GRADUATE ADVISOR HANDBOOK

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How the UAF Graduate School communicates information regarding events or opportunities:

Facebook
Add us as a Facebook friend: University of Alaska Fairbanks Graduate School

Listservs
For Graduate Coordinators
https://lists.alaska.edu/mailman/listinfo/gradcoordinators-

For official UAF & Graduate School information (workshops, scholarships/fellowships, etc.)
https://lists.alaska.edu:8025/mailman/listinfo/gradacademic-

For information on off-campus housing, job opportunities, outside funding, etc.
https://lists.alaska.edu:8025/mailman/listinfo/gradschool-

Website
http://www.uaf.edu/gradsch

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2 Introduction

This manual has been prepared to acquaint you with procedures and policies governing graduate students and graduate student advisory committees. Although experienced faculty will find useful information, the manual was written mainly for new faculty members, who are unfamiliar with UAF and have little or no experience advising graduate students. If you cannot find an answer to a specific question, please do not hesitate to contact the Graduate School.

Together with the UAF catalog, the manual will provide you with information about degree requirements, academic policies, and responsibilities of faculty and students. Please note that the UAF catalog is the ultimate authority. The Graduate School strives to keep the manual accurate and current, but this handbook does not supersede the UAF catalog.

This manual includes some general information on graduate student advising. Senior faculty in your own program can also be a good source of advice on how to work productively with graduate students. If you would like more information, the following may be helpful:


3 Expectations

Graduate students are fully responsible for knowing and complying with all of the regulations and requirements for the completion of the graduate degree. However, even conscientious students can overlook a requirement or deadline. For this reason, it is important that advisors are also familiar with the policies and regulations outlined in this manual, in the UAF catalog, and on the Graduate School website (http://www.uaf.edu/gradsch/).
4 Summary of Faculty and Administration Roles and Responsibilities

Committee Chair (Major Advisor) Roles and Responsibilities Include:

- Beginning at the application stage, if possible, discuss academic and career goals with the student. Although it isn’t easy (especially since a student’s goals can change), programs and faculty should accept students whose goals and interests are consistent with what UAF and the faculty member can offer. Major advisors and committees should work with the student to help him or her attain personal goals, consistent with the academic standards and requirements of the degree program.
- If the student is accepted to the department or research project with funding, be very clear about the duration of support and the options for subsequent funding when the funding offer is made. If any substantive changes occur, let the student know as soon as possible.
- Provide a detailed description of the duties that will be required of an RA or TA, especially any unusual requirements:
  - Remote field work (in remote field camps)
  - Shipboard work
  - Other travel
  - Hazardous materials or activities
  - Work schedule
- Describe the thesis\(^1\) or project topics (in general) that are consistent with the funding source (if any) and advisor expertise.
- If the student’s funding source will place any restrictions on publication, fully inform the student of those limits.
- Assist the student in the selection of the other advisory committee members and have your student submit an Appointment of Committee Form.
- Determine the appropriateness of the student’s thesis/project topic.
- Ensure that both you, as the supervising faculty member, and the student have obtained the required University and agency approvals for research involving human subjects, vertebrate animals, marine mammals, endangered species, public lands, radioactive materials, biohazards, hazardous materials, and any other regulated activities. Information on the UAF Office of Research Integrity can be found at: http://www.uaf.edu/ori/.
- Ensure that the student obtains the training required to conduct his or her research, including training needed to meet University and regulatory requirements. Information on the Institutional Review Board can be found at: http://www.uaf.edu/irb/training/.
- Assist the student in designing his or her research, review the final plan carefully, and approve it, in consultation with the other committee members, before the student begins work. Help the student to revise the design as needed based on the early results and other developments. Along with other committee members, review and approve the Graduate Study Plan and the Advancement to Candidacy Form (Master’s, PhD) to ensure that the student is meeting all degree program requirements (as found in the UAF catalog).
- Meet frequently with the student to follow progress and assist with problems that arise with the research.
- Work with the student to set realistic timelines for completion of the thesis/project.

\(^1\) Throughout this manual “thesis” is used interchangeably with “dissertation”.
If the student is not meeting timelines in research or academics, meet with the student as soon as you become aware of the problem. Try to ascertain the reasons and help the student to improve his or her rate of progress. Or, in some circumstances, revise the timeline.

- Review drafts of the thesis or project, or portions thereof, in a timely manner. In ordinary circumstances, two to three weeks should be sufficient for a Master’s thesis or project, and four to six weeks for a Ph.D. thesis, with the longer times being needed for documents of greater length or complexity. A variety of factors can result in longer review times, including other commitments and poor technical or writing quality of the draft. However, the faculty member should communicate these special circumstances to the student promptly and tell them when the review will be completed.

- Thoroughly review the final draft of the thesis/project before the defense. In addition to reviewing the content, see that a high standard of writing quality is maintained throughout the thesis/project.

- Chair the public defense of the thesis/project. (Not all departments require a public defense of projects.)

- Carefully review the thesis/project before it is printed in final form for submission to the Graduate School (or department, in the case of projects) and confirm that all the changes required by the committee after the defense have been incorporated.

- Make certain that the thesis/project, when in final form, conforms to the format and style requirements of the field of study, department and the Graduate School.

**Committee Roles and Responsibilities Include:**

- Review and approve the Graduate Study Plan and the Advancement to Candidacy Form, including the research plans.
- Check the thesis/project design before the research or project begins, and suggest needed changes.
- Attend committee meetings and carefully review the materials the student prepares for them, such as progress reports.
- Assist the student with research issues that fall within the committee member’s special area(s) of expertise.
- Thoroughly review the thesis or project before the defense and see that a high standard of scholarship and writing quality are maintained throughout.
- Participate in the public defense of the thesis/project.
- Review the thesis/project before the final version is submitted to the Graduate School, to ensure that required corrections have been made.

**The Department Chair Role and Responsibilities Include:**

- Ensure that the courses, comprehensive examination topics, and research plan included on the Graduate Study Plan and Advancement to Candidacy form meet departmental requirements.
- Work with faculty to ensure that degree programs have appropriate requirements and standards, including standards for thesis quality.
- Implement student learning outcomes assessment for graduate as well as undergraduate programs.
- Review the final form of the thesis/project. See that a high standard of scholarship and writing quality are maintained in the thesis/project.

**The School or College Dean’s Role and Responsibilities Include:**
• Work with faculty and departments to ensure that degree programs have appropriate requirements and standards, including standards for thesis quality. Review results of student learning outcomes assessment for graduate as well as undergraduate programs, and support programs in making needed improvements.
• Review and approve (if appropriate) departmental admission decisions.
• Review (or delegate a review of) sufficient portions of a thesis to see that a high standard of scholarship and writing quality are maintained.

The Graduate School’s Role and Responsibilities Include:
• Promptly process paperwork of graduate students and maintain student files.
• Be a resource for information and support to graduate students, departments, schools and colleges.
• Provide training opportunities for graduate students, faculty, and staff.
• Conduct a final check of theses to ensure that they meet UAF requirements for style and format.

The Graduate School Dean’s Responsibilities Include:
• Administer financial assistance programs for graduate students, and work to secure more resources for those programs.
• Review and approve (if appropriate) departmental admission decisions.
• Work with faculty, departments, deans, and the Graduate Academic and Advisory Committee to ensure that degree programs have appropriate requirements and standards, including standards for thesis quality.
• Monitor graduate student progress, as reflected in the forms and reports submitted to the Graduate School.
• Review and approve (if appropriate) major academic decisions involving graduate students.
• Through Program Review, Outcomes Assessment, and data available through Institutional Research, monitor graduate programs’ quality and productivity, and assist in their improvement.

5 Further Explanation of Procedures and Milestones

Selecting an Advisory Committee:
A graduate advisory committee is normally appointed within the first or second semester of study to guide a student in developing and completing his or her degree program. The department chair, the school or college dean, and the dean of the Graduate School approve committee members for graduate students.

Each interdisciplinary student must also follow procedures through the department of his or her advisory committee chair. The committee chair’s academic department is the “home” of the interdisciplinary student for academic purposes.

The graduate advisory committee’s major responsibilities are to formulate a Graduate Study Plan (GSP) in consultation with the student, by the end of the student’s second semester in the graduate program; to develop a tentative timetable for completing all requirements for the degree program; to monitor the student’s progress in course work and research; to provide advice and feedback to the student on that progress; to file an Annual Report of Graduate Student Advisory Committee with the Graduate School; to formulate and conduct the comprehensive examination and other exams as required by the department; to evaluate a research thesis or project when one is required; to uphold the standards of the college/school and the university; and to inform the dean, in writing, if a student’s performance is inadequate and provide relevant
recommendations. The student’s advisor (also referred to as the major professor or advisory committee chair) acts as head of the graduate advisory committee and takes the lead in fulfilling these responsibilities.

**Committee for Master’s Students:**

The core advisory committee of Master's degree students must consist of three approved University of Alaska Fairbanks faculty members. Any faculty members participating above this number are considered additional committee members. The home department, college/school dean, and the dean of the Graduate School must approve committee membership.

Retired and/or Emeritus faculty of the University of Alaska Fairbanks who have an association with the home department may serve on or chair Master's advisory committees, upon expressed approval by the home department.

Faculty from other universities and other professionals who are not employed by University of Alaska Fairbanks may serve as either core or additional committee members on Master's advisory committees, upon expressed approval by the home department. They may not serve as the chair of an advisory committee, but may serve as the co-chair. All Master’s committee members must hold an earned Master’s or higher degree, with rare exceptions for senior faculty or professionals with extensive research accomplishments. Such exceptions must have the approval of the department chair, school or college dean, and dean of the Graduate School.

**Committee for Ph.D. Students:**

The core advisory committee of Doctoral degree students must consist of four approved University of Alaska Fairbanks faculty members. (A few departments or programs require five members). Any faculty members participating above this number are considered additional committee members. The home department, college/school dean, and the dean of the Graduate School must approve committee membership.

Retired and/or Emeritus faculty of the University of Alaska Fairbanks who have an association with the home department may serve on or chair Doctoral advisory committees, upon expressed approval by the home department.

For interdisciplinary students, one member must be from a Ph.D. granting department. Faculty from other universities and other professionals who are not employed by University of Alaska Fairbanks may serve as either core or additional committee members on Doctoral advisory committees, upon expressed approval by the home department. They may not serve as the chair of an advisory committee, but may serve as the co-chair. All Ph.D. committee members must hold an earned doctoral degree, with rare exceptions for senior faculty or professionals with outstanding research accomplishments. Such exceptions must have the approval of the department chair, school or college dean, and dean of the Graduate School.
6 Required Forms to the Graduate School

All required forms can be found on the Graduate School’s website http://www.uaf.edu/gradsch/

Appointment of Advisory Committee Form:
A student must submit the Appointment of Advisory Committee form and have an initial meeting with his or her graduate committee before the end of their first semester. At this meeting the committee should discuss the Graduate Study Plan (GSP), and agree on its content. A student must meet formally with his or her committee at least once per year and submit a Report of Graduate Advisory Committee form by May 15th of every year. However, committee meetings should occur more often, especially near the beginning or end of the student’s program, or if there are serious problems with a student’s progress.

Graduate Study Plan:
The Graduate Study Plan (GSP) outlines the curriculum of study and timetable to be followed by the graduate student in meeting graduate degree requirements. It serves as a road map for graduate study and should be drafted early in a student’s program (and submitted to the Graduate School by the end of the second semester of study). The GSP serves as a working agreement of mutual expectation between the student and the committee and should be written collaboratively.

The GSP not only contains the specific degree requirements, but also indicates the mechanism for fulfilling these requirements (e.g., via coursework, examinations) and a projected timetable for completing various requirements. Depending on the length of a student’s degree program, the first draft of the GSP may be the final one, although it is not unusual to revise the GSP. Possible reasons for revising a GSP are: a planned course is cancelled, initial results or funding changes dictate a change in research direction, etc. Necessary revisions to the GSP are permitted and encouraged.

Advancement to Candidacy:
The Advancement to Candidacy (Master’s & PhD’s) formally establishes the student’s specific degree requirements and it is in the best interests of both the student and the advisory committee to file the Advancement to Candidacy form as soon as possible. Master’s students are eligible to advance to candidacy if they are in good standing, have completed at least 9 graduate credits after admission to a graduate program, and have their committee’s approval of their Graduate Study Plan, including research topic, coursework, comprehensive exam topic(s) and any other requirements. Some Master’s programs require the student to have passed the comprehensive examination before advancing to candidacy. Ph.D. students are eligible to advance if they have completed the full-time equivalent of two academic years of graduate study, have completed at least 9 UAF credits, have an approved Graduate Study Plan, and have passed a written comprehensive examination. At the latest, the Application for Advancement to Candidacy form must be submitted at least one semester prior to graduation.

The finalized Graduate Study Plan should be used as a basis for completing the Application for Advancement to Candidacy, but it is not necessary to submit a Graduate Study Plan to the Graduate School with the Application for Advancement to Candidacy.

A Graduate Petition Form is used to request any changes to the Advancement to Candidacy once it has been filed. This form must be sent through the advisor, department chair, and dean, to the Office of the Graduate School.
Check the catalog regarding specific course requirements for the student’s degree program. Most Master’s programs require at least 30 credits. Ph.D. students are required to take 18 credits of thesis (699), and the advisory committee usually requires additional courses.

**Report of Graduate Advisory Committee:**

This report, indicating the progress a student has made, must be filed annually, by May 15, for the student to remain in good standing. If a student does not have a current Report of Graduate Committee on file, they would not be eligible to receive any possible fellowships, grants, etc. from the Graduate School.

“Conditional” or “Unsatisfactory” reports must give the student specific and complete instructions for improvement and a timeline for meeting the requirements. If appropriate, consequences for not fulfilling the conditions must be specified. Students with “Unsatisfactory” progress are normally not eligible for RA, TA or Graduate School Fellowship support; if the student has a “Conditional” report, we will check to see that the conditions are being met. Note that “Conditional” and especially “Unsatisfactory” reports can affect the status of International students. If you think it might be necessary to file such a report for an International student, consult the Graduate School beforehand.

Note that more frequent advisory committee meetings (semiannual or even quarterly) are an excellent idea for many students, especially near the beginning and end of their programs, or if their progress is slow. Every time there is a formal committee meeting a Report should be filed with the Graduate School. This is especially true if there are any significant problems with the student’s progress.

**Report on Comprehensive Exam:**

After the completion of a comprehensive exam (oral, written or both), the student must submit a Report on Comprehensive Exam signed by the committee chair, committee members, the department chair, and Dean of their school or college (and, for Ph.D. students, the outside examiner). The original must be sent to the Graduate School; most departments retain a copy in their files. However, it is important that the major advisor and/or the student to keep a copy of the Report on Comprehensive Exam as well.

Most Master’s programs require a written and/or oral comprehensive examination to determine whether the student has integrated knowledge and understanding of the principles and concepts underlying major and related fields. Some programs (MBA, MCE, MEd, and MEE) allow or require a capstone course or synthesizing paper instead of the comprehensive examination.

All Ph.D. students must pass a written comprehensive examination, and most programs require an oral comprehensive examination, as well. See the Catalog and departmental policies to find out which of these examinations applies to the student’s program.

For comprehensive or MS qualifying exam (required by some departments for PhD students), a student may be given a pass, a conditional pass, or a fail.

For MS qualifying exam for PhD, a conditional pass indicates a specific weakness that the student must remedy before degree requirements are completed. The Graduate Study Plan and later the Advancement to Candidacy form must include mechanisms (normally courses) for addressing these weaknesses.

For comprehensive exam, the Report on Comprehensive Exam form must specify the conditions that the student needs to fulfill before the exam will be passed. These can include a second, partial oral or written exam covering the areas of weakness, only; completing assigned readings and a synthesizing paper, again addressing the areas of weakness; completion of a course or courses; or other appropriate remedies chosen by the committee. The Report on
Comprehensive Exam form must specify a deadline for satisfying the conditions, as well as the conditions themselves. When the student completes the conditions satisfactorily, the committee must submit a new Report on Comprehensive Exam form that indicates a “Pass” grade. If the student does not fulfill the conditions by the specified deadline, then the committee must submit a new Report on Comprehensive Exam form that indicates a “Fail” grade.

Most departments have written policies on how many times a failed comprehensive examination may be repeated. Such policies usually state that a graduate student will be dismissed from the program if they fail the comprehensive examination either two or three times, but some programs allow more attempts. If your department does not have such a policy, writing one and making it known to all graduate students is strongly encouraged.

Report on Thesis Defense:
After the completion of a thesis defense, the student must submit a Report on Thesis/Dissertation Defense signed by the committee chair, committee members, the department chair, and Dean (and, for a Ph.D. defense, the outside examiner). The original must be sent to the Graduate School; most departments retain a copy in their files, but if not it is prudent for the major advisor or student or both to keep one.

The “Conditional Pass” is usually appropriate for flawed defenses of work that can be remedied by re-analysis or re-interpretation. “Failed” defenses may be repeated if the departmental policy allows it. If your department does not have a policy on failed thesis defenses, then writing one and making it known to all graduate students is strongly encouraged.

Report on Project Defense
After the completion of a project defense, the student must submit a Report on Project Defense signed by the committee chair, committee members, the department chair, and Dean. The original must be sent to the Graduate School; most departments retain a copy in their files, but if not it is prudent for the major advisor or student or both to keep one.

The “Conditional Pass” is usually appropriate for flawed defenses of work that can be remedied by re-analysis or re-interpretation. “Failed” defenses may be repeated if the departmental policy allows it. If your department does not have a policy on failed project defenses, then writing one and making it known to all graduate students is strongly encouraged.

7 Other Forms Needed for Some Students

Request for Outside Examiner:
All Ph.D. students must request an outside examiner at least two weeks before an oral comprehensive or qualifying examination or the thesis defense. For Master’s students an outside examiner is not required for either a comprehensive examination or thesis/project defense.

Report of Outside Examiner:
The Graduate School asks a faculty member from outside of a student’s department to be present at the Ph.D. oral examination and thesis defense. The role of the outside examiner is to assess whether the exam was fair and rigorous. However, the outside examiner is not expected to be an expert in the student’s field or on the specific thesis topic. If you agree to be an outside examiner, you are responsible for returning the Report of Outside Examiner form (one will be provided to you) directly to the Graduate School after the exam or defense.

Report on Completion of Language or Research Tool Requirement:
Proficiency in a second language or a research tool is not a UAF requirement, but some departments or programs may make this requirement. The advisory committee determines the specific language or research tool, guided by policies of the administrative unit in which the degree is offered. Generally, competency in a second language is required. However, upon approval of the department chair, the committee may substitute computer languages, statistics, mathematics, or study in areas such as history or philosophy of science, business, administration, law or economics. In all instances, topics selected must support the student’s degree program. When the requirement is completed, the student must submit the report.

**Request for Leave of Absence:**
If a graduate student will be unable to complete the six graduate or 400-level credits per academic year (fall, spring, summer) required for active status due to job, family or other issues, a leave of absence may be obtained by filing a “Leave of Absence” form. Leave of Absences are normally granted for a maximum of one academic year. If a graduate student does not resume their studies by the originally scheduled re-enrollment date the student will be out of status and must file the Reinstatement to Graduate Degree Status form.

**Reinstatement to Graduate Degree Status:**
A graduate student who has not registered for at least six graduate or 400-level credits during the previous calendar year (unless on approved leave of absence) is dropped from their degree program. However, the individual may file the Reinstatement to Graduate Degree Status form. If approved, the student will be reinstated into their academic program, but reinstatement is not automatic. The student’s advisory committee, department chair, and dean will consider the student’s academic record, progress in research (if applicable), and the date of enrollment in the degree program relative to limits on time-to-degree when determining to reinstate a student.

**Change of Major Form:**
Students may use the Change of Major form for a change of major within a department (or equivalent). For example, a student could use the form to change from an M.S. in Marine Biology to an M.S. in Oceanography program (both housed in Graduate Programs in Marine Science and Limnology). The form may also be used to change from an M.S. to a Ph.D. program, or vice versa, within the same department. However, it may not be used to change to a major in a different department. For that, the student must submit a new UAF Admission application, although documents such as transcripts, GRE score reports, and letters of recommendation (if they are still on file) that were submitted with the original application can be re-used.

**Add a Graduate Degree Program**
The Add a Graduate Degree Program should be used when a student would like to be enrolled in two degrees (MS & PhD) at the same time in the same department. For example: if a student is in PhD Marine Biology but has decided to earn a MS along the way (thus being in two programs at once).

**Graduate Student Petition Form:**
A student who desires an exception to a catalog requirement, or wants to change anything on the approved Advancement to Candidacy form, must complete a “Graduate Student Petition form” and receive approval from his or her advisory committee members, the department chair, the dean of the school or college, and the dean of the Graduate School. The Graduate School Dean will not approve the following kinds of petitions:
• The 30-credit requirement for Master’s degrees or 18-thesis (699) credits requirement for the Ph.D. These are Board of Regents minimums and, in fact, no one at UAF has the authority to waive these requirements.
• Course credits below the 400-level (or any 500 level credits) for graduate programs.
• CLEP-type (Credit for Life Experience) or Credit by Examination credit for graduate programs. This is against the rules of our accrediting organization. Note that practica, internships, and individual study courses are acceptable if these are organized according to UAF rules and procedures for granting credit.
• The requirement to register for at least 3 graduate credits (or 400-level credits needed to meet degree requirements) in the semester of graduation. If (and only if) a delay in graduation is due to circumstances well beyond the student’s control, tuition assistance for the final semester may be available. The committee chair must request the assistance from the Graduate School dean.

8 Keeping Students on Track

Registration Requirement:
Graduate students must be registered for at least six graduate credits per academic year (fall, spring, summer) when actively working toward a degree. Graduate students failing to register for at least six graduate credits (or 400-level credits on their Graduate Study Plan or Advancement to Candidacy) or obtain a leave of absence will be dropped from graduate study. Dropped students will have to apply for reinstatement to their academic program. Students must be registered for at least three graduate credits in the semester in which they receive their degree and must apply for graduation in that semester.

Course Restrictions:
The following types of courses cannot be used to meet the requirements of any graduate degree program at UAF:
• 500-level courses.
• Courses below the 400-level.
• Courses at the 400-level that are graded P/F or Cr/No Cr, or in which the grade earned is less than “B”.
• Graduate courses in which the grade earned are less than “C”.
• Courses that have been previously used to meet the requirements of another graduate or undergraduate degree program. For student’s who are pursuing a second Master’s degree, 6 credits may be counted from the previous Master’s program if approved by the student’s graduate advisory committee as being relevant to the new program. Seniors who want to count 400-level or graduate courses toward a future graduate degree must reserve those courses by filing a petition during the first four weeks of the semester in which the courses are taken.

Only a limited number of credits from certain types of courses may be used to meet graduate degree requirements:
• Not more than 12 total credits can be from any combination of 693 and 695 (special topics) and 697 (individual study) courses.
• Not more than 50% of total graduate degree program credits can be courses completed as a non-degree-seeking student, i.e., before admission to a graduate program.
• Not more than 12 semester credits of thesis (699) and/or research (698) for thesis Master’s programs (usually requires a minimum of 6 thesis credits).
• Not more than 6 semester credits of research (698) in non-thesis Master’s programs.

**Thesis and “Research” Credits (catalog definition of the two courses)**

**698 Non-thesis research/project, preparing for professional practice.** Master’s degree students working on a project should be the only students enrolling in research credits. Ph.D. students should never enroll in 698 credits as they do not count toward a Ph.D.

**699 Thesis/dissertation, preparing for scholarly or research activity.** All students who are working on a thesis/dissertation should be enrolling in 699 and not 698 credits.

**Deficiency Courses:**
Graduate advisory committees can require students to take deficiency courses if the student’s prior course work did not sufficiently prepare them to complete the graduate level courses or comprehensive examination in their graduate program. Required deficiency courses should be listed on the Graduate Study Plan, but should not be listed on the Advancement to Candidacy. Deficiency courses do not count toward meeting graduate degree requirements. Any undergraduate courses (100- to 400-level) courses included in the deficiency courses must be completed with a grade of “B” or better.

Note that English language proficiency is required of all UAF graduate students. A student who is not initially proficient should be required to take English courses as deficiency courses. UAF offers several ESL (English as second language) courses, as well as a Technical Writing course (ENGL 314).

**Time Limitations on Program:**
Students may elect to graduate under the degree requirements in effect in the first semester of their enrollment in a graduate degree program or the catalog in effect when they graduate, if they have been enrolled continuously (for a minimum of 6 graduate credits/year). If a student does not meet the continuous registration requirement, he or she must use either the catalog in effect during the semester of reentry or the catalog in effect during the semester of graduation; they waive the right to use the catalog in effect when they first entered the graduate program.

All non-academic policies and regulations listed in the current catalog apply, regardless of the catalog being used for the degree requirements. All coursework listed on the Advancement to Candidacy form and all other degree requirements must be satisfactorily completed within seven years for a Master’s degree and ten years for a Ph.D. Taking a leave of absence or being reinstated into your program does not re-set the time limit. Students may request an extension to the time limits using the Graduate Student Petition Form, but extensions require approval at all levels and are not automatic. Extensions of more than one year are unusual and require special justification.

The time limits on degree completion are intended to correspond to extreme situations of part-time students or those who face unusual difficulties in completing their research or creative work. In normal circumstances, for a full-time student, two to three years should be sufficient to complete a Master’s degree and four to six years should be sufficient for a Ph.D.
Grade Point Average and Grade Requirements:

Students must have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 (B) for good standing and in courses identified on the Advancement to Candidacy form to graduate and to maintain a research or teaching assistantship (if applicable). Students must earn an A or B grade (no P grades or B- grades) in 400-level courses; a C grade will be accepted in 600-level courses for the purpose of satisfying degree requirements (but a C- is not acceptable), provided a 3.0 GPA, overall, is maintained.

Students who have GPAs slightly below 3.0 and who have reasonable prospects for achieving a 3.0 GPA will be placed on Academic Probation, but are allowed to continue in the program. However, students with a cumulative GPA less than 2.7 after their first year (or 18 credits for part-time students) of graduate study should be advised that their chances of successfully completing the graduate program are poor, and that withdrawing is likely their best option. (A GPA of 2.67 for 18 credits would be the result of 2 C’s and 4 B’s for six, 3-credit courses). Students with a GPA less than 3.0 after their second year of graduate study, or after one year of academic probation, whichever is later, will be academically disqualified from the academic program in which they are enrolled.

Residency Requirements and Transfer Credit:

Cooperative students (students who have a UAA or UAS faculty member as a major co-advisor and who complete the majority of their program at UAA or UAS) must complete at least 12 UAF course credits (as well as completing 18 UAF thesis (699) credits).

Up to 50% of graduate program credits, if approved by the student’s graduate advisory committee, may be transferred from UAA or UAS. Up to 33% of graduate program credits, if approved by the student’s graduate advisory committee, may be transferred from other institutions. Note: that these limits cannot be added together, a minimum of 50% of all credits used to meet the requirements of a degree program must be UAF credits. For example, a typical 30-credit Master’s program could include at most 10 non-UA system credits, and in addition 5 UAA or UAS credits.

Note: that certain kinds of credits are not transferable. These include credits that are below the 400 (senior) level, credits that were not awarded a grade of “B” or above (including most P/F credit, unless the institution will certify that “P” is equivalent to “B”), credits that were awarded by institutions that lack regional accreditation (or the equivalent in foreign countries), credits that were earned more than seven years before the UAF Master’s (or 10 years before the UAF Ph.D.) is completed, and credits that the student’s advisory committee will not accept as meeting the requirements of the student’s degree program.

International graduate students on F-1 visa must complete their first semester in a UAF program in physical residence at UAF, including those UAF facilities located in Juneau, Palmer, Seward, Kodiak, or any of the UAF rural campuses. However, they may not reside in Anchorage, since UAA is a separate institution under Immigration regulations. Taking UAF courses via distance learning does not qualify as physical residence.
9 Thesis or Project

Thesis or Project Writing:

Before thesis students begin writing, they should attend one of the Thesis Formatting Workshops offered by the Graduate School. The workshops are offered twice every semester, and generally save a lot of time overall, since extensive formatting corrections can be avoided. Contact the Graduate School for the dates or check the schedule online at www.uaf.edu/gradsch/.

The Graduate School has no specific format requirements for projects, and these may consist largely of photos, software, or other non-text materials. However, most departments that require projects do have format and content requirements, and these requirements must be provided to students by the departments.

Urge students to carefully read a copy of the Thesis Writing Handbook (available online at the Graduate School website, or in hardcopy at the Graduate School office) as they are beginning to write. Many aspects of the required format are easy to incorporate, as the document is written, but difficult and time-consuming to do after the thesis is close to completion. Before beginning to write, the student should reach agreement with his or her major advisor and committee whether the thesis will be written in monographic (book) form or as one or more manuscripts ready for submission to a professional journal (or in some cases, already submitted or published).

While the student is writing, it is generally most successful if the major advisor reviews each section or chapter, as it is completed, rather than waiting for the entire thesis to be done before reviewing any of it. Typically, a student will need substantial, frequent feedback to produce a good-quality product. Many major advisors prefer to have reviewed and approved the thesis (or thesis chapter) before it is passed to the other committee members for review. However, other major advisors and committees work together to review all drafts. Either system can work well (although the second is obviously more work for committee members), but the review process and schedule should be made clear to the student as he or she begins writing. When a student is ready to begin the writing process, it’s a good idea to have a committee meeting and discuss the following issues:

- Which thesis format will be used, monographic or manuscript? If the latter, to which journal(s) will the manuscript(s) be submitted, and hence, what style should be used?
- If the question is not already settled by journal requirements, will the thesis be written in first or third person style?
- Is the thesis outline (either prepared before the meeting, or shortly afterward) acceptable to the committee?
- Will the major advisor review and approve drafts before they are passed to the rest of the committee? Or will all drafts go to all committee members simultaneously?
- What is the smallest unit that the advisor or committee members prefer to review? For example, 20 pages? A completed chapter or manuscript draft, only? Or, the entire thesis?
- What will be included in the thesis? That is, a students might have collected some data that may not be suitable for the thesis, because they aren’t of the best quality, they are “off topic” from most of the work, or the student was not primarily responsible for the data or their analysis. Sometimes, such data are included in an appendix rather than in the main body of the thesis.
• What is the schedule for completion? It is usually best to set up a schedule for submission and review of each unit (e.g., each chapter), as well as setting a target date for completion of the entire thesis. At this time, committee members and the student can point out times when they will be unavailable. (This information should be updated periodically as major commitments, such as fieldwork and meetings, are added.) The student and committee must work within the deadlines set by the department, school or college, and Graduate School.

It is important to keep the schedule realistic. Very few students require less than 3 to 4 months to complete a thesis or project; many Ph.D. students require close to a year, especially when extensive and complex data analysis is required. Over this long period it is important for the student and major advisor (and other committee members, as needed) to meet regularly; at a minimum, monthly, formal meetings are recommended to discuss progress.

Some students will meet the agreed-upon writing schedule (or at least, close) with little difficulty and will produce initial drafts that need only moderate revision. Unfortunately, this situation is not especially common. If a student is not producing work to the agreed-on schedule, discuss the matter with the student as soon as you recognize there is a problem. Ask the reason for the delay, and work with the student to resolve the blocks that you can identify.

Submitting the Thesis or Project:

The advisory committee, department chair and college/school dean usually have thesis or project submission deadlines that are well in advance, typically a month or more, of the Graduate School deadlines. As the chair of a committee, it is most important that you convey any deadlines to your students in a timely manner. Although students are responsible for knowing these deadlines and meeting them often problems arise when a chair, or committee member fails to take into account thesis submission deadlines when they set their own calendars.

Advisory committee chairs and members are responsible for carrying out timely reviews of theses. This is a very time-consuming task to do well, and students should expect it will take a minimum of several weeks. However, it is your responsibility to communicate your timeline with your students. It is not fair to the student to state you will review a chapter, thesis, etc. in a week and after several weeks have gone by it still hasn’t been reviewed. Sometimes a faculty member has other, unusually time-consuming responsibilities in any particular time period, if this happens the faculty member should make their students aware of any changes in their schedules so that the timeline can be adjusted. Also, some theses submitted for faculty review need much more work than others. If a thesis draft needs many corrections and revisions, the time for the faculty to review it will be longer. However, faculty members should give students a date when the review will be completed, and do their very best to meet the agreed-upon schedule.

Defending the Thesis or Project:

Committees and students should consult together to determine if a thesis or project is ready to be defended and decide when to schedule the thesis/project defense. It is important to find out when the committee members are available. If necessary and if approved by the department chair, committee members may attend by audio or videoconference, but this is undesirable if it can be avoided. Please remind your Ph.D. students to submit a Request for Outside Examiner a minimum of two weeks prior to the dissertation defense.

Signature Page for Thesis:
After the student has successfully defended the thesis and made any recommended corrections, at least one original signature page on thesis paper must be signed by the committee, department chair (or equivalent), and dean of the school or college, with an additional lines for the signature of the Dean of the Graduate School and a Date line. Please note that faxed signatures are not acceptable, and that blue or black ink is strongly preferred. Only original signatures are acceptable; faculty members cannot sign for another faculty member in any circumstance. In extreme cases (e.g., a committee member is on sabbatical in Australia) a faxed signature will be accepted for purposes of meeting the graduation deadline, but an original must be provided before the thesis will be bound. In cases where it is impossible, or nearly, to obtain an original signature (a committee member is wintering over at the South Pole) call the Graduate School for specific instructions.

**Final Evaluation of the Thesis:**

Before final acceptance, all members of the advisory committee, the department chair, the dean of your school or college, and the dean of the Graduate School must approve the thesis. Any of these individuals may require changes or corrections. The committee chair and other advisory committee members are primarily responsible for evaluating the thesis, and they consider both the academic standards of their field and the quality of presentation (e.g., clear and correct writing, neat and easy to understand figures). Usually, the committee will give the student the required changes or corrections shortly after the defense. The student must make those corrections before the committee members will sign the signature page of the thesis, which signifies their final approval. The department chair should also conduct a thorough review, to check for any overlooked errors, and to monitor the quality of theses for the program as a whole. He or she will sign the signature page after the student has corrected any additional errors found. Most deans read only parts of theses, or selected theses, again with the purpose of monitoring quality, but they too can require changes before signing the signature page. The Graduate School always checks that format and style conform to UAF standards, and the Graduate School Dean will not give his final approval until the student makes any required corrections. The Graduate School Dean reviews selected theses in some detail, and the student must also correct any errors that he or she finds before his or her final signature.

It’s obvious that the many steps in the evaluation process require substantial time. This is why departmental and Graduate School deadlines for thesis submission are set well before the end of the semester. If you think your student will miss a deadline, but will be very close to meeting it, the committee chair may request an extension for the spring or summer terms. The committee chair (not the student) must submit a “Request for Extension to Thesis/Dissertation Deadline” form. This form must be submitted to the Graduate School no later then April 7th for spring, and August 1st for summer. Because of the holiday break, fall (December) extensions are not allowed. At the Graduate School level, 1-week extensions are often granted but on a first come, first served basis, and 2-week extensions may be granted in special circumstances, but are strictly limited, because they require a very quick turnaround for format review.

**Final Copies of the Thesis:**

After the student makes the changes required by the Graduate School, the student must submit the final copies of their thesis. The Graduate School requires one plain paper and one thesis paper copy, both of which are kept by the UAF Rasmuson Library. A few departments require a bound copy of the thesis; and if you would like a personal copy please let your student know (and offer to pay for the bound copy). The student may choose to submit additional copies for binding, up to a total of ten including the required copies.
10 Professional Development

Professional Skill Development:
As much as possible, offer your students opportunities to learn the broad range of skills he or she may need in the future. If a student hopes to be a principal investigator on grants, either as a faculty member or a research scientist, let him or her read some of the proposals you are writing as PI, and discuss how the proposal was put together. (As a side benefit students sometimes have good suggestions for improvement). Similarly, as you prepare a manuscript (even if the student is not an author), invite the student to read a draft and discuss not only the content, but also the writing process.

If a student hopes to work in academia, attending regional and national meetings are a good way to develop professional contacts. In addition, joint research or field work with researchers at other universities can be very helpful, enriching the student’s education with new viewpoints, techniques, and approaches as well as widening the student’s circle of professional colleagues. Be alert for such opportunities on behalf of your graduate students.

If a student intends to teach at the college or university level, TA experience will be helpful. Even if the primary source of support is an RA, consider encouraging the student to TA for one or two semesters if a TA position is available.

If a student hopes to work in a particular industry or in certain government agencies, internships can be an excellent way both to “learn the ropes” and to make contacts that can lead to a permanent position. UAF Career Services can help students to make appropriate contacts with businesses and agencies that operate in Alaska.

- Federal internships (and all Federal jobs, for that matter) are listed on http://jobsearch.usajobs.opm.gov/.
- The Alaska Department of Natural Resources internship program is at http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/pic/intern.htm.

Developing Professional Contacts
Work with your students to choose opportunities for presenting their work, seeing other research or scholarly presentations, and meeting other students, researchers, and scholars in the field. This is especially important given Fairbanks’ relatively remote location. If possible, accompany your students to a regional or national meeting or other gathering and make introductions.

Job Applications:
Encourage your students to begin looking for jobs about 6 months before degree completion. Suggest places that they can look for postings, such as professional society websites. Tell your students about colleagues who might have relevant positions available.

You should be prepared to write letters of recommendation, or provide a reference over the phone. If you cannot honestly provide an entirely favorable recommendation, tell the student what you will say, so as to give the student an opportunity to seek another reference. Note that for many positions it’s crucial for the reference to arrive by a given deadline, so try to take care of this task immediately when you receive a request. Most advisors will end up writing a dozen or more letters of reference for their past students, and it’s convenient to use much the same letter repeatedly. However, it’s important to “customize” references for particular positions. It’s off-putting for a search committee to receive a recommendation letter that is clearly generic, or worse, refers to another position altogether.
11 Supervising Teaching Assistants

The Graduate School offers a half-day TA training session at the beginning of fall semester (and spring semester if demand warrants). This includes relevant UAF rules and policies, a brief and general overview of teaching methods, and an optional session on laboratory safety. Contact the Graduate School or visit our website for the schedule. Some departments also offer TA training specific to the courses their TAs teach, or (in the sciences) have a staff member supervising undergraduate labs, who is also charged with some aspects of TA training. However, if your department does not have these resources, you, as the faculty member in charge of the course, are usually responsible for any further training that the TA receives.

It’s very important to make expectations clear, and it’s best to put these in writing. Some issues to address include:

• Expectations for class attendance (e.g., TAs who are mainly paper graders may or may not be required to attend class sessions. Also, some faculty members want TAs to arrive earlier than the start time of the class, to set up equipment, answer student questions, etc.)
• Specific TA duties.
• What the TA must do when unable to attend a particular class or lab.
• If the TA is responsible for grading assignments or exams, when is the deadline for having them returned to students? Are there explicit grading criteria, or is the TA expected to use his or her own judgment?
• Is the TA required to keep office hours?
• Is the TA expected to respond to e-mailed questions (about course content)? To assist students over the phone?

Although UAF does not offer a general guidebook on being a teaching assistant, there are many resources available online that can help graduate students maneuver through teaching experiences. Some excellent websites are:

University of California Santa Barbara
http://oic.id.ucsb.edu/ta-handbook

University of Maryland’s Department of Computer Science:

12 Supervising Research Assistants

Graduate Research Assistants have highly varied tasks and responsibilities, depending on the field of research and the specific project. A key to working successfully with Research Assistants is good and frequent communication. The supervising faculty member should discuss his or her expectations with a new RA shortly after he or she joins the project.

Here is some information that you should give a RA, if possible even before they commit to a particular project:

• What, specifically, is the RA expected to accomplish?
• What deadlines exist? Are these somewhat flexible, or unchangeable? (Due dates for grant progress reports and final reports, or a task that must be completed to allow another to begin, are examples).
• What records do you to be kept, in what format? Do you expect copies to be made and stored separately?
• How often do you expect progress reports? Do you want written or oral reports?
• Are there any scheduled activities that the student must attend, without fail? For example, remote field research often has to be conducted on specific dates, because the logistical arrangements and/or scheduling of other participants are very complex.
• Are there any unusual physical or travel or other requirements of which the student should be aware? For example, some field research requires unusually good physical condition. Some research requires long periods (many months per year) away from home. Other projects may require handling of toxic or radioactive substances; although regulations require that exposures will be within safe limits, some individuals may be unwilling or unable (e.g., multiple chemical sensitivity syndrome) to tolerate any exposure.
• What times and days or dates do you expect the student to be present in the lab or office? (The faculty supervisor should consider the student’s class schedule in setting the RA schedule. It’s fine to allow a flexible schedule if that fits your program and suits others in your research group, but if not, be specific about what you want.) Note that it should be forbidden that the student work alone with hazardous materials or in other hazardous situations, especially outside of working hours when there will be few people in most buildings.
• How long will the RA last? Can it be renewed? How likely is renewal? (If it depends on a new grant proposal or proposals, you might mention your funding track record). What other funding options exist?

13 Financial Support and Other Resources

There are a variety of different types of financial aid available to graduate students at UAF. The most prevalent is graduate assistantships.

• **Teaching Assistantships:** May involve teaching courses, leading a discussion section, supervising a laboratory, grading papers, or meeting with students. The typical appointment involves working up to 20 hours per week. A teaching assistant receives a stipend, health insurance and tuition payment by the university. Tuition is paid for no more than 10 credits during each semester if the workload is 15 to 20 hours per week. If the workload is 10-14 hours per week, no more than 5 credits will be included. No tuition will be included if the workload is less than 10 hours per week.

• **Research Assistantships:** Are most common in science and engineering fields, but are often available in other fields as well. Research assistants work in laboratories and other settings to assist faculty on research projects related to the student’s thesis or project. Research assistants also receive a stipend, health insurance; a tuition award based on workload and in some cases may include payment of fees. Research assistant support is provided by grants/contracts and includes a tuition payment for no more than 10 credits during each semester if the workload is 15-20 hours per week. If the workload is 10-14 hours per week, no more than 5 credits will be included. No tuition will be included if the workload is less than 10 hours per week.

• **Graduate Fellowships:** Awarded by the Graduate School to select students within specific programs. The programs (i.e. IGERT, MESA, Indigenous Studies) recommend students for the fellowships. Students cannot apply directly for a Graduate Fellowship.
• **Thesis Completion Fellowships:** These highly competitive awards are offered by the Graduate School and are intended to support students without a source of funding to support thesis writing. Ph.D. students will receive preference in the selection process. Evaluation of applications will be based on academic achievements, prior timely progress in graduate course-work and thesis or dissertation research, and a plan plus timeline for completion of the thesis or dissertation within the duration of the fellowship. Deadline for applying is March 15th.

• **University of Alaska Foundation and UAF privately funded scholarships** are also available at UAF. The deadline for applications is February 15th. Early applications are strongly encouraged. The Financial Aid Office coordinates scholarship applications with the various departments, which evaluate the applications for appropriate scholarships. Applications are available online at: [http://www.uaf.edu/finaid/scholarships](http://www.uaf.edu/finaid/scholarships).

• Other funding sources are available to assist graduate students in accomplishing their educational and research goals while at UAF. There are sources within your department, in the Graduate School, and external to the university. Depending on the source, the funds may be used for living expenses, (stipend or salary), tuition, equipment, supplies, or travel.

### 14 International Students at UAF

International students are faced with unique situations that U.S. citizens don’t encounter. They must comply with immigration regulations and adapt to a new and different culture. The international student advisors serve as a liaison between the student and the U.S. immigration authorities, authorizes documents for student visas, helps students adjust to the U.S., Alaska and UAF, provides counseling for personal, academic and employment-related problems and serves as a resource for information and support. The International Advisors can be contacted by telephone at (907) 474-7677 or (907) 474-7583.

**Immigration requirements:**

UAF will help students comply with U.S. immigration laws and is committed to assisting students in ways that prevent status violations from occurring.

- F-1 and J-1 students new to UAF must physically check in with the International Advisor (IA) prior to registering for classes. The IA will review the student’s immigration documents, and must confirm to U.S. immigration authorities that the student has arrived on campus.
- International students cannot drop below a full course of study without prior authorization from the IA. Failure to obtain advanced approvals is considered an immigration status violation.
- “Full-time” means a minimum of 12 credits per semester for undergraduates, and 9 credits for graduate students. Of these credits, no more than 3 credits can be independent study or distance education. Acceptable reasons for reduced credit load include:
- In the first semester, students who experience academic difficulties (for example, unfamiliarity with American teaching methods or incorrect grade placement);
- Graduate students who have completed required coursework may register for thesis or research credits only but must enroll in at least 9 credits;
- Students in their final term of study may enroll in less than full time credit but must have approval for reduced course load before the end of the semester’s late registration period;
- Students who have a medical problem may be authorized a reduced credit load or take the semester off (this reduction cannot exceed an aggregate of 12 months, the request must be accompanied by a doctor’s statement and must be authorized when the medical condition begins – not afterwards.)
- Students must request and be approved for a reduced course load before falling below full-time status.

Status:
A summary of key Federal regulations regarding “status” is included at the end of this Handbook. Basically, “in status” means that the student is meeting all regulatory requirements and can continue studying in the U.S. “Out of status” usually means that the student must leave the U.S. within a very short time or be deported. The student is considered to be maintaining status if he or she is making normal progress toward completing a course of study. This includes being registered as a full-time student (except in summer) and being in good standing as a graduate student. If proper procedures are followed, students on F-1 visa can complete one degree and then begin another, e.g., a student can earn an M.S. and then enroll in a Ph.D. program the next regular term. It’s not necessary for international students to enroll in summer, unless they are receiving an RA or TA or other financial support that requires it.

Some examples of failure to maintain status include dropping from full-time to part-time enrollment without prior approval from the International Student Advisor; attending a school other than the one a student is authorized to attend; failure to apply for a timely transfer or I-20 extension or change in level of study; unauthorized employment; and failure to report a change of address. UAF is legally required to report to Immigration (i.e., through SEVIS) if the International Student Advisor has information that indicates an international student is out of status. If you, as advisor, have reason to think that a status violation might exist (or might occur soon), phone the Graduate School for advice.

International students on F-1 Visa may not work in most jobs unless they receive special permission. Teaching and research assistantships through a student’s department and affiliated research institutes are permitted. It is possible for International students to work in other parts of campus, outside of their department, but only with special permission from the International Student Advisor. For more information contact the Office of International Programs.

Health Insurance:
Health insurance is required for all international students in F-1 or J-1 status (including Canadian students). International students who meet specific requirements may get a waiver from the UAF Office of International Programs and Initiatives. Graduate students funded through a Research Assistantship, Teaching Assistantship or University Fellowships are automatically covered by the Graduate Health Insurance policy. This coverage meets the Office of International Programs insurance requirement.
15 Forbidden Faculty Behavior

Releasing Confidential Student Information:
FERPA (the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) requires that UAF and all of its employees keep student records confidential. This applies to any written record of student performance, including grades (either for assignments or courses) and Graduate School forms like the Advancement to Candidacy, Report of Advisory Committee, or Report on Examination. Even accidental release of information is against the regulation if it occurs because faculty or staff failed to exercise due care. For example, do not leave student records in places where they can be easily viewed by others, i.e., unattended computer displays, open files on the top of your desk, stacks of graded papers in hallways, grade sheets posted on your office door, etc. It’s also forbidden to disclose the contents of records verbally, even though the record itself is not released. The rules apply even if parents, spouses, siblings, close friends, or employers of the student request the information, unless of course the student has given express written permission for the release of records or information. It is permitted to share or discuss student records with University faculty and staff and administrators if there is a legitimate educational reason for doing so.

A current or former student’s request for a reference constitutes permission for you to discuss your knowledge of the person’s qualifications, which might include (for example) grades in courses you taught, but it does not include permission to print the student’s transcript or make copies of other student records and attach them to the reference.

It can be a particularly awkward situation when a student’s friends or relatives hover in the hallway waiting for the result of an oral comprehensive examination or thesis defense. In the case of a pass, it’s highly unlikely that anyone will mind if the good news is announced, but fails are a touchier situation. If you do encounter someone who asks about an exam result, if it was a fail it’s best to say, “I’m sorry. You’ll need to discuss that with John [the student]”. The person is likely to infer bad news from that statement, but it doesn’t actually reveal any confidential information.

A faculty member’s discussing his or her individual opinion of a student is not a violation of FERPA, but in some circumstances this can be inappropriate and unprofessional. Of course it is not a problem to say something like, “Ellen’s thesis project is going well. She’s resolved that contamination problem.” Negative information, like “Bob is quite a bit behind schedule with the data report; I’ll be talking with him about it tomorrow,” can also be acceptable. For example, you should respond accurately if you are answering another student, who needs to see Bob’s results in connection with a collaborative research project. On the other hand, most would agree that the following answer is inappropriate: “Bob is a slug. I am tired of trying to work with him. He is never going to get that report done as far as I can see.” Faculty members often consider their graduate students to be friends and colleagues, and that is mostly a good thing, but it is best to exercise considerable restraint in discussing other students’ faults with them.

Discrimination:
UAF forbids all employees, including faculty, from engaging in discriminatory behavior. A short statement of this policy is:
“The University of Alaska will not permit or tolerate discrimination that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or learning environment, or that interferes with an individual's performance.”

Students and employees are protected from discrimination based on race, religion, color, national origin, citizenship, age, sex, disability, marital status, changes in marital status, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions or parenthood.

If a student thinks they have been the subject of discrimination by a UAF employee (including faculty) they can contact the dean of their school or college or the Dean of the Graduate School, or they can contact the Office of Equal Opportunity directly, (907) 474-6600 or mbgerdeman@alaska.edu.

A more complete version of policies against discrimination and harassment is given in the paragraph below, quoted from UA Board of Regents Policy:

**PART X - Academic Policy**

**CHAPTER VII**

**Equal Educational Opportunity and Nondiscrimination**

**Equal Educational Opportunity**

The University of Alaska is committed to establishing equal educational opportunity, to opposing and prohibiting illegal discrimination in the provision of educational opportunities, and to eliminating illegal discriminatory educational practices. All academic decisions, including those affecting educational programs and activities available to a student, will be based on the student's qualifications, abilities, and performance, as appropriate. All academic decisions will conform with requirements of state and federal laws and regulations pertaining to non-discrimination and equal educational opportunity.

The Chancellors will be responsible for implementing this policy at their respective MAUs by developing programs to establish educational equity and equal educational opportunity.

Passed 04-19-96

**Sexual relationships with students:**

Sexual relationships between major advisors or committee members and the graduate students they supervise are not allowed, even if consensual. If a sexual relationship develops, or seems very likely to develop soon, the faculty member must immediately remove himself or herself from the committee. Course instructors must not have sexual relationships with students who are currently enrolled in the courses they teach. Any sexual relationships between faculty and students within the same department, or other academic or research unit, are discouraged, but if they occur, the faculty member must not thereafter be involved in any academic decision concerning that student. The governing Board of Regents Regulation is R 04.02.020 C:
C. Consensual Sexual Relationships

1. Faculty-Student Relationships

a. Within the instructional context: It is considered a serious breach of professional ethics for a member of the faculty to initiate or acquiesce in a sexual relationship with a student who is enrolled in a course being taught by the faculty member or whose academic work, including work as a teaching assistant, is being supervised by the faculty member.

b. Outside the instructional context: Sexual relationships between faculty members and students occurring outside the instructional context may lead to difficulties, particularly when the faculty member and student are in the same academic unit or in units that are academically allied; relationships that the parties view as consensual may appear to others to be exploitative. Further, in such situations the faculty member may face serious conflicts of interest and should be careful to distance him or herself from any decisions that may reward or penalize the student involved.

Spouses or sexual partners of faculty often enroll at UAF, but the couple should carefully consider a choice to enroll in the same department that employs the faculty member. Negative academic decisions or poor grades given to the spouse or partner by other department faculty can impact working relationships with colleagues. As above, the faculty member may not be involved in any academic decision involving the spouse or partner. Interpreted with respect to graduate students, this policy means that a faculty member cannot be the supervisor of an RA or TA or serve as the major advisor or committee member of a graduate student who is a spouse or sexual partner. A student may enroll in a course taught by their spouse or sexual partner, but then the chancellor must approve an alternative means of evaluating the student’s academic performance that does not directly involve the spouse or sexual partner of the student.

Nepotism:

Nepotism is addressed in Board of Regents’ policy P04.10.040:

No employee of the University may supervise or participate in employment, grievance, retention, promotion, salary, leave or other personnel decisions concerning members of his or her immediate family. Immediate family includes an employee’s spouse, child or stepchild, parent, sibling or immediate in-laws. It is not a violation of this policy for a faculty member to have an immediate family member as a student enrolled in his/her class, provided that the chancellor has approved an alternative means of evaluating the student’s academic performance. This precludes the faculty member from direct involvement in such evaluation. Any exception to this policy requires the prior written approval of the president of the university. The president will advise the Board of Regents of all granted exceptions.

Interpreted with respect to graduate students, this policy means that a faculty member cannot be the supervisor of an RA or TA or serve as the major advisor or committee member of a graduate student who is an immediate family member. It is allowed for an immediate family member to enroll in a graduate course you teach, but you cannot assign their grade. Instead, another qualified individual approved by the Chancellor must evaluate his or her work.
The policy does not forbid immediate family members of faculty from enrolling in graduate programs offered by the department that employs the faculty member, but this decision should be weighed carefully. Very difficult situations could arise if colleagues make negative academic decisions about your family member. Of course, it’s recognized that family members may choose to enroll regardless of your opinion. Further, UAF programs cannot reject applicants solely on the basis of their relationship to a faculty member, if they are otherwise qualified, unless the program is so small that nepotism could not be avoided. In those cases the Interdisciplinary program may be an alternative.

16 How to Deal with Problems in Working with Graduate Students

The specific examples below can’t include all of the problems a faculty member may face in helping a student to complete a graduate degree. Here we try to cover common problems and a few rare, but serious problems, and the initial solutions that can be tried. However, both students and faculty members vary, and we understand that some situations are very difficult to resolve. In general, if you don’t know what to do in a particular case, ask your department chair. If they don’t resolve the problem, you can talk with your school or college dean or with the Graduate School dean.

Academic problems:

Your student’s GPA falls below 3.0: Students cannot advance to candidacy or graduate with a GPA below 3.0. However, if the problem is due to a “C” grade in only one or two courses, then the student may be able to overcome it by retaking the course(s) and earning a better grade, or earning an “A” or two in other courses. Graduate students with a GPA below 3.0 can be dismissed from their graduate program on the recommendation of their graduate advisory committee (or the chair if a committee is not yet appointed), the department chair (or equivalent), the school or college dean, and the dean of the Graduate School. This step is normally reserved for cases when the committee sees little likelihood of the student being able to improve the GPA or complete other requirements for the degree. The committee should initiate dismissal for any graduate student whose GPA is below 3.0 after the equivalent of two full years (36 credits attempted). The annual “Report of Graduate Advisory Committee” should reflect the low GPA at its first and subsequent instances and include steps to rectify the GPA as well as a timeline and consequences for not bring the GPA up to the required 3.0. Note that a GPA that rounds up to 3.0 (i.e., ≥2.950) is acceptable.

If your graduate student wants to appeal a course grade or an academic decision (e.g., failure of a comprehensive examination or thesis or project defense, or a dismissal): He or she must follow the Faculty Senate appeal process.

http://www.uaf.edu/uaafgov/faculty-senate/policies-procedures/grade-appeals/
http://www.uaf.edu/uaafgov/faculty-senate/policies-procedures/appeals-policy-for-academ/

Research problems:

If your student is not making any (or much) progress you need to meet with the student regularly and frequently, and work with him or her to identify and remove barriers to progress. In consultation with the student, set a written schedule and require biweekly or monthly progress reports (or partial drafts, if at the thesis writing stage). It’s usually best not to take a punitive
approach as this can kill a student’s enthusiasm and motivation. However, in severe cases, especially when external deadlines loom, it may be necessary to specify consequences: a conditional or unsatisfactory “Report of Graduate Advisory Committee”, withdrawal of funding, or even dismissal, if the schedule is not met. If matters get to this stage, the consequences should be a collective decision of the entire committee, and the student should be provided with an explicit written warning.

1. Your student is not working hard enough: First, make sure your requirements for student effort are reasonable. Yes, graduate students must work hard. However, early in their programs students must juggle the demands of their classes with research requirements. Throughout their programs, most students do better if they have some free time to relax and unwind.
   a. Again, it’s important to meet with the student and ask, “Why?” Once the problem is identified, it is usually easier to come up with solutions. Think about the working environment. There may be problems a student is reluctant to admit to you, e.g., personality conflicts within your research group.
   b. Finally, the student may have personal or family problems that limit work time. If there are serious problems it may be best for the student to take a leave of absence until they can be resolved. Most advisors try to accommodate students who must take up to several weeks off for illness or serious family emergencies. However, if a student is unable to meet the requirements of an RA over longer periods, it may be impossible to continue the assistantship.

2. If it seems that the student has a serious mental health problem or is abusing drugs or alcohol, then the Center for Health and Counseling may be able to help. Most faculty members do not have the skills to address such problems and should avoid trying to fill the role of a professional counselor.

3. Your student is overly dependent on you for directions: This is often the case, initially. Break up large tasks into smaller, easier parts, but allow and expect the student to take the initiative on those. Gradually increase the length and complexity of tasks. In some (extreme) cases, insist that the student solve some problems: “I know you can handle that yourself. Go ahead.”

4. Your student does not respond well to criticism, i.e., takes offense or does not improve: Nobody likes to be criticized, and it is difficult to criticize constructively. Consider the following approach:
   a. Allot sufficient time for the meeting, without interruptions, and when neither of you is likely to be tired, hungry, or unusually cranky.
   b. Avoid criticizing in front of others, except that sometimes-advisory committees need to work as a group.
   c. Do not criticize the person (as opposed to their work) or use vague, general criticisms like “You are the worst student I have ever had”, or “You are just terrible at lab work”.
   d. Keep criticisms specific to a few issues that need improvement. If there are many such issues, prioritize and save some for later.
   e. Offer specific instructions for improvement (if appropriate) or ask the student for an improvement plan.
   f. Praise as well as criticize. Don’t criticize at every encounter (the 80:20 rule works for No Criticism:Criticism, too).
   g. Be calm and courteous, even if the student is defensive.
h. Listen carefully to the student’s response or explanation. Agree or disagree, but avoid being drawn into an argument.

i. If the discussion is no longer constructive, end it, but offer an appointment for later.

5. Your student avoids you: Again the question is, “Why?” The student may be reluctant to tell you about a lack of progress, he or she may fear criticism (especially if you have been frankly critical in the past), or you may be too busy (or seem so to the student). Of course the student has responsibility to stay in touch with you, but it can be very helpful if you make the extra effort to initiate contact (try an intermediary if the student won’t talk to you). Advisors do have the authority to require student attendance at reasonably scheduled meetings. If the student fails to attend such meetings, and fails to return phone calls and e-mails, it can be grounds for an unsatisfactory progress report and ultimately, dismissal. Be absolutely certain you use current contact information.

6. Your student does poor quality research work: The best approach to this depends on the reason. Many new graduate students have very little practical research training or experience. They may not know how to keep good records or carry out many of the specific tasks you expect of them. In this case the student needs additional instruction on expectations or techniques. On the other hand, perhaps you have not allowed sufficient time to do quality work. Perhaps the student needs a little less time pressure. Another possibility is that the student needs more supervision. For example, a student who knows that you will look through his or her lab notebook every Friday may be more likely to keep a neat, complete, and up-to-date notebook.

7. Your student writes very badly: It’s best to try to deal with this early in a student’s program, because it will be painful to both of you if writing is still a serious problem when the thesis or project must be completed. Many students would benefit from a formal course or courses in writing, e.g., ENGL 314 Technical Writing or ESLG 071 Writing English as a Second Language. Students also benefit from practice; you may want to require a student with weaker writing skills to submit written progress reports on his or her research. The Writing Center is available to help with written assignments and, in a limited way, with thesis writing. (Writing Center resources do not extend to editing entire theses). In some cases, a student may need to hire an editor to produce a well-written final thesis. Often the least expensive editor is another graduate student in the same program.

8. Your student is not complying with research ethical or regulatory requirements: As PI or co-author, you may be held responsible. Hence, this cannot be overlooked. To prevent serious problems, appropriate training is important. UAF’s Office of Research Integrity (http://www.uaf.edu/ori/) offers on-line training in several important areas, as well as seminars and workshops. Environmental Health and Safety and Risk Management (http://www.uaf.edu/safety/) offers some training for regulatory compliance. However, if your student needs specialized training for compliance, it may be necessary for you to seek and pay for (through your grant or contract) training outside UAF.
Other problems:

You think your student should not or cannot finish his or her graduate degree. First, think about this evaluation carefully. What is it based on? Good reasons for concern include consistently marginal performance, i.e., a GPA close to the minimum 3.0 in graduate course work, a barely passable performance (especially if only passed on the second or third try) on comprehensive exams, or little progress on research. However, sometimes the issue is less clear-cut. For example, a very shy student may not respond well to questions face-to-face, and so could appear to lack ability. However, if his or her written work is satisfactory, the shyness (although clearly a difficulty) might be partly overcome in time.

Also, check your perception with other faculty (committee members, instructors of courses) and the department chair. Do they share your views of this student? Counsel the student about his or her prospects. Try to draw the student out and let him or her do much of the talking. Is continuing this graduate program really the student’s best option? Voluntary withdrawal is much less traumatic than dismissal, and even if the student might complete the program, there is little to be gained from the effort to earn a degree in a field that the student finds very difficult or uninteresting.

Resignations from thesis committees are strongly discouraged as an alternative to dismissals, and must not occur without consultation with the department chair, dean of the school or college, and dean of the Graduate School. All committee changes require the signatures of these individuals.

You feel threatened by your student (or the student is threatening others): This situation is fortunately very rare. However, if you have good reason to believe that a student might harm you or others (e.g., verbal or e-mailed threats; damage to property, especially if meant to intimidate; or physical assault, even if minor), the matter should be reported to the UAF police department, to Don Foley (Dean of Student Affairs/Judicial Services, don.foley@uaf.edu, X7317), and to your dean.

Your student has violated the student code of conduct. A complete statement of the Code of Conduct is printed in the UAF Catalog. An excerpt is given below:

The university may initiate disciplinary action and impose disciplinary sanctions against any student or student organization found responsible for committing, attempting to commit or intentionally assisting in the commission of any of the following prohibited forms of conduct:

- cheating, plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty
- forgery, falsification, alteration or misuse of documents, funds or property
- damage or destruction of property
- theft of property or services
- harassment
- endangerment, assault or infliction of physical harm
- disruptive or obstructive actions
- misuse of firearms, explosives, weapons, dangerous devices or dangerous chemicals
- failure to comply with university directives
- misuse of alcohol or other intoxicants or drugs
- violation of published university policies, regulations, rules or procedures
- any other actions that result in unreasonable interference with the learning environment or the rights of others.

This list is not intended to define prohibited conduct in exhaustive terms, but rather offers examples as guidelines for acceptable and unacceptable behavior.
Illegal student behavior should be reported to the UAF police department. Illegal and other prohibited behavior should be reported to Don Foley (Dean of Students, djfoley@alaska.edu, x7317) and to your dean and the dean of the Graduate School. Serious violations of the student code of conduct can be grounds for dismissal.

**Dismissals: Due Process and Fair Warning:**

“Due Process” means that the same, well-defined process carries out dismissals for every student, with adequate levels of review. At UAF dismissal of graduate students is recommended by the advisory committee, and then must be approved by the department chair, dean of the school or college, and dean of the Graduate School. Note that final dismissal letters are only sent by the dean of the school or college of the student. “Fair Warning” means adequate notice to the student that dismissal is a probable or certain consequence of his or her performance or actions. This notice can simply be catalog policies, when the grounds for dismissal (like low GPA) are very clear-cut. In the case of dismissal for inadequate progress, the student must receive a written warning of pending dismissal at least one semester before the dismissal occurs and be given a reasonable opportunity to demonstrate adequate progress. Again, it is imperative that a “Report of Graduate Advisory Committee” be filed with the Graduate School and it should reflect the pending dismissal. The following are examples of grounds for dismissal:

- **Academic grounds:** These include low GPA (well below 3.0 at any stage, or below 3.0 after the completion of the equivalent of 2 full years of graduate study) or repeatedly failed comprehensive or qualifying exams or a failed thesis or project defense.

- **Academic misconduct:** Substantial evidence of misconduct must exist. The student may be entitled to a hearing. Contact the Graduate School for advice if academic misconduct is suspected.

- **Research misconduct:** Contact John Blake, Associate Vice Chancellor for Research, Office of Research Integrity, for advice and procedures, especially if the misconduct involves funded research.

- **Lack of progress:** Normally (but not always) dismissal is undertaken only after the time limit for a degree program has passed. The committee must document the lack of progress with “conditional” or “unsatisfactory” Reports of Graduate Advisory Committee (may be filed much more often than annually) over a period of at least a year. An explicit dismissal warning must be issued, in writing, at least one semester before the dismissal can occur.

- **Other serious misconduct:** Rarely, a student is barred from campus, either temporarily or permanently. Usually this occurs only if the student’s behavior makes them a serious threat to the safety of others. Obviously a student who cannot enter the campus cannot complete their degree.

**Discontinuing research or teaching assistantships:**

Student expectations and normal practices for award and continuation of research and teaching assistantships vary among departments. In some of UAF’s graduate programs, nearly all full-time graduate students receive a research or teaching assistantship, at least for the first year or two of their graduate program. In others very few of the graduate students have assistantships. The availability varies with the amount of research funding in particular fields of study, the size of undergraduate programs, and whether the graduate student population tends to be predominantly full-time (as in the sciences) or part-time (as in education and business). Become familiar with your department’s (or research institute’s) policies and practices in regard to assistantships.
If a prospective student is offered financial support, it is very important to include a clear explanation of the duration of the support in the offer. Is the research grant that funds a research assistantship (RA) continuing for one or two or three years? Do departmental policies limit the duration of teaching assistantships (TAs)? If a student’s initial TA or RA ends, are there prospects for other funding? Do some students need to fund part of their education out-of-pocket? Many faculty members go to substantial lengths to obtain funding for all of their students for the full duration of their programs, but even so, their efforts are not always successful, and students need to be aware of the uncertainties from the outset. If a department or PI is very clear about the duration of offered support from the outset, then no special steps need to be taken when support ends.

Occasionally it is necessary to terminate an assistantship before the end of the contract period, or before the end of an agreed-upon term of support. TA or RA contracts are normally for one semester, two semesters, or a full fiscal year. It’s uncommon to terminate support in the middle of a contract period, but this can occur for cause. In addition to the circumstances that warrant dismissal of the student, grounds for termination also include failure to carry out the duties specified in the contract letter satisfactorily. Examples include repeated, unexcused absences during assigned working hours or classes or poor performance. The supervising faculty member should keep timely records of absences, student complaints (in the case of TAs), botched laboratory work, or other problems. A written warning, coupled with a verbal warning and advice on how to improve performance, should be given.

All departments that employ TAs are encouraged to give each of them a systematic, written evaluation each semester. The advisory committee normally evaluates RA performance annually, if the RA is related to the student’s thesis research.

At the end of a contract, the supervising faculty member may decide that the student’s performance does not warrant continuing the assistantship. Again, this should be based on documented, poor performance, and the student should have received a written warning well in advance of the termination of support.

Of course there are a few circumstances in which immediate (or very early) termination is necessary. One example that comes up occasionally is that a new TA can’t communicate in English and so is unable to do their assigned teaching. Departments need to be very careful to ensure that TAs have good English skills, e.g., via telephone interviews prior to acceptance. Many international students do not have the financial resources to remain in the US if they lose their assistantship; therefore, it’s important to discuss termination of assistantships with the International Student Advisor. If available, the degree program should try to shift the student to RA support, provided the student’s English skills are sufficient for that type of position.

A rare situation that can call for immediate termination is when a student engages in criminal behavior (either at the University or elsewhere) that raises concerns about their carrying out the duties of the assistantship. UAF does not have a policy that automatically terminates assistantships of students with criminal convictions, but in certain cases (e.g., a TA who is a convicted sexual predator) termination is the only prudent course. There are also circumstances when termination may be appropriate when a student is arrested for an offense, but not yet convicted. An example would be an RA in Chemistry who is arrested for manufacturing illegal drugs and who was in possession of chemicals stolen from the laboratory where he works at UAF. Since the best course of action is seldom clear, faculty who face this situation with an RA or TA should contact the Graduate School, University Counsel, and the school or college dean for directions.