3.4.1 Faculty Directors of Graduate Studies: Policy

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Summary

Every graduate-level, degree-granting department or program at Stanford (other than the professional degree programs of JD, MBA, and MD) must have a designated faculty member who oversees graduate studies, commonly known as Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). (This policy was approved by the Faculty Senate in April 2019; see SenDoc#7658.)

Rationale

Every Stanford graduate student should have an identified faculty member, the faculty Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) of the student’s degree-granting department or program, who is a faculty resource in addition to their faculty advisor and thesis committee members. DGSs serve as primary liaisons between graduate students, faculty in their programs, the Chair or Director, the School, and the University. The DGS is a member of the Academic Council, typically University Tenure Line faculty. The contact information for the DGS is in the Stanford Bulletin.

Policy

Every graduate-level, degree-granting department or program at Stanford (other than the professional degree programs of JD, MBA, and MD) is required to have a faculty member who oversees graduate studies, commonly known as Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). The faculty director of interdisciplinary programs may serve as ex officio DGS or may appoint another faculty member to this role. For Schools without departments (Business, Education), a faculty senior associate dean often serves as ex officio DGS. The DGS is typically appointed by, and is accountable to, a department Chair or to the School Dean if there is no department chair. (This policy was approved by the Faculty Senate in April 2019; see SenDoc#7658.)

Authority:
- Committee on Graduate Studies (policy)
- Departments and degree programs; School Dean’s Offices (implementation)

Applicability:
Applicable to all graduate-level, degree-granting department or program at Stanford (other than the professional degree programs of JD, MBA, and MD).
1. Faculty Directors of Graduate Studies

Every Stanford graduate student should have an identified faculty member, the faculty Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) of the student’s degree-granting department or program, who is a faculty resource in addition to their faculty advisor and thesis committee members. DGSs serve as primary liaisons between graduate students, faculty in their programs, the Chair or Director, the School, and the University. The DGS is a member of the Academic Council, typically University Tenure Line faculty. The identification and contact information for the DGS is published annually in the Stanford Bulletin.

Every graduate-level, degree-granting department or program at Stanford (other than the professional degree programs of JD, MBA, and MD) is required to have a faculty member who oversees graduate studies, commonly known as “Director of Graduate Studies” (DGS). The faculty director of interdisciplinary programs may serve as ex officio DGS or may appoint another faculty member to this role. For Schools without departments (Business, Education), a faculty senior associate dean often serves as ex officio DGS. The DGS is typically appointed by, and is accountable to, a department Chair or to the School Dean if there is no department chair.

Graduate programs vary in size, degree options, and requirements, as well as in disciplinary and departmental norms. Thus the specific roles and responsibilities of the DGS in overseeing graduate education, and even who serves as DGS, is determined locally. Departments and programs, or the Dean’s Office in Schools where there are no departments, should make explicit the various roles and responsibilities for graduate education, and then disseminate through the Stanford Bulletin, in graduate handbooks, and on public websites.

The DGS is also the primary liaison between the degree program and VPGE. The DGS should plan to attend DGS meetings convened by VPGE to share effective practices and obtain timely information that impacts graduate students and graduate study. DGSs should disseminate information from the VPGE to their program faculty, students, and staff, as appropriate. (If unable to attend, the DGS should send a faculty proxy.)

2. Core Responsibilities of Directors of Graduate Studies
The duties of a DGS vary by program, but all DGSs play a critical role in informing graduate students about the policies and procedures that affect them and the various resources available to support their success. DGSs make students aware of the expectations and requirements of the degree program, as they are a vital link between graduate students and their program, School, and the University more broadly. DGSs also work with student services and other academic staff to ensure effective communication of policies, requirements, and advising expectations to students and faculty. DGSs are knowledgeable about the resources to support graduate students and may play a role in advising students and faculty in difficult situations or – as is appropriate – refer them to University resources to help resolve issues that affect students’ academic success and wellbeing.

Schools, departments, and programs should make explicit the core responsibilities of the DGS and of the student services staff. The Guidance for Faculty Directors of Graduate Studies document, prepared by VPGE with input from faculty and staff leaders, outlines potential core responsibilities as well as additional potential roles DGSs may fulfill.

3. Additional Roles of Directors of Graduate Studies

DGSs may have additional responsibilities, such as contributions to admissions and orientation of new students; academic training and professional development; and collaboration with student leaders within the department and School. Like the core responsibilities, these additional roles should be made explicit to students and faculty.

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