits from students' exposure to a wide range of experiences. Among these are professional development activities geared to stage of degree work and career preparation. Faculty, in their roles as mentors and advisors, may be positioned to introduce graduate students to the most suitable workshops, conferences, etc. Many resources are available on campus—for example, at the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, English Language Institute, University Library, Sweetland Center for Writing, and many others—and we hope you will encourage your students to participate in these opportunities when that is appropriate.

Rackham also offers opportunities to advance the professional development of University of Michigan graduate students. To that end, we coordinate a variety of resources to assist with professional development, including workshops, social media, and a network of faculty and staff dedicated to supporting graduate students. For further information, contact Laura Schram at 615-3658 or Inschram@umich.edu.

Understanding Rackham's Academic Policies

The academic policies of the Graduate School apply to all Rackham programs and are designed to ensure consistent standards in admissions, registration, degree requirements, and the awarding of degrees across all Rackham programs. Please make sure that students know about these policies.

The [Rackham Policies website](#) can help you quickly find information and forms for every phase of progress and completion for students in master's and doctoral programs. You will find detailed information and forms for retaining student status and degree completion, such as:

- [Master's degrees](#)
- [Dual degree programs](#)
- [Calculating GPA](#)
- [Registration](#)
- [Leaves of Absence](#)
- [Extramural Study Status](#)
- [Reinstatement](#)

From time to time, policies are revised by the Rackham Executive Board. We will always notify you of these changes, and ask you to pass along to your students those changes that will affect them.

Responsible Conduct of Research and Scholarship

Learning standards of academic and professional integrity and how to responsibly conduct research and scholarship (RCRS) is a necessary part of graduate education. Doctoral programs provide RCRS training for their [Ph.D. students before they reach candidacy](#). Graduate chairs oversee the implementation of this training and certify that each student who applies to advance to candidacy has met this requirement.

Other Requirements and Resources

The graduate chair assists faculty and students by making sure they are aware of other requirements and resources available to support each phase of graduate education, particularly those pertaining to dissertation completion. These include:

- [The Dissertation Handbook](#) is a guide to submitting the doctoral dissertation and completing the doctoral degree requirements.
- [Grad Tools](#) is a project management tool to guide the work of producing dissertations. The graduate chair should also see that the program's required steps are reflected on the website.
- [Completing the Doctoral Degree Requirements](#) provides students with a step-by-step description of what to do both before and after the oral defense.
- [Abstract & Dissertation Format Guidelines](#) provides a guide that takes students through the formatting regulations of Rackham dissertations.

Assisting Students with Funding

The principal sources of funding for most graduate students come from the department, program, school or college, and the graduate chair works with the department chair, associate dean, or dean to develop fair and effective funding plans for students. Rackham provides block grants to most programs to help to meet some of the financial needs of students. At the University level, some additional sources of funding are available for Master's and doctoral students. Information on [funding from Rackham, the University of Michigan and external sources](#) is outlined on the Rackham website.

In all Ph.D. programs, students are funded for four years or more through a combination of fellowships, teaching, or research assistantships. In addition, students are eligible to apply for additional University funding as outlined later in this section, e.g., Rackham Pre-doctoral Fellowships, Institute for the Humanities, or Barbour Scholarships. Summer funding opportunities vary from program to program. Graduate chairs work with students to help them identify and apply for summer funding. Students should be encouraged to apply for support from federal agencies as well as private foundations and other external funders that support graduate students. When students are successful in competing for external support, Rackham Graduate School partners with graduate programs to provide [cost sharing](#) to ensure that students are fully supported.

Whatever the funding resources and practices in your program are, the graduate chair is a critical source of information for both students and faculty in the effort to make sure that students have adequate funding and that the program's funding procedures are complete, clear, and fair. Information is available in the [Resources section of this handbook](#), providing sources of funding available to support graduate education and suggestions on ways to address funding challenges in your program and for your individual students. This section has information about:

- Rackham Administered Fellowships, Grants, and Scholarships
- GSI, GSRA, and GSSA appointments

- Emergency Funding
- Funding for Financial Shortfalls
- Rackham Student Research Grants
- Rackham Conference Travel Grants
- Rackham Cost Sharing

Overseeing Annual Reviews of Student Progress

The faculty should review the academic progress of each graduate student at least once a year and the graduate chair is often responsible for organizing such a system. Annual reviews provide an opportunity to assess performance and clarify expectations about next steps. Students value knowing their status and receiving candid feedback. An annual review that assesses student progress, sets goals and identifies milestones for the coming year will benefit students enormously. Regular review can function as an early warning system for emerging difficulties and provides an opportunity for students to share any underlying personal problems that may be affecting work.

In each graduate program faculty should be explicit about their common expectations about what constitutes satisfactory academic progress at each stage of graduate study, and should share that information with all students. From the outset of graduate study, each student should be familiar with the satisfactory academic progress standards established by his or her graduate program and the Graduate School. Providing an annual review of progress, and routinely documenting and sharing with each student a constructive critique of that individual's efforts, provides a year-by-year record of how the student is meeting those standards. In the unfortunate case that a student is unable to make satisfactory progress, you will have established a record of the faculty's consistent efforts to advise the student.

Placement of Graduates

The success of the careers of new graduates, especially in a tight job market, is an important measure of the health and national reputation of any graduate program. The graduate chair can be of great service by assisting faculty and students in the job search process, monitoring available options in and out of the academy, coordinating placement efforts, and by providing information about graduating students to prospective employers. Though the resources needed will vary by discipline, here are a few common ones:

- Provide a "going on the job market" workshop that is specific to your discipline, with attention to the timing of the market in your field.
- Invite alumni to participate in a panel about different kinds of jobs in your field or discipline.
- From students who have been successful on the job market, collect examples of CVs, cover letters, and teaching portfolios, and make them available to current job seekers.

Part 4: Student Problem Solving and Crisis Management

Graduate chairs are called upon to deal with a range of special issues involving students. These include unprofessional behavior on the part of faculty or students, misunderstandings between students and faculty on academic or personal matters, and various sorts of student adversity, often involving health and mental health. Occasionally, it is necessary to deal with the death of a student or faculty member and the repercussions of the loss in the community.

Sources of advice and support are available to assist in dealing with these issues, and this section is intended to serve as a guide to resources on campus that can assist the graduate chair in dealing with problems that arise and to help the chair prevent such problems in the first place.

Health and Mental Health Issues

Faculty and staff members are often on the front line in dealing with student health and mental health concerns. These concerns may include problems with scholarly work, difficulties with advisors or other faculty and staff, disruptive behavior or personal concerns including depression, anxiety, substance abuse, relationship or financial problems, and other emotional issues. The desired outcome in managing [graduate student mental and emotional health](#) concerns is to fashion an individualized approach that supports the student's continued and successful enrollment and that does not compromise the health and safety of the campus community.

Graduate study is a stressful activity. The graduate chair may become aware of students facing any of a range of mental health concerns, including depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and other problems. Students should be made aware of Rackham's brochure, "[got stress?](#)"

The [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (CAPS) office provides services that are free, confidential, and available to currently enrolled students. Services include: grief counseling for individuals, couples and groups; consultation to students, faculty, staff, and parents; assistance with referrals to community resources, and crisis interventions. The Graduate School and the University's Psychological Clinic have developed a resource, [Assisting Students in Need: A Resource Guide for Faculty and Staff](#). Your dean's office may also have resources to support students with mental health questions or concerns.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities often need special provisions in order to succeed in graduate education. Graduate students who require academic accommodations because of a documented disability may get assistance from the office of [Services for Students with Disabilities](#). Graduate students who require accommodations to fulfill their obligations as graduate student instructors or as graduate student research assistants may get [assistance from Rackham](#). Please contact Darlene Ray-Johnson at RackResolutionOfficer@umich.edu or 764-4400 with any questions.

Grade Grievances

Individual schools and colleges have grade grievance policies. Please become familiar with your school or college policies.

Academic Probation and Warnings

Graduate programs should immediately notify students in writing when their performance falls below an acceptable level. Rackham's academic policies require that a student whose cumulative GPA falls below a B (3.0 on a 4.3 point scale) be placed on academic probation. During the probationary term the student will not be awarded a graduate degree or certificate and cannot transfer credit to a Rackham master's program, be advanced to candidacy, or be allowed to change his or her program. Upon the recommendation of the graduate chair, and with the consent of the Rackham Graduate School, a student may be given an opportunity to correct the scholastic and/or academic deficiency. Details on academic probation are outlined in [section 4.7 of the Rackham Academic Policies](#).

Addressing Problems in Student-Research Advisor Relationships

Research advisors are strongly encouraged to consult with the graduate chair when they have early concerns about a student's performance. The advisor should document and provide a written summary of difficulties that may cause consideration of terminating a student, and discuss these with the student in a timely manner. These discussions should also be included formally as part of the annual review. Advisors may terminate the student-advisor relationship because of a student's poor performance and lack of progress.

Academic Disputes

On occasion, academic disputes between faculty and graduate students come to the attention of the graduate chair. The Graduate School provides a process for the resolution of disputes related to equity and fairness of decisions or procedures that affect a student's academic standing and progress toward the degree. Rackham's academic [dispute resolution policy](#) is designed to serve both students and faculty in a way that is consistent with the integrity policies of the University. For assistance, contact Darlene Ray-Johnson at RackResolutionOfficer@umich.edu or 764-4400, Rackham's Resolution Officer.

Academic Dismissal

Clearly articulated procedures and careful record-keeping safeguard the rights of both students and faculty in cases where a student is unable or unwilling to meet the academic expectations of the program.

The following is a summary of issues that arise when considering a dismissal of a graduate student for academic reasons.

- Students who are not making satisfactory academic progress should have an opportunity to return to good academic standing by completing satisfactory work within a deadline that is explained in advance. Students should receive a probation letter indicating the possibility of termination at least one term prior to the term the termination will take effect. A student will not normally be dismissed from a Ph.D. program without at least one term of probation.
- A student may not have financial support terminated for academic reasons in mid-term; the advisor or graduate chair should provide a probation letter that gives advance warning of one term that funding will be terminated without improvement.

- If the student has not been able or willing to return to good standing within the agreed upon time frame, the faculty should consider dismissal on academic grounds.
- The faculty in the program have a collective responsibility for making decisions about academic dismissals. This should never be the decision of a single faculty member. Thus each program should have a clear process for making these decisions that reflects a program-wide perspective. This process should involve at a minimum the student's advisor, the faculty director of the program, and at least one other faculty member who is involved in policy or admissions in the program. After full review of the case, the committee may decide to dismiss, or to impose other academic sanctions. To insure fairness and avoid bias, unnecessary grievances or litigation, the program-level process should provide written notification of the decision to the student (and possibly a copy to the advisor), the reasons for it, the effective date, and appeal options available to the student.
- In general, academic dismissals should take effect at the end of an academic semester in which the student is enrolled.

The decision to dismiss a student for academic reasons rests with the faculty in the student's graduate program. However, only Rackham has the authority to make the dismissal official. The staff at the Rackham Graduate School will process the dismissal upon the written recommendation from faculty leadership in the graduate program involved in the dismissal process.

Academic and Professional Integrity Issues

Graduate School [policies define forms of academic and professional misconduct by Rackham graduate students and lay out procedures for investigating and adjudicating these cases](#). Faculty advisors or instructors often contact the graduate chair for advice and guidance about how to determine if something constitutes misconduct and what to do in such cases. For assistance if this arises contact Rackham's Resolution Officer, Darlene Ray-Johnson, at RackResolutionOfficer@umich.edu or 764-4400.

Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct Issues

The University has issued *Policy and Procedures on Student Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct and Other Forms of Interpersonal Violence*. Under this policy, as a graduate chair you are defined as a responsible employee and must immediately report any information about suspected prohibited conduct involving a student to the University's Title IX coordinator, Anthony Walesby, Associate Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Affairs and director of the [Office for Institutional Equity](#), at walesby@umich.edu, or 763-0235. Prohibited conduct includes any instance of sexual harassment, gender-based harassment, sexual assault, stalking, or intimate partner violence.

Assistance with reporting to the University may be obtained from the [Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center \(SAPAC\)](#), the University of Michigan Police Department (763-3434), or Rackham's Resolution Officer, Darlene Ray-Johnson, at RackResolutionOfficer@umich.edu or 764-4400. SAPAC provides free and confidential crisis intervention, advocacy, and support for students who are survivors of sexual assault and misconduct.

Conflict of Interest or Commitment Issues

Students or faculty may contact you about how to manage a potential conflict of interest or conflict of commitment involving a student. A *conflict of interest* can occur when a student has an involvement in an activity or interest outside the University (such as employment or participation in a start-up or other venture) which could provide the basis for unethical actions or decisions on behalf of the external interest. These can include, for example, using University resources to benefit the external interest. A *conflict of commitment* occurs when an external activity or relationship competes with the student's primary academic responsibilities, including coursework, research and teaching. You should contact the point person designated by your school or college to handle these issues who can advise the student about how to eliminate or manage the conflict. The [Office of Research Ethics and Compliance](#), a unit of the U-M Office of Research, provides useful information about University policies and procedures for these issues.

Personal Grievances

Students may contact Rackham's Resolution Officer, Darlene Ray-Johnson, at RackResolutionOfficer@umich.edu or 764-4400, concerning perceived discrimination and harassment. Additional resources for addressing the personal grievances of graduate students include:

- The [Dean of Students](#) office has staff trained to help students, faculty and staff uncertain of where to turn; they possess the knowledge and influence to solve a full range of problems.
- The [Office of Student Conflict Resolution](#) provides a variety of programs and services designed to support a safe, just and peaceful community, and to help Michigan students learn how to manage and resolve conflict peacefully. OSCR offers a full-spectrum menu of conflict resolution pathways.
- The [Center for the Education of Women](#) provides counseling and educational programs to women and men regarding academic, career and life issues, conducts social research on policy and gender issues, and advocates for improved policy and practice.
- The [Spectrum Center](#) provides a range of education, information and advocacy services to create an open, safe and inclusive environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and similarly-identified members of the university community.
- The University's central student [Ombuds Office](#) (different from the Rackham Resolution Officer) is a place where student questions, complaints and concerns about the functioning of the University can be discussed.

Addressing Disruptive Non-Academic Behavior

Violations of the University's non-academic misconduct policies, including harassment, assault, theft, cyber-bullying, and other violations of the University's [Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) are handled by the Office of Student Conflict Resolution (OSCR) which administers campus-wide policies and procedures for such incidents. For questions about whether a student's disruptive behavior rises to the level of misconduct under University policy, contact the Office of Student Conflict Resolution at 936-6308.

When a student's behavior does not violate University policy (including but not limited to, the *Statement*), but does disrupt the work of other students, faculty or staff, the program may take steps to address these issues with the student to resolve them.

The decision to address non-academic issues should be based on the student's behavior. When it is determined that a student's behavior is disruptive to the work of other students, faculty or staff, steps should be taken to ensure that the student receives clear and specific feedback about the nature of the behavior, the impact it has on others, and the requirements for correcting the behavior.

The program or graduate chair, advisor, mentor, or other appropriate faculty member should meet with the student and:

- Discuss the disruptive behavior (using specific examples) and the impact it has on others;
- Explain the expectations of the program for standards of behavior;
- Give the student an opportunity to provide an explanation for the behavior that gives cause for concern;
- Inform the student of University resources that are available to help manage the behavior;
- Inform the student of the consequences for failing to correct the behavior (for example, continued outbursts may result in filing a report to OSCR);
- Make a written record of the conversation and send a summary to the student.

If signs indicate that health-related issues may be causing the behaviors of concern, contact Rackham's Resolution Officer, Darlene Ray-Johnson, at 764-4400 or RackResolutionOfficer@umich.edu. She can consult representatives from campus support services to develop a plan of action to address the disruptive behaviors.

For advice about how to talk with students who are concerned about another student's behavior contact Sarah Daniels, Assistant Dean of Students at 764-7420.

If you are concerned about a possible risk for your safety or the safety of others, contact Darlene Ray-Johnson to discuss security options. If you need immediate assistance in responding to a threat, contact the U-M Police Department at 763-1131 or dial 911. Off campus locations should dial 911.

You might conclude that the student needs additional support. See the additional resources listed in Appendix A, or contact Darlene Ray-Johnson at 764-4400 or RackResolutionOfficer@umich.edu.

Part 5: Program Administration

Rackham Program Review

The purpose of the Rackham Program Review is to improve graduate education at the University of Michigan by building a partnership among Rackham, the faculty responsible for graduate programs, and the other schools and colleges. This collaborative process helps to identify opportunities to improve graduate education. The process led by Rackham complements the expertise of the program's faculty

through the sharing of data about historical patterns and ideas for promising practices in graduate education.

Each degree program is reviewed every four years. The graduate chair plays a significant role in the review itself, meeting with associate and assistant deans from Rackham, and is usually responsible for following up on the recommendations from the review. Each new graduate chair can benefit from reviewing the data about his or her own program prepared for the last review and the letter summarizing the issues raised by the last review. If you have trouble locating a copy of the most recent set of recommendations for your program, please contact Rackham Institutional Research at 764-4401 or rackhamir.questions@umich.edu.

Part One: Rackham Shares Data with Faculty in the Graduate Programs

The Program Review begins when Rackham provides program leadership with reports on the following so that these can be reviewed in advance of the first meeting.

- Rackham's Selected Indicators
- Candidacy & Completion Reports
- Exit Surveys of Doctoral Recipients
- Faculty Service on Dissertation Committees
- Placement Data of Recent Graduates

Part Two: Rackham Deans Meet with Graduate Program Leadership – Meeting #1

The goal of this first meeting is to discuss the extent to which the data sent earlier provide useful information about the quality of the graduate program or, perhaps, areas of concern as well as any changes since the last Program Review.

Part Three: Survey the Views of Current Graduate Students

Rackham staff survey current graduate students in the program to learn how the graduate program can facilitate graduate student success. Rackham provides additional and updated reports to the program leadership on the following to be reviewed in advance of the second meeting.

- Rackham's Selected Indicators (updated)
- Candidacy & Completion Reports (updated)
- Discontinued Reports
- Active & Completed Reports
- Current Student Survey
- Funding Reports

Part Four: Rackham Deans Meet with Graduate Program Leadership – Meeting #2

The purpose of the second meeting is to discuss the current status of students and the future direction of the graduate program. Depending on the program's circumstances, this conversation may focus on recruiting strategies, enrollment trends, student funding, systems for advising, strategies to promote completion, placement and career preparation, student research productivity, or other issues of

importance. Program quality is principally in the hands of the faculty, and Rackham may be able to share expertise or provide services to assist faculty initiatives.

Part Five: Rackham Dean and Dean of the School or College – Meeting #3

At this third and final meeting in the Program Review process, the dean of Rackham and the dean of the school or college discuss the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to each of the graduate programs that participated in the Rackham program review. This conversation focuses on the next steps to improving the quality of the graduate program.

Part Six: Summary of Findings

At the conclusion of the Program Review, the dean of Rackham writes a letter summarizing the findings, which is sent to the department chair, graduate chair and dean of each participating graduate program.

Proposing a New Graduate Program

Faculty members may develop ideas for new graduate programs that can prepare students for academic or professional careers in emerging fields of scholarship and research. Most new graduate degrees (and all Ph.D., M.S., M.A., and M.F.A. degrees) must be approved by the Rackham Executive Board before the program can be advertised and new students admitted. To assist in this process, Rackham has developed [guidelines to help faculty think through the feasibility of their ideas](#) and to consider questions that must be answered for a new graduate program to be approved by Rackham. The guidelines also provide information about:

- Certificates of graduate study
- Dual degree programs
- Rackham Interdepartmental Programs (Rackham IDPs)
- Sequential or concurrent undergraduate/graduate programs
- Distributed (online or distance) degree programs
- Dual degree programs with other institutions

Preliminary discussions should carefully consider the need for a new program. Is the field substantial enough in its research focus, and of sufficient enduring importance? How would such a program relate to existing Rackham programs and faculty commitments to these? Could an existing program be modified or expanded to accomplish these purposes? Is the program under consideration similar to programs at peer universities? What are the successes and problems associated with those programs?

What distinctive features might a new Rackham program have that would make it of high quality and likely to compete successfully?

Realistic consideration should be given to likely demand for graduates of the degree program under consideration. What evidence is there that applicant interest will be sufficient to sustain a high quality program and a strong student community? What evidence is there that graduates will find ample opportunity for successful careers after graduation?

The [development of a successful proposal](#) for a new graduate program requires several months and occasionally as long as a year. Please leave yourself enough time to accommodate the faculty review process by which proposals are approved.

Changes to Existing Programs

The Rackham Executive Board also reviews and approves major [changes to existing graduate programs](#).

For minor changes, please notify Rackham, as some of these changes also require approval, and all changes in program requirements require notification. Please contact Assistant Dean John Godfrey at 764-8221 or jgodfrey@umich.edu.

Admissions Suspension, Moratorium and Program Deactivation

Program faculty may recommend to Rackham that admissions to a graduate program be temporarily suspended for one year. This is usually done to address short-term issues such as over-enrollment or the need to re-design curriculum.

If the faculty have longer-term concerns about program quality or viability, they may ask the Graduate School to place a moratorium on admissions, or to close the program. In any of these circumstances, please contact John Godfrey at 764-8221 or jgodfrey@umich.edu.

Appendix A

Resources

Contact List of Key Rackham Offices by Topic

Topic	Phone	E-mail
Academic degree requirements, records, dissertations	763-0171	oard.questions@umich.edu
Academic policies and procedures	764-4400	RackhamDeansInfo@umich.edu
Admissions, applications, fees, I-20s, and DS 2019s	764-8129	rackadmis@umich.edu
Budget funding transfers	763-2278	rackham.budget@umich.edu
Changes to current term registrations	763-5174	registrar@umich.edu
Changes to prior term registrations	763-0171	oard.questions@umich.edu
Conflict resolution, student concerns and problems	615-3682	RackhamDeansInfo@umich.edu
Counseling and Psychological Services	764-8312	tdsevig@umich.edu
<i>OR 24 hour crisis line</i>	996-4747	U-M Psychiatric ER
Dean's Office	764-4400	RackhamDeansInfo@umich.edu
Facilities (Rackham room scheduling and assistance)	764-8572	facsched@umich.edu
Fellowships (Rackham), student funding sources	764-8119	rackham.fellowships@umich.edu
Funding (Rackham) sources for faculty	764-4400	RackhamDeansInfo@umich.edu
Institutional research and reporting	764-4400	rackhamir@umich.edu
Recruitment	647-4013	gradstudentsuccess@umich.edu
Student employment at Rackham	647-5927	rackhamhr@umich.edu

[Visit Rackham's website for a complete listing of contacts.](#)

Guides for Graduate Students and Faculty

- [Rackham Graduate School Academic Policies](#)
- [How to Get the Mentoring You Want](#) (for students)
- [How to Mentor Graduate Students](#) (for faculty)
- [OUTlist](#) (LGBT mentoring directory)
- [Research Ethics and Compliance at the University of Michigan](#)
- [Integrity in Scholarship](#)

- [Dissertation Handbook](#)
- [Abstract and Dissertation Format Guidelines](#)
- [Plagiarism and Copyright Resources](#)
- [Doctoral Degree Deadlines](#)

Discrimination and Sexual Harassment

- [Rackham Graduate School, Discrimination and Harassment, Policies](#)
- [Office of Institutional Equity, Non-Discrimination Policy Notice](#)

Dealing with Student Health and Mental Health

- [Practices to Facilitate Academic Success, Mental and Emotional Health](#)
- [Mary A. Rackham Institute, Psychological Clinic](#)
- [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#)
- [Mental Health Resources at U-M](#)
- [MiTalk](#)
- [University Health Service \(UHS\)](#)

Student Funding

- [Rackham Graduate School, Funding](#)
- [Rackham Graduate Student Research Grant](#)
- [Rackham Conference Travel Grant](#)
- [Rackham Graduate Student Emergency Funds](#)
- [Rackham Administered Fellowships, Grants and Scholarships](#)
- [Cost Sharing by Rackham](#)
- [Rackham Graduate School, Interdisciplinary Workshops](#)
- [Office of Financial Aid, U-M Child Care Subsidy Program](#)

Policies Every Graduate Student Should Know

- [Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#)
- [U-M Nondiscrimination Policy](#)
- [U-M Standard Practice Guide, Discrimination and Harassment](#)
- [U-M Standard Practice Guide, Sexual Harassment](#)
- [Rackham Graduate School, Graduate Student Parental Accommodation Policy](#)
- [Faculty-Student Relationships Policy](#)

Handling Allegations of Misconduct by Rackham Graduate Students

Overview of Grad Tools

Student Organizations

- [Rackham Graduate School, Student Organizations](#)
- [Rackham Student Government \(RSG\)](#)
- [Students of Color of Rackham \(SCOR\)](#)
- [U-M Central Student Government \(CSG\)](#)

Graduate Employees Organization (GEO)

Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT)

- [Rackham Graduate School, Support for Teaching](#)
- [U-M Graduate Teacher Certificate](#)
- [CRLT, Resources on Faculty Mentoring](#)

Rackham Registration Policies

- [Rackham Graduate School, Graduate Programs and Registration Policy](#)
- [Rackham Graduate School, Ph.D. Students and Registration Policy](#)

Dispute Resolution

Professional Development

- [Rackham Graduate Student Success Workshops](#)
- [Rackham Professional Development](#)
- [Mentoring Others Results in Excellence \(MORE\)](#)

Assistance for International Graduate Students

- [U-M International Center](#)

Assistance with English Language

- [U-M English Language Institute](#)
- [U-M Sweetland Center for Writing](#)

Statistical Services for Graduate Students

- [The Center For Statistical Consultation and Research \(CSCAR\)](#)

Rights of Students to Intellectual Property

- [U-M TechTransfer, Student Ownership Policy](#)

Appendix B

Sample Timeline of Selected Tasks for Faculty Directors of Graduate Programs

June and July

- Review your program's budget and plan for any adjustments needed or shortfalls the program may face.
- Confirm the dates of the Rackham Fall Welcome, the International Center's orientations, and for your program's new student orientation. Invite incoming students to attend the appropriate events.
- Plan the recruiting events you'll hold on campus in the fall or any recruitment at conferences and other venues.
- Define your program's goals and determine any related program initiatives for the coming year.

- Review your program's student handbook and make any needed revisions. It then should be easily available to all students in the program.

August

- Review materials that will be used in your program's new student orientation so you can make sure they're ready for distribution.
- Review your program's admissions deadlines, committees, and admission offer letters; update the letter content as needed.
- Discuss with your colleagues and the admissions committee your planned enrollment goals and recruiting efforts.
- Determine the status of students in your program who are on Academic Probation or have taken a Leave of Absence so you will be ready to take any needed action next month.
- Prepare your program's report on your use of Block Grant funds as this will be due early next month.
- Welcome incoming students and hold an orientation for them. You can use this opportunity to ensure that they know where to find information about policies, requirements and resources. Encourage them to attend the Rackham Welcome and Resource Fair.

September

- If you are new to the director position, or feel the need for a refresher, take part in the workshop for new faculty directors of graduate degree programs offered by Rackham's deans.
- If you are involved in faculty and student award nominations, review the procedures used by your program and confirm the deadlines for nomination. The eleven awards administered by Rackham have deadlines in November through March.
- Ensure that all active students are registered for the fall term, including students who have returned from leaves of absence.
- Familiarize yourself with fellowships, grants and scholarships, including those administered by Rackham, for which your program submits a nomination on behalf of the student(s) for a competition or allocated award. Deadlines occur throughout the fall and winter terms.

October

- Attend the Chairs and Directors Meeting held at Rackham.
- Meet with your program's admissions committee to review enrollment goals and criteria for holistic review of applications.
- Begin to review applications for winter term admissions if this is applicable to your program.

November

- Complete the review of applications for the winter term and notify applicants of your program's decision.

December

- Determine the status of students in your program who are on Academic Probation or have taken a Leave of Absence so you will be ready to take any needed action next month.
- Begin to review applications for spring, summer and fall term admissions.

- Discuss with your program’s faculty the plans for funding your students in the next academic year.

January

- Continue to review applications for spring, summer and fall term admissions.

February

- Process appointments for the GSRA and GSI positions you have open for next year.
- Inform applicants and the Admissions Office of your decisions.
- For international applicants, inform the Admissions Office of the program funding to be provided in order to start the student visa process.

March

- Attend the Chairs and Directors Meeting held at Rackham.
- Continue to inform domestic applicants and the Admissions Office of the program’s admission decisions. Organize events for admitted students to visit campus.
- Continue to work with the Admissions Office on the student visa process for international applicants who have been admitted.
- Remember that all applicants to whom you have extended offers have until April 15 to inform you of their final decision.

April

- Make certain you have heard from all those to whom you extended an offer.
- Update your alumni placement data.

May

- Convene all faculty to complete an annual review of each student’s academic progress, provide written feedback to students, and keep the written feedback on file.
- Review your admissions season to see what worked well and what might be improved. Plan your strategy, budget and events for recruiting your next cohort.
- Prepare a detailed timeline and other materials for use by your successor if you are stepping down.
- Form your committees for the upcoming year—admissions, fellowship review, GSI hiring, etc.

Appendix C

Annual Cycle of Rackham Deadlines for Faculty Directors of Graduate Programs

June and July

- You should provide the Admissions Office with any changes you wish to make in your application deadlines, requirements, or materials.

August

- You will be asked to submit your annual reporting on Rackham Merit Fellowships.

September

- You will be asked to submit a report on your use of Block Grant funds from the previous academic year.
- Four important deadlines fall at the end of the third week of term:
 - the grace period ends for doctoral students completing their degrees with a spring/summer registration;
 - requests for Leave of Absence and Extramural Study are due;
 - the forms required for students to Advance to Candidacy are due;
 - probation decisions must be submitted.

October

- There are nomination deadlines for three sources of funding: Rackham International Student Fellowships, Rackham Non-Traditional Fellowships, and Grants for the Global Engagement of Doctoral Education.

November

- The deadline falls in this month for final degree conferral decisions for Ph.D. students completing requirements during the fall term.
- This is the time to inform winter term applicants and the Admissions office of your decisions.
- For international applicants, this is the time to inform the Admissions Office of program funding for the winter term that will be provided to start the student visa process.

December

- The nominations are due for Rackham Humanities Research Fellowships.

January

- The deadline falls this month to submit final degree conferral decisions for master's and certificate fall graduation applications.
- The nominations are due for Rackham Pre-doctoral Fellowships.
- Four important deadlines fall at the end of the third week of term:
 - the grace period ends for doctoral students completing their degrees with a fall registration;
 - requests for Leave of Absence and Extramural Study are due;
 - the forms required for students to Advance to Candidacy are due;
 - probation decisions must be submitted.

February

- The first nomination deadline occurs for Rackham Merit Fellowships, Rackham Engineering Awards, Rackham School of Education Scholars Awards, and Rackham Science Awards.
- For international applicants, inform the Admission Office of program funding that will be provided to start the student visa process.

March

- The second nomination deadline occurs for Rackham Merit Fellowships, Rackham Engineering Awards, Rackham School of Education Scholars Awards, and Rackham Science Awards.
- Begin to inform applicants and the Admission Office regarding admission to your program.
- For international applicants, inform the Admission Office of program funding that will be provided to start the student visa process.

April

- The deadline falls in this month for final degree conferral decisions for Ph.D. students completing requirements during the winter term.

May

- Four important deadlines fall at the end of the third week of term:
 - the grace period ends for doctoral students completing their degrees with a winter registration;
 - requests for Leave of Absence and Extramural Study are due;
 - the forms required for students to Advance to Candidacy are due;
 - probation decisions must be submitted.
- Notify the [Rackham Dean's Office](#) staff of any changes in faculty and staff administration for your program in order to update contact lists.