

# Graduate Program Director | Role and Responsibilities Guidelines

This document serves as an optional framework to guide colleges/departments in defining the role of Graduate Program Directors. It is intended to provide a foundation for developing a customized position description tailored to the specific needs of each unit.

---

## Overview

The following outlines the general responsibilities, qualifications, and terms of service for Graduate Program Directors. Departments are encouraged to adapt this framework to meet their unique needs. Any modifications—such as additions, omissions, or amendments—should be documented in the Graduate Program Director’s plan of work.

Graduate Program Directors are expected to be available during the summer semester to perform limited duties. Compensation and course release approvals are determined by the Department Chair in consultation with the Dean and may be influenced by enrollment levels and program needs.

---

## Recommended Qualifications

- Full-time Tenured faculty, Senior or Principal Lecturer faculty member
  - 5–7 years of teaching experience
  - Curriculum development/management experience
  - Strong organizational, communication, and interpersonal skills
  - Commitment to the quality/integrity of graduate education
  - Commitment to student success
- 

## Appointment Process

- Any full-time faculty member within the department may self-nominate or be nominated
- Ideally, the Graduate Program Director is selected by consensus among faculty in the primary discipline

- If a consensus cannot be reached, the Department Chair recommends a candidate
  - If no faculty member is willing to serve, the Department Chair, in consultation with the Dean, appoints a suitable candidate
  - The Department Chair submits the final recommendation to the College Dean for approval
  - Once the new Graduate Program Director is confirmed, the Graduate School and Graduate Enrollment must be notified of the change
- 

## **Duties and Responsibilities**

### **Leadership**

- Participate in departmental leadership meetings and raise relevant topics
- Serve as a liaison between the department, college, Graduate School, Graduate Enrollment, and external stakeholders
- Attend regular Graduate Program Director meetings (or designate a representative)
- Track and use data (enrollment, retention, and graduation) to inform program improvement
- Organize and lead program meetings and faculty discussions on curriculum development
- Update program curricular tables
- Collaborate with Department Chair on graduate course scheduling
- Support development and submission of new courses
- Help to identify adjunct faculty for curricular needs or faculty leave coverage
- Ensure teaching spaces are equipped to support curriculum delivery
- Coordinate with other departments on interdisciplinary programs, CABM programs, shared courses, or joint research initiatives
- Complete annual progress reports for student learning outcomes and participate in assessment processes
- Coordinate with career services and co-op advisors
- Mentor faculty in curriculum and teaching
- Foster a collegial and inclusive academic environment

***Recruitment & Admissions***

- Collaborate with the Office of Graduate Enrollment on recruitment, admission, and yield of new students through an active and strategic partnership with the admissions counselor assigned to your program
- Meet with prospective and admitted students, virtually and in person
- Participate in recruitment events (e.g. Graduate Open Houses, webinars, etc.)
- Engage in alumni events and receptions
- Contribute program-specific content and messaging for the program website, social media content, and Graduate Enrollment email flows
- Develop and review recruitment plans with the Department Chair
- Review application materials and collaborate with faculty on admissions decisions promptly (within 2 weeks)
- Oversee financial awards (scholarships, stipends, assistantships) in consultation with the Department Chair, program faculty, and OFAS

***New Student Communications & Program Orientation***

- Manage communications with accepted students
- Oversee course registration for incoming students
- Collaborate with the Graduate School on orientation activities
- Provide a program overview during orientation. Topics may include:
  - Key faculty and department contacts
  - Overview of the curriculum and program expectations.
  - Milestones (e.g., thesis, dissertation, qualifying exam, etc.)
  - Overview of facilities, labs, and resources
  - Academic integrity (e.g., plagiarism, citations, and ethics)
  - Library, ITS, and software resources
  - Research ethics, authorship guidelines, privacy, and intellectual property policies
- Conduct mid-semester check-ins with new students

***Advisement/Program Administration***

- Collaborate with program faculty and advisors to support and mentor graduate students

- Provide program and curriculum information to advisors and students in Combined Accelerated Bachelor's/Masters (CABM) pathways
  - Advise students on career paths and research topics, and course selections
  - Refer students to appropriate university resources
  - Work with student services to determine transfer credits and full-time equivalency
  - Oversee the review and approval of graduate proposals, thesis projects and papers and ensure that faculty and students are aware of thesis/dissertation guidelines (<https://infoguides.rit.edu/thesis-services/guidelines>)
  - Advise students on co-op and internship opportunities
  - Coordinate and award new scholarships or scholarship increases to enrolled students (endowed or named funds) processed by OFAS
  - Manage extension requests for the 7-year graduation rule ([D12.0 Graduation Requirements | University Policies | RIT](#))
  - Manage degree certification and academic action process
  - Make continuance decisions in department reviews of CABM Master's early accept students and enrolled student pathway applications
- 

## Terms of Service

- Graduate Program Directors typically serve a three-year term, renewable with consensus from faculty, the Department Chair, and the Dean
- A Graduate Program Director may be removed for cause by a majority faculty vote, followed by a discussion with the Department Chair regarding next steps
- A succession plan should be developed to ensure:
  - Smooth transition between program directors
  - Faculty awareness of potential service expectations
  - Department readiness to fill the position as needed
- Notify the Graduate School and Graduate Enrollment of any changes

For questions or further guidance, please contact the Graduate School, [gradstudies@rit.edu](mailto:gradstudies@rit.edu) or your designated program admissions counselor in Graduate Enrollment.