

Policy on PhD Programs

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

PhD Programs Recommendations and Policies

Overview

The following policies and recommendations are based, in part, on recommendations offered by a committee charged by the Provost with identifying “best practices” for creating effective PhD programs. These have been reviewed by the Faculty Senate, the Graduate School, and the Provost’s Office.

1. Recruitment and Admission

Recommendation: Graduate student admissions to UF PhD programs should reflect a planned, thoughtful student recruitment process, including identification of prospects, encouragement of applications, personalized contacts and clear steps for selection/offers of admission/funding and related actions. The reputation of UF and its graduate programs requires clear, consistent, and professional communication with all applicants.

Policy: UF PhD programs shall document and regularly assess the effectiveness of their recruitment process, including identification of prospects, an efficient application process, attention to diversity in recruitment, personalized contacts with recruits, and clear steps for selection/offers of admission/funding and related actions.

2. Orientation and Handbook

Recommendation: Colleges should provide a mechanism for sharing of best practices for orientations and handbooks among graduate programs and provide guidance on important components that should be covered universally. Colleges should document that students have received the orientation program and handbook.

Policy: Programs shall provide an orientation for new students, including making a handbook available that describes the program and its requirements such as advising and supervisory committees, Individual Development Plans, and professional development. Effectiveness of the orientation program and handbook should be periodically assessed.

3. Advising and Supervisory Committees

Recommendation: Programs should maintain advising processes that assist students in understanding program expectations, facilitate opportunities for students to meet the faculty, provide assistance in the selection of a proposed major professor/committee Chair, and the establishment of a committee. Programs also should provide information on alternative professional career pathways, through workshops, outreach, internships, collaboration with the UF Career Resource Center, or other initiatives.

Policy: Departments shall develop advising and supervisory committee standards, including expectations for mentor-mentee interactions, and regularly evaluate their effectiveness in time-to-degree and retention metrics, augmented with responses to the AAUDE surveys.

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Policy: Colleges and departments should document provision of information about and connections to alternative career pathways for PhD graduates.

4. Individual Development Plans

Recommendation: The Graduate School should convene a working group of representatives from across campus to develop a universal UF IDP template. Excellent examples are available at other institutions, but the UF plan should be developed by and for UF graduate programs. The recommended features of an IDP program include (a) initiation by the student with participation by the advisor or mentor, (b) annual reevaluation by the student and advisor or mentor to reflect accomplishments and new goals, (c) monitoring methods for programs, (d) integration with GIMS and (e) advisor oversight to ensure minimal time burden on deans, chairs, graduate coordinators, staff, and students.

Policy: Departments shall create, implement, and monitor Individual Development Plans for degree completion and professional development experiences relevant to effective doctoral education in the particular field and preparation for employment, including a timeline for completion of these requirements and experiences.

5. Monitoring Progress

Recommendation: A minimum of two formal advisor-student meetings per year should be documented in the progress summaries. After candidacy, one meeting with the supervisory committee should occur annually if possible.

Policy: Departments shall actively monitor each student's progress toward degree completion. Progress summaries should be prepared and submitted annually for each student to the department Graduate Program Administrator. Any issues identified should be addressed.

6. Professional Development

Recommendation: Colleges should work in concert with the Graduate School to provide professional development experiences. The Graduate School can provide a list of professional development workshops and other activities offered. The Career Resource Center is a valuable resource to support professional development.

Policy: Departments shall document that each student has had opportunities to obtain teaching, professional development, and research experiences as appropriate to each student's Individual Development Plan.

7. Postgraduate Contact Information

Recommendation: Placement and career progress data are frequently requested by federal funding and accreditation agencies. Assistance from UF Alumni Affairs is critical for obtaining the most accurate information possible.

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Policy: Programs shall maintain contact with graduates and keep information on the initial employment and career progress of program graduates. These data are a baseline for an effective assessment of a program.

8. Diversity and Inclusion

Recommendation: The Graduate School, colleges and departments share responsibility for monitoring student diversity in PhD programs, and should be aware of the University's commitments to diversity and incorporate those commitments into the recruitment and retention processes for PhD programs.

Policy: Colleges and departments must document specific outreach efforts incorporated into the recruitment process, and monitor advising, retention, and placement metrics to ensure student diversity in programs.

9. Faculty Mentor Training

Recommendations: Successful graduate mentoring, which goes beyond the general concept of advising, is a crucial indicator in the university tenure and promotion process, and contributions to graduate education. It should be included, as appropriate, in evaluation of faculty performance. Colleges should work in concert with the Graduate School to provide faculty mentor training and share best practices across colleges, some of which have well established mentor development programs. The goal is to increase the number of effective mentors who advance students' academic and professional success.

Policy: Colleges and departments shall provide, and periodically assess the effectiveness of, graduate student mentor training for new graduate faculty and current faculty.

10. Consecutive Semester Registration

Comments: Though students in some doctoral programs are encouraged to conduct their dissertation research away from Gainesville (often out of the country) for extended periods, a number have no support and tend not to register for credits. Notably, if a student is unregistered for two consecutive semesters, officially they are no longer UF students and have to re-apply for admission. Further, they are counted in a program's attrition rate during those non-registration periods.

Policy: When PhD programs approve doctoral research requiring extended time away from campus, and for affected students with no funding, programs will require minimum registration to ensure students are not unregistered for any two consecutive terms.