

# Positive Graduate Education Culture

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## Introduction (p. 1)

As reflected in the University Mission (<https://leadership.ncsu.edu/university-mission/>), NC State values excellence, inclusion, integrity, sustainability, community, freedom, and collaboration. NC State strives to promote a collegial, respectful, and academically productive environment between graduate students, administration, faculty, and staff. To promote these aims and build and maintain a supportive culture, the University has enumerated the below principles. Although this document is not a policy, regulation or rule of the University and is not legally binding, it is intended and aspires to provide a solid foundation from which students, faculty, and staff can effectively build a positive and supportive environment that reflects the University's values. It articulates a set of principles and approaches designed to promote effective and productive relationships among students, administration, faculty, and staff as well as to serve as a source of guidance and support.

These principles align with several goals of the institution's strategic plan, Wolfpack 2030: Empowering the Extraordinary. In terms of direct impacts, these include: Goal 1: empowering students for a lifetime of success and impact, Goal 2: ensuring preeminence in research, scholarship, innovation and collaboration, Goal 4: championing a culture of equity, diversity, inclusion, belonging and well-being in all we do, and Goal 7: elevating the national and global reputation and visibility of NC State.

## History

These principles were developed by the Graduate Issues Task Force (see Section 9 (p. 3) for membership), a committee that was initially formed and charged in Fall 2020 to address a range of issues associated with the graduate environment, especially as related to the interactions between graduate students and their faculty advisers.

The committee began work in Spring 2021 semester to thoughtfully craft these principles, starting with a review of documents developed at other institutions. After reviewing these documents, two important decisions were reached: 1) the document summarizing key principles at NC State should not be so lengthy that its implementation and use would be discouraged; and 2) the principles should more broadly reflect an environment/culture that would create a positive approach to graduate education.

Once the initial draft was completed, it was circulated to a broad range of stakeholders, including graduate students, members of the Faculty Senate, Graduate Program Directors, and Graduate Service Coordinators for their input. Their comments resulted in various changes that are incorporated into these principles. The final element is the endorsement of these principles by various bodies across the institution as outlined in Section 8 (p. 3).

## Section 1. General Goals and Expectations

1. Each graduate student is unique with varied experiences, backgrounds, and abilities that add to the diverse fabric critical to successful graduate education, and each should be valued with dignity and respect.

2. As more fully set forth in NC State POL 04.25.05 (<https://policies.ncsu.edu/policy/pol-04-25-05/>), NC State is committed to being welcoming, inclusive, and supportive of all people, and the University prohibits discrimination and harassment based on race, color, religion, sex (including but not limited to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical condition, and parenting), sexual orientation, actual or perceived gender identity, age, national origin, disability, veteran status, and genetic information.
3. Free speech and free expression are fundamental to the mission and purposes of NC State University. In accordance with NC State POL 04.25.01 (<https://policies.ncsu.edu/policy/pol-04-25-01/>), students, faculty and staff may freely express their views, political positions, and opinions.
4. Graduate students should not face retaliation, overt and/or covert, for exercising their rights.
5. Graduate students should participate in the shared governance of the University through representation within Student Government and the Graduate Student Association.
6. Discussions between faculty, staff, and graduate students should be on-going, collegial, respectful, timely, and transparent.

## Section 2. Expectations for Graduate Supervision, Advising, and Mentoring

1. As set forth in the Graduate Handbook (<http://catalog.ncsu.edu/graduate/graduate-handbook/>), faculty members should provide professional and effective supervision, advising, and mentoring to graduate students.
  - a. To be effective, both faculty and graduate students should play an active role in the advising process.
  - b. Graduate students should play an active role in and be actively encouraged to develop a mentoring network to promote their academic and post-graduation success.
2. In accordance with the procedures in the Graduate Handbook, graduate students and advisers should develop a Plan of Work to meet degree requirements and regularly assess the progress toward degree completion.
3. Graduate students, faculty mentors and advisers should frequently communicate with each other, especially in matters related to research and progress within the graduate program. This helps to maintain a positive relationship and promotes effective solutions, including, where necessary, difficult conversations, to address potential conflicts.
4. In the event that faculty or staff need to discuss concerns about a graduate student, they must adhere to applicable privacy laws and should conduct those conversations professionally. These discussions should not occur with other graduate students.
5. Prior to entering into an advising relationship and/or hiring a student as a graduate assistant, faculty should clearly articulate to graduate students, in writing, their standards and expectations.
6. In accordance with POL 04.20.06 (<https://policies.ncsu.edu/policy/pol-04-20-06/>), faculty and staff may not ask graduate students to perform tasks that are unrelated to the student's academic program

or job responsibilities and which would be a personal benefit to the faculty or staff member.

7. Faculty and graduate students should discuss contributions to academic or scholarly work and give graduate students the proper level of authorship in recognition of those efforts.
8. In accordance with the NC State's Responsible Conduct of Research Guidelines (<https://grad.ncsu.edu/professional-development/rcr/>) as well as the related university policies, regulations and rules, graduate students will accurately and honestly report research results and will uphold ethical norms in research methodology and scholarship.
9. Graduate students should be afforded the opportunity to provide input into the composition of their committees.
10. Graduate students are navigating a range of needs and responsibilities both inside and outside of their academic program. As such, faculty advisors and mentors should recognize the importance of a healthy work-life balance and provide flexibility for graduate students to adjust schedules to promote wellness and to accommodate needs.

### Section 3 Provisions for the Degree

1. Average and maximum allowed time to degree should be explicitly communicated to graduate students prior to and upon admission.
2. De-identified information pertaining to a program's completion rate and, if available, the predominant reasons for which students choose to leave should be accessible to prospective graduate students.

### Section 4 Provisions for Graduate Assistantships and Fellowships/ Scholarships

1. At the time of admission and/or in the offer letter, graduate students should receive an accurate description of the availability, likelihood, and duration of financial support within our programs.
2. Offer letters should contain the criteria for and terms of the position for Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Research Assistants (RAs), including the stipend amount, bi-weekly or monthly disbursement, duration, and specific information related to tuition and health insurance as covered through the Graduate Student Support Plan (GSSP), prior to the graduate students beginning their appointment. The expectation is that graduate assistants are responsible for student fees as well as, where applicable, premium tuition.
3. Eligibility for continued financial support is based on satisfactory degree progress, satisfactory completion of work expectations, other academic criteria, adherence to the Code of Student Conduct (<https://policies.ncsu.edu/policy/pol-11-35-01/>), and availability of funds.
4. The University, departments, and programs should endeavor to enhance student financial support and other resources in support of graduate education.
5. Graduate assistants are allowed reasonable amounts of time off and should coordinate the timing and length of their requests with their supervisor. At a minimum, they should not be expected to work during all established University breaks and national holidays unless

prior arrangements have been discussed relative to scheduling. In five words: be kind to each other!

6. Graduate students are entitled to parental leave according to NC State Regulation (<https://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-02-15-08/>) 02.15.08 (<https://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-02-15-08/>).

### Section 5 Provisions for Evaluation

1. Graduate student annual performance evaluations must be completed based on criteria clearly communicated in a timely manner to graduate students and conveyed to advisory committee members. Evaluations related to graduate milestones, such as decisions on preliminary and final written/oral qualifying examinations, should be treated in a similar manner. Where either annual or milestone performance is deemed unsatisfactory, a specific and reasonable improvement plan should be provided in a written and timely fashion to the student and implemented prior to the severing of an advisor-advisee relationship.
2. Any program-initiated decision to terminate a student (in regular status not on academic probation or on provisional status) from a graduate program for academic reasons should be supported by evidence from written evaluations and, where applicable, improvement plans. This provision does not include dismissal based on violations of the Code of Student Conduct, the Responsible Conduct of Research Guidelines (<https://policies.ncsu.edu/rule/rul-10-15-01/>), or similar standards of conduct.

### Section 6 Provisions for Professional Development

1. The University, departments, programs, faculty advisers, and mentors should provide students with meaningful opportunities for professional development, including:
  - a. socialization into the norms of the discipline and the accompanying professions,
  - b. information about relevant professional associations and conferences, and
  - c. preparation for and exposure to skills required for practitioners of the discipline.
2. Graduate students should be encouraged to explore professional development (<https://grad.ncsu.edu/professional-development/>) opportunities both inside and outside the university. Graduate students should be able to pursue these activities without retribution, but do so being mindful of how their choices might impact their time to degree.

### Section 7 Shared Governance

1. The Graduate Student Association (GSA) and Student Government, typically through the graduate senators, serve as the main university bodies representing graduate student voices and engaging in shared governance at the university level.
2. Departmental Graduate Student Associations serve as an important link between the GSA and departments. All graduate students are encouraged to be active members as these groups serve as

important change agents for elevating departmental issues that have implications across graduate education at NC State.

3. To promote shared governance, the department/program should include graduate student representation where possible, which could include attending and actively participating in faculty meetings and serving on search committees.
4. Graduate students should be included in communications and have representation in activities where their engagement and voices are relevant.

## Section 8 Endorsement and Amendments

The endorsing bodies, listed below, have reviewed, commented on, and approved these principles. Furthermore, these principles should be revisited by these bodies every four years.

<b>of Approval</b>	<b>Date</b>
Graduate Student Association	09/27/2021
Student Government	10/27/2022
Administrative Board of the Graduate School	02/24/2022
Graduate Operations Council	11/03/2021
Staff Senate	06/01/2022
Faculty Senate	03/08/2022
Deans Council	08/04/2022

## Section 9 Task Force Members

Co-chair and President of the Graduate Student Association: Lexie Malico (2020-2021); Devesh Hariharan (2021- )

Co-chair and Dean of the Graduate School: Peter Harries

President of the Student Senate: Coleman Simpson (2020-2021) and current graduate student and member

Graduate Student Association Representatives: Mason Hayes (History; 2020-2021); Miles Calzini (Chemistry; 2021- )

International Graduate Student Representatives: Rajshree Jain (Computer Science; 2020-2021)

Black Graduate Student Association Representative Courtney Ray (2020-2021); and current Graduate Services Coordinator (College of Design) and member

Graduate Services Coordinator Representatives: Natasha Dillon (Physiology and Poultry Science)

Associate Dean Representative: Melissa Pasquinelli (College of Natural Resources)

Director of Graduate Programs Representatives: Kara Peters (Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering)

Faculty Senate Representative: Eileen Taylor (Accounting)