

School of Geoscience Vision Statement:

*The School of Geosciences is a leader in multidisciplinary studies of complex and dynamic geosystems and their impacts on society.*

*The School will provide students with high-quality education and research opportunities within a creative and interdisciplinary environment with an emphasis on fundamental and applied geosciences.*

Therefore, we expect graduate students, faculty, and staff to work together towards the following goals:

- 1) Develop a positive learning and working environment for students, faculty, and staff.
  - Respect the rights of others- students, peers, faculty, and staff
  - Seek out and share information, resources, and opportunities
  - Listen and provide constructive feedback
  - Demonstrate civility; bullying, belittlement, harassment, and intimidation of others- whether undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, or staff- is unacceptable.
- 2) Engage in scholarship (research, teaching, outreach, and other creative activities) that expands our knowledge of the geosciences through interdisciplinary and collaborative efforts that have a positive impact on our community.

**Expectations for Graduate Students:**

1. Gain expertise and skills in geosciences and related fields by pursuing a topic of scholarly research for their thesis or dissertation.
  - Select an appropriate advisor and committee members who will provide guidance and expertise free from conflicts of interest and will evaluate student work based on the academic merit alone.
  - Request clear guidelines of expectations from their research advisor, including timetables for completion.
  - Communicate regularly with faculty advisors and committee members, especially on matters related to research, academic progress, concerns, and problems within their graduate program.
  - Recognize that the faculty advisor and committee members are responsible for guiding graduate-student research but that students are responsible for conducting the independent research required for the graduate degree. Recognize the time constraints and other demands imposed on faculty, staff, and other students.
2. Fulfill program requirements in a timely matter by developing an individual development plan and actively participating the annual progress review process with their advisor and committee.
  - Devote an appropriate amount of time and energy toward achieving academic excellence and earning their advanced degree (~4 hours work per credit hour per week).
  - Take primary responsibility to learn about School of Geosciences and Graduate College policies and procedures, program requirements, and expectations established by faculty. See the [Graduate College Bulletin](#) and School of Geoscience [MS](#) and [PhD](#) degree sheets to get started.
  - Ask questions to promote their understanding of these requirements and expectations and any additional assistantship requirements.

## Expectations for Graduate Education in the University of Oklahoma School of Geosciences

- Meet with their full thesis/dissertation committee at least once per academic year either in person or via live electronic communication.
  - Inform their faculty advisor and graduate student coordinator (Rebecca Fay) of any leaves of absence that may be needed, including their data of departure and expected date of return.
  - For international students, recognize that the immigration form specifies the normal length of the academic program (2 years for master's degree, 5 years for PhD). Extensions to the immigration form may be requested based on academic reasons.
3. Exercise honest and ethical behavior in all their academic pursuits, whether these undertakings pertain to study, course work, research, outreach, engagement, or teaching.
    - Contribute to the maintenance of an ethical environment by reporting any unethical actions they observe or are aware of to their research advisor or other responsible supervisor.
    - Acknowledge the contributions of faculty and other members of the research team in all publications and conference presentations.
    - Work with faculty and collaborators to agree as early as possible upon authorship positions or acknowledgements commensurate with levels of contributions to the work.
  4. Devote time and commitment to instructional duties in order to provide high quality education to their students.
    - Receive appropriate training and evaluation for instructional roles they are asked to undertake.
    - Pursue, to the extent possible, teaching and training opportunities that are relevant to their career expectations and that enhance teaching to diverse learners and populations.
  5. Pursue professional opportunities, training programs, seminars, and courses that will enhance their professional and personal growth and development and help them build a broad network of professional contacts.
    - Seek out mentors and advisors to help them prepare for professional careers and responsibilities.
    - Contribute, to the extent possible, to the discourse of the scholarly discipline through presentations, publications, collaborative projects, and other means.
  6. Contribute to the University of Oklahoma's academic mission by providing high-quality teaching to undergraduate students, supporting the scholarly activities of fellow graduate students whenever possible, and upholding the public-service aspects of the university mission.
    - Uphold, in their own classrooms, research groups, and laboratories, an ethos of collegiality and collaboration.
    - Contribute to the overall academic culture of the department through attending colloquium and other department events whenever possible.
    - Behave consistently with OU's [Institutional Goals for Diversity and Inclusion](#), as a community member who respects and celebrates diversity.
    - Contribute to the department, university, and external communities by participating in broader impacts and outreach activities when able.

If appointed to a graduate assistantship (GA, GRA, or GTA), graduate students are expected to Request clear guidelines for graduate assistantships from the appropriate faculty or staff member.

1. Fulfill the responsibilities and requirements of the appointment as stated in the contractual agreement with the department and university. Students on full-time assistantships are expected

to work an average of 20 hours/week. Note, these hours are in addition to the hours required for coursework and individual thesis/dissertation research. Students on appointment are also expected to attend colloquium.

2. Act in a professional manner in all aspects of their duties as graduate assistants.
3. Elect to decline tasks that are not related to or are in excess of their contractual obligations and/or thesis/dissertation research projects. This includes work on assigned projects that, on average over the course of a semester, are in excess of the hours for which they are being paid.

### **Expectations for Faculty:**

1. Provide intellectual guidance and support for graduate students' scholarly and pedagogical efforts and are responsible for the ongoing evaluation of graduate students' performance in academic, research, and scholarly activities.
  - Support the academic progress of graduate students in their program by working with the student to develop an appropriate plan of study and an individual development plan.
  - Establish a meeting schedule that has been mutually agreed upon with their graduate students.
  - Take reasonable measures to ensure that graduate students initiate thesis or dissertation research in a timely fashion.
  - Communicate their expectations of graduate students by providing clear descriptions of the requirements each student must meet, including course work, research tools, examinations, and thesis or dissertation work.
  - Provide students with feedback in a timely manner (typically less than one month), particularly for manuscript and thesis/dissertation drafts.
  - Participate in at least one committee meeting (in person or via live electronic communication) per academic year to discuss student progress and research plans prior to completing the annual progress report.
  - Conduct annual evaluations that reassess each graduate student. These evaluations should be factual, specific, and based on criteria that are understood by both the faculty advisor and the student.
  - Support and respect graduate students' work–personal life balance.
  - Provide intellectual guidance on and promote rigor in students' educational programs and specific research projects.
  - Provide students with knowledge of the current frontiers and opportunities in disciplinary and inter-or cross-disciplinary research.
  - Provide appropriate guidelines for completion of research projects.
2. Create an environment of the highest ethical standards and act as role models for ethical behavior in all professional activities.
  - Demonstrate and encourage collegiality with students, faculty, and staff.
  - Demonstrate departmental/academic collegiality and interest in the broader geoscience field by attending colloquia, defenses, and other departmental events.
  - Act fairly, impartially, professionally, and in the student's best interest in all dealings with graduate students, in accordance with university policies governing nondiscrimination and harassment of all sorts.
  - Model and mentor ethical practices in research, teaching and training, and professional interactions. Engage in discussions about managing situations that would be considered as unethical.
  - Treat all students fairly and assess their work in meaningful ways, consistent with the discipline. Assessment of work should be judged by academic scholarly merit alone.

## Expectations for Graduate Education in the University of Oklahoma School of Geosciences

- Avoid situations that might create conflict of interest for graduate students. This includes supporting the student selection of a committee that avoids conflicts of interest or coercive relationships among the committee members as well as between the student and committee members.
  - Recognize graduate student participation in supervised research and ensure that ethical standards of attribution and acknowledgment in collaborative settings are followed.
  - Work with graduate students to agree as early as possible upon authorship positions and acknowledgments commensurate with levels of contributions to the work.
3. Help graduate students develop the professional research, teaching, and networking skills required for a variety of career options, both within and outside academia.
- Encourage and assist students in developing teaching and presentation skills that meet the needs of diverse learners and populations.
  - Help students develop interpretive, writing, oral, and quantitative skills.
  - Assist graduate students in developing grant-writing skills, where appropriate.
  - Provide training for any equipment, instruments, laboratory procedures, or field skills that are necessary for the student's research and teaching program.
  - Encourage graduate students to participate in and present their work at professional meetings
  - Encourage graduate students to pursue professional training programs, seminars, and courses that will enhance their professional and personal growth and development.
  - Prepare students to be competitive for employment, which includes portraying a realistic view of the field and the job market and making use of professional contacts for the benefit of their students.

### **Expectations for the School of Geosciences Administrators (Director and Committee A) and Staff**

1. Provide appropriate resources and environments to allow students to complete their education and research in a timely and productive manner.
- Create a collegial learning environment in which faculty, staff, and students work together in mutual respect and collaboration.
  - Establish an environment in which members of diverse communities feel welcome and honored.
  - Address graduate student concerns in a timely and productive manner. Provide best practices for conflict resolution.
  - Provide specific mechanisms for appeal or complaint when standards of collegiality or fairness may have been violated.
  - Hold faculty, staff, and graduate students accountable for fulfilling their expectations.
  - Inform graduate students of the requirements for the academic program, including the expected time-to-degrees within the program, the plan-of-study requirements, and the availability of courses required for their graduate studies.
  - Provide accurate, timely, and clearly stated information concerning academic requirements and academic evaluation, as well as guidance toward establishing and maintaining acceptable academic standing.
  - Provide relevant course offerings at the graduate level.
  - Provide supervision, external to the institution if necessary, if the student's dissertation or thesis advisor departs the University of Oklahoma after the student's graduate work has begun.

## Expectations for Graduate Education in the University of Oklahoma School of Geosciences

- Ensure that graduate students receive regular evaluation and feedback throughout their academic program, including annual evaluation. Written evaluations should, at a minimum, include annual progress reports.
  - Provide graduate students with a fair opportunity to correct deficiencies in their academic performance before being dismissed. Dismissal of a graduate student from a graduate program for academic reasons should typically be based on annual progress reviews.
2. Ensure the highest standards of academic quality in all aspects of the graduate program.
    - Ensure that advisors and committees treat all students fairly and assess their work in meaningful and consistent ways
    - Follow FERPA guidelines, which mandate a student's right to reasonable privacy and confidentiality in all communications among students, professors, staff, and administrators.
    - Provide graduate students with a safe working environment.
  3. Encourage graduate students to engage in professional development activities and opportunities that will prepare them for a wide range of future career options.
    - Encourage graduate students with interests in teaching to participate in teaching workshops
    - Provide information to graduate students about professional meetings relevant to their research area.
    - Provide information to graduate students about professional training programs, seminars, and courses that will enhance their professional growth and development.
    - Assist students to be competitive for employment by providing information about opportunities and, when appropriate, making use of professional contacts for the benefit of graduate students.

*If a graduate student is supported on an assistantship (GRA, GA, or TA), the School of Geosciences is expected to*

- Provide clear expectations to students on their responsibilities as GAs, GTAs, or GRAs.
- Inform graduate students of the requirements and qualifications necessary for academic employment, training, or financial support.
- Provide graduate students on assistantships (GA, GTA, GRA) with a written agreement as well as the terms and conditions of any graduate-assistant appointments
- Inform graduate-student assistants of academic or other institutional policies affecting their role as employees.
- Inform graduate students of available funding sources, including departmental or program of study sources of funding.
- Should a funding source be terminated through no fault of the graduate student, the School of Geosciences and faculty advisor should make reasonable efforts to find alternative funding for that student.

### Additional Resources

[Graduate College](#)  
[OU libraries](#)  
[Writing Center](#)  
[Office of Diversity and Inclusion](#)  
[Vice President for Research \(VPR\)](#)  
[Title IX](#)  
[Gender and Equality Center \(GEC\)](#)

[Equal Opportunity Office \(EOO\)](#)  
[Disability Resource Center \(DRC\)](#)  
[Center for Teaching Excellence](#)  
[Graduate Student Senate](#)  
[Goddard Health Center](#)  
[University Counseling Center](#)

### **Best Practices for Resolving Graduate Education Conflicts, Concerns, and Appeals**

1. Graduate students, faculty advisors, and committee members are encouraged to discuss their concerns directly whenever appropriate. However, they may also discuss concerns with other faculty members serving on the thesis/dissertation committee, the School of Geosciences Graduate Liaison (Mike Engel), Student Relations and Communication/Events Coordinator (Ashley Tullius), or the Academic Programs Coordinator (Rebecca Fay).
2. Both the Student Relations (Ashley Tullius) and Academic Programs Coordinator (Rebecca Fay) may serve as ombudspersons within the department to provide advice and mediation support when needed. Students should be aware that graduate students on assistantship, as well as all faculty and staff are all required to report sexual misconduct concerns to the Sexual Misconduct Office as mandatory reporters.
3. If the conflict/ concern cannot be resolved following these measures, the student, committee member(s), advisor, and/or staff will inform School of Geoscience Committee A (the Director + 2 faculty members elected by the faculty in the School of Geosciences) of the situation. Committee A will meet with the concerned parties and work with the advisor, graduate student, committee members, staff, and/or graduate liaison to resolve the concern/conflict based on the expectations laid out in the School of Geosciences Graduate Expectations document, [OU Student Conduct Policies](#), [Graduate College Bulletin](#), and [Faculty Handbook](#) and following the [University of Oklahoma's non-discrimination policy](#).
4. Graduate students, advisors, thesis/dissertation committee members, and staff may also contact the Mewbourne College of Earth and Energy Dean's office or the Graduate College for further support and/or appeal if their concern/conflict is not adequately addressed. The [MCEE Academic Appeals Board](#) addresses concerns/conflicts associated with academic classes within the College of Earth and Energy, while the [Graduate College](#) addresses concerns/conflicts associated with graduate student annual evaluations, thesis/dissertation work, qualifying exams, and defenses, as well as graduate assistantships.
5. Faculty and staff are expected maintain student confidentiality when possible and follow [FERPA guidelines](#) as they work with students and faculty to resolve concerns or conflicts, but also recognize that they are required to report sexual misconduct and research ethics concerns as mandatory reporters under [Title IX law](#) and the [Ethics in Research](#) portion of the [Faculty Handbook](#).

**Best Practice Documents for Ph.D. Qualifying Exams and Thesis/Dissertation Defenses in progress...**