STAYING ON COURSE:
**Mutual Roles and Responsibilities in the Graduate School Experience**

vital information for your first year and beyond . . .

Council of Graduate Students

Fall Semester, 2008

This and other COGS booklets are available as PDF files which can be downloaded from the COGS website: www.cogs.umn.edu

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Contents

Acknowledgments

Introduction

Part I: Navigating Your First Year
Get Your Bearings ................................ ................................ ................................ ............................. 3
  Navigating the University of Minnesota.........................................................................................3
  Navigating Your Academic Program ............................................................................................4
  Choose an Adviser ........................................................................................................................................5
  Build a Durable Support Network .....................................................................................................10
  Plan Your Future Career ....................................................................................................................11
  Solve Problems ...................................................................................................................................12
  Engineering is From Mars; Cultural Studies is From . . Another Place ..............................................13
  First-Year Checklist ............................................................................................................................17

Part II: Staying On Course
For Graduate Students: How To Help Yourself Be Proactive .........................................................19
  Get More From Your Adviser ..............................................................................................................19
  Get the Most out of Meetings with Your Adviser ...............................................................................22
  Handle Problems with Your Adviser or Other Faculty Members .....................................................23
    Principle 5: RESPECTFUL EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS ..................................................................24
  The Food Chain ...................................................................................................................................24
  Get More From Your Department .......................................................................................................25
  Forms, Forms, Forms ..........................................................................................................................26
  Taking Classes: You’re Not in College Any More .............................................................................27
  Establish Your Expertise ......................................................................................................................27
  Choose Your Doctoral Committee .....................................................................................................28
  Preliminary Exams ..............................................................................................................................29
  The Thesis Prospectus ..........................................................................................................................30
  Join the Profession ..............................................................................................................................31
  Professional Experiences Outside of the University ..........................................................................31
  Present Your Research .........................................................................................................................32
  The Mid-(Graduate)-Career Blues ......................................................................................................36
  The Second Degree/Third Degree ....................................................................................................38
    Mastering the Master’s .......................................................................................................................38
    The Daunting Dissertation .................................................................................................................39
    The Last Word: Your Oral Defense .................................................................................................40
  Finish Before You Leave ..................................................................................................................41
  Prepare for the Career Transition ....................................................................................................41
Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of a number of people who helped in the compilation, review, and production of this resource booklet: Associate Vice President for Public Engagement Vic Bloomfield; Director – Postdoctoral Affairs, Esam El-Fakahany; Associate Dean George Green; Director of Graduate Student Services, Karen Starry; Preparing Future Faculty Program Director, Ilene D. Alexander; Christopher Cramer, DGS, Chemistry; Susan Page, Assistant DGS, Chemistry; Naomi Scheman, DGS, Philosophy; and the University of Minnesota Campus Life Initiative in Partnership with Coca-Cola.

We express our appreciation for the feedback we received from graduate students and faculty who participated in our workshops, and for the information and understandings that have come to us through our interaction with graduate students who sought assistance and referrals through COGS.

We acknowledge the debt we owe to all those upon whose hard work, dedication, and persistence we continue to build: the U of M Coalition of Women Graduate Students, the U of M Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) Student Group, the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students (NAGPS) Employment Concerns Committee and its Subcommittee on Faculty-Student Relations, and previous members of the COGS ad hoc Committee on Professional Development.

Responsibility for all content and any errors in fact remains with the Council of Graduate Students. Please contact COGS with any corrections.

Thank you to all of the COGS representatives, senators, policy and review council chairs and members, and all of the graduate students who graciously donate their time and energy to ensure a positive and proactive graduate school experience.
Introduction

This booklet is the sixth in a series produced by the Council of Graduate Students (COGS). The first section, *Navigating Your First Year*, was written for new graduate students as an introduction and guide to their progress, from the initial decision to enter graduate school (arriving on campus, finding an adviser, learning the department’s culture, etc.) to getting the program underway, all the while avoiding many traps along the way.

The second section, *Staying on Course*, looks beyond the first year of graduate school to thinking through the thesis, developing as a professional, and finding a job. *Lighthouse Beacon* directly addresses faculty members as official and unofficial advisers and advocates for their colleagues-to-be. This is an attempt to bring the two perspectives together to promote mutual understanding of one another’s challenges, expectations, and constraints.

Sprinkled throughout the text are short case vignettes provided by graduate students and the problematic situations they experienced in graduate school. We have left out the endings so that you can speculate on what happened and fill in the blanks yourself. These cases are meant to stimulate thinking, discussion, and communication. Use them as teaching resources in your departments; ponder them with other students and faculty members. None of them has a right or wrong answer, but the variety of perspectives evoked by each situation will bring a lot of issues to the table, and stimulate further interaction. The model developed for conflict resolution by Michigan State University works well with these cases, which could be disputes in the making if they are not addressed quickly. Dr. Karen Klomparens, Dean of the Graduate School at Michigan State U, has presented her school’s conflict resolution model at workshops at the U of M. Briefly, the method goes like this: look at a situation, identify the parties at interest, list their interests, and find the commonalities. Those are your talking points, your pathway to better mutual understanding. Go from there. The cases in this booklet lend themselves to involvement by faculty members and grad students together. The two groups may bring very different perspectives to the discussion, and that’s what is needed: better communication between students and faculty members/advisers.

As you read or otherwise use the material in this booklet, we’d appreciate hearing any comments, questions, or feedback you might have. We hope to revise and refine these materials each year, based on your comments. Just contact the COGS office: cogs@umn.edu. Copies of this and other COGS publications are available as downloadable PDF files on the COGS Web site, http://www.cogs.umn.edu.
Part I: Navigating Your First Year

Get Your Bearings

Starting a graduate program can be an intimidating experience as well as an exciting adventure. To help you start out on the right foot, here are some tips to guide your way around the university as well as your department.

Navigating the University of Minnesota

Finding your way around the university can sometimes appear to be a mammoth and intimidating task. Following are some pointers to help you in the process.

Familiarize yourself with the following:

- The University’s central website, Onestop (http://onestop.umn.edu)
- Boynton Health Service, 410 Church St S.E. If you have not already done so, you will need to go there and fill out your immunization record before you will be able to register for classes (http://www.bhs.umn.edu).
- Parking and Transportation Services, located on Washington Ave., can give you information on where to park when you come to campus and help you access information about driving, biking, walking or carpooling to the university (http://www.umn.edu/pts/parking.htm). They are also in charge of the U-Pass, which is available to students for purchase each semester and allows its holder to ride any Twin Cities bus or light rail at any time. For city bus and light rail schedules, see (http://www.metrotransit.org).
- Coffman Memorial Union and St. Paul Student Center. Food, post office, maps, newspapers and bus schedules are available (http://www.coffman.umn.edu & http://www.spsc.umn.edu/).
- Campus libraries (http://www.lib.umn.edu) and student bookstores (http://www.bookstore.umn.edu).
- The Graduate Student Services Office, located in 316 Johnston Hall, is where you need to go to obtain and file required forms over the course of your graduate career. Many of these can also be downloaded (http://www.grad.umn.edu/Current_Students). Most departments also can supply copies of the forms. Always make sure that you ask about the various rules and regulations as they pertain to either the Graduate School or your department. Also remember that the Graduate School has administrators and staff who are willing and able to help you solve problems, ranging from conflicts with your adviser and issues with your department to seemingly intractable administrative nightmares.
- Your Council of Graduate Students (COGS) department representative or the COGS office also can give you advice on how to seek appropriate solutions to problems. COGS is the graduate student governance body here at the University of Minnesota. Every graduate program is entitled to elect a COGS representative and alternate. You can talk to your rep about issues that you would like COGS to address. The COGS office also can refer you to sources of help if you’re having a problem and don’t know where to turn, or are looking for information about some aspect of graduate school or the University that you can’t find. If your program does not have a COGS rep, consider volunteering for the position. COGS or your Director of Graduate Studies can give you more information. The COGS office is located at 405 Johnston Hall. Phone: 612-626-1612;

3
Navigating Your Academic Program

Even though you are technically enrolled in the Graduate School, and subject to its policies and requirements, you are bound primarily by the rules and regulations of your own academic program.

Learn what those are. Sometimes they are not very explicit, so deciphering them can be an interesting adventure. But it is important to familiarize yourself with those because they are going to have a strong bearing on the quality of your graduate experience. Each graduate program is required to have a graduate student handbook that spells out its own policies and procedures including, for example, grounds for discontinuation of a student. Ask your Director of Graduate Study (DGS) or your program’s staff person for a handbook.

Some helpful tips:

- **Attend your departmental orientation.** If your department does not have an orientation, as soon as you arrive on campus you should meet with your adviser and the Director of Graduate Studies, and get to know the Department secretary or your graduate program secretary as well as the supervisor of your assistantship (if there is one). These individuals will help you find the things that you need to take care of to successfully begin your first semester.

- **Get to know the following persons:**
  - *Your academic adviser.* Your admission letter might inform you who that is. Since it is important to get to know them, try to contact them as soon as you can. They should be one of your mentors here at the University, especially the first year of your experience. They will assist you in becoming familiar with the department, introducing you to other faculty members and students, designing your program, the initial selection of your classes, assigning you space in the department, giving you information about financial assistance, etc. It is very important to communicate with this person and clarify what both of your expectations are so that there are no surprises down the line. If your adviser is not one of those who are very...
knowledgeable about how to navigate the university, there always are other people who can help you, such as other faculty members and your Director of Graduate Studies.

- **Your program’s Director of Graduate Studies (DGS).** In some graduate programs the DGS plays a bigger role than in others. Find out what role the DGS plays in yours. The graduate staff person and other graduate students are great resources to find out whether you need to solicit contact with the DGS and what the nature of interaction should be.

- **The graduate staff person (assistant to the DGS).** This person often is the most knowledgeable person in the department and can help you with all sorts of formalities, including what to do, where to go, who to see, what forms to fill out, and where to turn them in. They are also is very knowledgeable about those unwritten departmental rules, so it is a good idea to get well acquainted and check in often.

- **Fellow graduate students** are crucial source of information, especially those who are a bit senior to you. Get to know them and talk to them. Do not feel intimidated by them just because of their seniority in the program; they were in your shoes at one time and are usually quite willing to help. One of the ways to get to know senior graduate students is by asking about what they are doing; most graduate students love to talk about their own research. This is also a good way of getting the inside scoop on what is going on in the department, and things like who you should get to know and for what purposes. Other graduate students also are an excellent source of information regarding which classes to take and who the best instructors are.

- **Other faculty members** can be a great resource. The best way to connect with them is to familiarize yourself with what they are doing. Ask the graduate secretary or your adviser for information about faculty research areas (or check your department’s webpage). Find faculty members with research of interest to you, and get in touch with them. Email is a great way to begin the conversation.

In conclusion, always remember that your graduate experience is not your entire existence; it is only a part of your life. Picture yourself as a driver. You are in the driver’s seat and know where you want to go. You have goals. The university and all its resources are the roads and the maps to help you get where you want to go. Keep in mind that if you and other students were not here, there would not be much reason for the University of Minnesota to exist. So take charge and have a great graduate experience. You have worked hard to earn it and you deserve it.

**Choose an Adviser**

This may be the most important decision you will make as a graduate student. The right adviser will help you in many ways while you are in graduate school and beyond. Presumably, you came to Minnesota because there are faculty members here with whom you would like to work. If not, start looking as soon as possible.

**The best adviser:**
- is actively doing research in an area you are interested in, so that they are well-equipped to help you in your own research endeavors
- holds themselves to a high ethical standard, and is involved in and respected by the research community
- is concerned about your success in graduate school and afterward
- is someone you can get along with.
To identify potential advisers, read summaries of faculty research and attend seminars in your department. If possible, take a class offered by a potential adviser. When you’ve narrowed it down to 2-4 potential advisers, meet with them in person to discuss your plans for research and for your career (see below). Ask them directly if there is room in their advisee or research/lab group for you, and if they have the time to be an effective research supervisor. Meet with their graduate students to find out what they are like to work for and with. If possible, meet with recent graduates, too.

Think about what kind of person you are, and how your personality and work style will mesh with that of potential advisers:

- Do you prefer to work very independently, or do you want more direction?
- What kind of feedback do you work best with: specific or broader?
- Do you prefer to work in a group or on your own? You might consider taking a personality test such as the Myers-Briggs, to gain insights into your personality and work preferences. Also the University Counseling and Consulting Services offers a wide range of counseling tests on a referral basis. (www.uces.umn.edu)

A good adviser will be a mentor as well as a source of expertise for your thesis or dissertation. The best adviser as a matter of course will be thinking about your professional development, helping you to identify funding sources, giving you support and helping you to stay motivated. A good adviser also will lead you to other faculty members, administrators, and other students, who can provide research advice or help you develop and achieve your goals. A good adviser will give you advice on your research and thesis, promote your work, introduce you to the movers and shakers in your field, and help you find a job when you finish. Your adviser should help you set and achieve your short-and long-term goals. Your adviser should listen to you.

Your adviser does not have to be all of these things in order for you to succeed. Use your thesis committee members (usually selected well into your graduate school career) and other faculty members in your program when you need advice or want to chat about career options in your field. People love to talk about themselves and it is good practice to get to know a few of the faculty in your field quite well. You’ll need them for recommendation letters when you start job-searching.

**Research Adviser vs. Academic Adviser**

A good academic adviser is not necessarily a good research adviser. This is not unusual. You should not hesitate to seek advice from other faculty members on any aspect of your graduate education. If you encounter problems because you sought the advice of someone other than your adviser, speak with your Director of Graduate Studies or department head. Although choosing your adviser is important, you can opt to switch if you find a more suitable faculty member later. If you were assigned one or more advisers when you started your program, you’ll very likely want to choose an adviser with an active interest in the research you plan to do. If you find that you made a bad choice, you might want to consider changing advisers. If your adviser does not have the expertise to guide your research, has a personality clash with you, is not accessible or is very negative, or harasses you, you should seriously consider changing advisers. (Report any harassment immediately! See the appendix on harassment policies.) You also might change advisers if there is a new faculty member in your program who shares your research interests. Especially for lab scientists, this is easiest to do if you figure it out early on in your graduate career. It is hard to make up lost time at the bench, and it can sometimes be difficult to use the research already completed for your thesis if you change groups. However, you shouldn’t be miserable, and a poor advising relationship can be equally if not more costly than changing advisers. Weigh these considerations and speak to other faculty members and students before making a decision. You should also speak with your DGS, current adviser and potential adviser about your decision and how to make the switch. It’s usually better to change and get the most out of the advising relationship that you can.
Your adviser should not be your best friend or your parent. Your adviser should respect you and recognize professional boundaries. Your adviser should not tell you how to run your life, or what to do in your free time. Ideally, your relationship should evolve from adviser and advisee to colleagues.

**Senior Graduate Students**

One of your most valuable resources for most everything will be senior graduate students. They can tell you about the customs, culture and politics of your department, as well as which faculty members are good advisers. Use them to your advantage. But don’t just rely on one senior student for everything; build a network of peer advisers that you can use for advice and support. This is especially important if your undergraduate work was at a small liberal arts college, because most likely your graduate adviser won’t be much like your undergraduate advisers.

**Assistant Professors**

Working for an assistant professor has many rewards, and can be a major risk. Assistant professors typically are very enthusiastic about their work, eager to do high-quality research, publish in good journals, and go to many conferences to promote their (and hopefully your!) work. In the lab sciences, assistant professors are still at the bench, so you have the opportunity to be trained by an excellent and established researcher, rather than by a post-doc or senior graduate student. The major risk is that the adviser may be denied tenure, at which point they usually can choose to stay for one more full year, during which time you either have to find another adviser or graduate fast! Another caution is that they are learning the ropes along with you, and they are probably still trying to figure out how best to deal with graduate students. They also might be overwhelmed by the pressures of being new and on the tenure clock, and not able to give you the attention you might want or need. They might not have realistic expectations of you, since they haven’t yet seen a range of students and this is probably their first-ever managerial experience. Some assistant professors may become less interested in helping you with your research or seeing you graduate in a timely manner once they earn tenure. If you’re in a lab science, you may be able to influence the direction of the research more in a brand new group, but you will lack senior graduate students in your group to learn from. Having an extended network of faculty members and students is a good way to protect you from these problems. It may be more appropriate in some cases to collaborate with an assistant professor on a project-by-project basis rather than committing to a long-term adviser relationship.

Be sure that you make an informed decision! This is very important. Take your time. Use the list of questions below to prompt your own thinking, to ask your potential advisers, and their students:

**Funding**

- Does the adviser have external research funding? How stable is it? Can you expect any support in the form of a Research Assistantship?
- Do this adviser’s students typically work as Teaching Assistants?
- Does the adviser have tenure?
- Do students help write grant proposals? Does the professor sponsor student grant proposals?
- Does the adviser help students identify funding sources, such as fellowships?

**Research**

- What is most important to you: work environment, intellectual interest in the field, or both?
- Will the project be purely experimental, theoretical, or both?
• What projects are available? Can you, or must you, propose your own?
• How much time will be spent working on your own project vs. other project work?
• How involved is the adviser in the research?
• Does/will the adviser promote your work or claim it as their own?
• Do students publish and attend conferences? Typically when in the career? Only at the end? Is this travel funded?
• Are students actively involved in writing manuscripts? Does the adviser give timely feedback?
• Does the adviser have the expertise to help you with your research?
• What facilities and instrumentation are available to you?
• Will you need to travel to do research? Is there funding for this travel?
• How much flexibility is there in switching projects?

Career Issues
• How long does it typically take to get a Master’s under this adviser? A Ph. D?
• What is the attrition rate among this person’s advisees?
• What kind of work can you expect to find if you specialize in this area of research?
• Is this subfield easily adaptable to other subfields?
• Where have the adviser’s previous students gotten jobs?
• Does the adviser work with you toward your career goals?
• What is the adviser’s professional reputation?
• What is the adviser’s reputation within your department (is this someone who can go to bat for you)?
• Where do you want to be in 5 years? In 10 years?
**Interacting with the adviser**

- What is the primary role of the adviser: facilitator, mentor, guide, teacher, supervisor, or friend?
- Do you need direction and motivation or do you prefer to work independently?
- Do you need to feel extremely comfortable talking to your adviser?
- Do you prefer to work in a group or on your own?
- Do you plan to start a family in the next 5 years?
- What are the adviser’s expectations of you?
- How many hours are you expected to work per week? How flexible will your schedule be? Are the expectations made clear? Are allowances made for coursework or extracurricular activities?
- Will you be permitted or even encouraged to take vacation? How much?
- Are you required to meet specific deadlines?
- How often will you meet with your adviser? Group meetings? Individual meetings only? By appointment only?
- Does the adviser back up their students when they run into problems with departmental politics?
- Does the adviser have favorites in the group?
- Do you get along with the adviser?
- What duties will you have other than your thesis? Group jobs? Literature reviews? Attending meetings with other groups or collaborators? Supervising undergraduates? How are these duties determined?
- Does the group collaborate with other groups?
- Will you have a co-adviser?
- Are Master’s and Ph. D. students treated differently?
- Are students treated differently because of their career preferences (i.e. academic vs. non-academic)?
- Does the adviser treat male and female students with the same respect?
- Are there courses the adviser would require you to take (or audit)?
- Is the adviser close to retirement?

**Interacting with the other students (especially in laboratory research groups)**

- What is the role of the graduate students in relation to technicians, post-docs, other graduate students, undergraduates?
- What is the size of the group?
• Do you get along with the group?
• Does the group meet regularly?
• Are the other graduate students competitive or cooperative?

**Build a Durable Support Network**

You should actively seek and build a support network as you begin your graduate study. Your support network can and should include several sources. Try to develop support from all of the possible sources mentioned below.

**Adviser**
This individual should provide you with support and advice in the academic planning of your course curriculum and your research proposals. Graduate students sometimes are blessed with advisers who can provide support in other areas of their student lives, but don’t necessarily expect this. You should be prepared to clearly identify and express your goals, preferences, and expectations for your academic experience even if you are not sure that they are realistic. Having done so, you should expect from your adviser constructive and respectful insights, recommendations, and criticisms. If you get this kind of interaction you will be doing well. In some instances an adviser may be assigned to you. If your assigned adviser does not provide you with the direction you need or expect you should try to make that known and prepare to look for another.

**Other Faculty Members**
Do not feel that your official adviser is the only available and allowable source of advice and direction. It is advisable to develop relationships with other faculty members as well. Try to identify at least one other faculty member with whom you feel comfortable developing a less formal advisery relationship. Faculty members who are new and have just completed their graduate and/or post-doctoral training are good candidates for this role, as they often still retain fresh memories of their own needs as recent graduate students. They often can be sounding boards for questions, concerns or proposals before you present them more formally to your adviser.

**Other Students**
Try to identify a couple of peers and/or more advanced students with whom to develop a supportive relationship. It is comforting to know that your frustrations and fears often are shared by others. A more advanced or even a peer student can help you to achieve proper perspective on many matters in academic life. This should not be a competitive relationship but one that provides realistic support and insights.

**Non-academic Resources**
Often times there are individuals who perform administrative or otherwise non-academic functions within the department and with whom a friendly relationship can be of value. Administrative secretaries, business managers, etc. often provide a unique perspective into the people and culture of the department. These relationships can help you navigate the department’s landscape and governance.

**Outside Sources**
Previous faculty advisers from other institutions you have attended can help in the transition to establishing yourself in your new department. Keep in touch. Someone who works in the private sector in a related field also may provide perspectives and measures with which to analyze difficulties one may encounter. These may be former graduate students in your field who joined the private sector, or members of your discipline’s professional society who have entered non-traditional academic pathways.
Plan Your Future Career

The academic job market is tight, so start planning and setting goals (preferably even before beginning grad school) so that you can be marketable as soon as possible upon graduation. Use your college’s career service office to learn of job opportunities in your field.

But first, you must think about the type of job that is right for you. What type of working environment do you prefer? What job best suits your skills? The biggest decision is to determine if you would like an academic job or a non-academic job.

Academic Jobs
To help you determine what skills are desirable for academic jobs, take the following steps:

- Interview recent successful graduates to ask how they prepared; interview faculty who have positions you desire, check faculty job listings to see what they are requesting of applicants.
- Get involved with your department’s search committees for new faculty members. You certainly can attend job talks to get an idea of what kind of candidates get interviews.
- Check into the Preparing Future Faculty Program (PFF) sponsored by the Graduate School and the Center for Teaching and Learning Services (http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/pff/). PFF offers two courses - one focused on developing strategies and practice for teaching in higher education, one focused on shaping an academic career and initial job search; students also work with a faculty mentor from one of 25 partner institutions. Alums of PFF recommend taking the first course during year 2 or 3, and the second course just after completing exams.

Non-Academic Jobs

- Have informational interviews at companies you would like to work; talk to employees to see how they obtained their jobs; check job listings to determine what qualifications are desirable.
- Check with the University of Minnesota Alumni Association (UMAA) to see what types of jobs previous graduates have obtained. Get involved as a student member, to meet alumni.
- Think about getting an internship to gain applicable skills. An internship will also give you a better idea of what type of non-academic position you would like.
- If you are still at a loss, utilize the resources/workshops that are offered by the University Counseling and Consulting Services (http://www.ucs.umn.edu) that are designed to help you determine what type of job you would be happiest with.

Once you have decided on a career path, devise a plan with your adviser to achieve the goal of getting that job. This plan should include:

1. Sit down with your faculty adviser and map out a plan for you to achieve your long-term goals. Determine what you will need to accomplish in order to be marketable (e.g. the number of publications, skills, committee work experiences, etc.).
2. Set goals for each of your programs (e.g. “In my third year, I will finish my prelims and have one submitted manuscript.”).
3. Periodically check your plan to determine if your goals are being met. You can always adjust your plan if your goals change as you learn more about your field. Have a plan, though, or you’ll waste precious time.
Solve Problems

Graduate school can be a very intense time of life, in part because one of the goals of the experience is to become completely immersed in a field of study. This can be one of the most enjoyable things about graduate school, but it also can lead to problems. Below we address some of the more common problems graduate students face.

Staying Motivated
Especially during the middle part of graduate school, but at other times as well, staying motivated is a major challenge. This is a particular problem if your research isn’t working the way it should, or if you aren’t progressing as fast as you feel you ought. Use your network of your adviser, other faculty members and senior students to help you sort out these problems and get back on track. If that’s not enough, go to the U Counseling and Consulting Service (www.ucs.umn.edu). Try to identify the causes of your motivational slumps: are you simply frustrated with your project, having a conflict with your adviser, or feeling ambivalent about your future? Once you identify these problems, then you can begin to work past them. Goal setting is a major facet of staying motivated. It’s difficult to work hard on something if you have no sense of what you’re striving for. You might be feeling frustrated because of all of the new demands on your time, as teacher, researcher, student, partner, parent, etc. Learning how to balance these roles is part of what being a graduate student is about. However, the expectations on you should not be so unrealistic that you have no time for yourself. Learn how to prioritize. See the resource list for places you can go for help.

Self-Doubt, The Imposter Syndrome
Many graduate students, especially women, suffer from a lack of confidence and/or from low self-esteem. They sometimes feel like it’s only a matter of time before their adviser and everyone else finds out how dumb they really are, and that they got into graduate school by mistake. This is normal, especially when you look around at all of the other very intelligent, highly motivated graduate students in your program. If you are surrounded by highly competitive students, find a supportive group of people to interact with for some balance. This could be a social group, art or music group, an issues group, such as Women in Science and Engineering or MPIRG, or student governance, such as COGS or GAPSA. If these feelings become overwhelming, find a supportive counselor. Most importantly, you should recognize that you are not the only one: many other graduate students suffer from the Imposter Syndrome, including some of the ones who appear to have everything figured out.

Maintaining Perspective
You are not your degree; your degree is not you. Success (or failure) in graduate school has little, if anything, to do with your worth as a person. Graduate school is not worth risking your personal relationships or your health. Keeping yourself healthy (physically and emotionally) should be your number-one priority, if that means 30 minutes at the gym every day plus pottery twice a week, so be it. And this goes without saying: get enough sleep whenever possible (every night!). Late nights in the lab or poring over journals don’t leave you in any condition to think constructively about your current projects and your future.

Financial Concerns
Financial stress can be a major hardship for graduate students. If you have an assistantship or fellowship, you won’t be rich, but you’ll survive. If it’s not enough, and even if it is, constantly be on the lookout for new funding sources. Also, financial aid information is in the resource list in this booklet. If you find yourself in dire straits, you can get an emergency loan from the Student Emergency Loan Fund. If you or your household has only one income, you might qualify for Section 8 (subsidized) housing, food stamps, and/or Minnesota Care (state health insurance for the poor and uninsured).

Harassment and Discrimination
You should never have to suffer these. Period. If you have problems with your adviser or another student
or faculty member, talk to your DGS, Department Chair, or other official. The University's Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action office can help (www.EOAffAct.umn.edu), as can the Sexual Violence Program (www.umn.edu/aurora/), the Student Dispute Resolution Center (http://www.sos.umn.edu/), and the Office for Conflict Resolution (http://www1.umn.edu/ocr/), and these conversations can be confidential. Most importantly, don’t stop reporting your story and asking questions until the matter is resolved to your satisfaction.

Benign Neglect
A common problem that graduate students encounter with faculty members is benign neglect, in which the adviser or other faculty member is not actually nasty to the student, but doesn’t actively do anything to help the student, either with thesis research, professional development, or career planning. This can happen with inexperienced advisers, faculty with too many graduate students to supervise, or the hopelessly clueless. You should take the initiative to make sure that you meet regularly with your adviser and discuss issues that are important to you. Most likely, you will have to be assertive about this. It helps to have a physical list of items with you that you would like to discuss when you meet with your adviser. It also is wise to have many mentors in your network so that you can get the help you need and deserve.

If you experience any of the following symptoms, you are likely in need of special assistance, and you should seek help from the resources listed in this book:

- You feel a sense of isolation within your department.
- You cannot identify any individual within your academic or personal life with whom you can share thoughts, ideas, or worries.
- You feel that you do not belong or are not part of the academic community within your department.
- You are consumed by fears of failure.

Engineering is From Mars; Cultural Studies is From. . .Another Place

Let's face it: we’re different from each other, on all sorts of levels. We’re Research Assistants and Teaching Assistants, physical scientists and social scientists, linguists and humanists and physicists; wannabe teachers, researchers, poets. We're young and not-so-young, right out of college or right out of real life, been around the block or just got out the door. Our backgrounds, life experiences, genetic makeup, and courses of study all set us apart. All of these dimensions of difference can be isolating, and some of them can bring other problems. On the other hand, these few years that you spend in the close company of such diversity can enrich your life forever, if you learn from it.

So how can we make difference a positive thing?

Well, despite our differences, there are some universals to post-baccalaureate study. We all interact with faculty advisers. We all dwell in departments and disciplines with particular cultures. And we all have to navigate a similar course of obstacles and milestones. The guidance on these pages addresses some of the universals in post-baccalaureate study. You should adapt it to your own situation. Just keep an eye on what we have in common, so that you can draw on it when you need it.

Let's look at some examples of difference.

Different Funding Status
A Research Assistant in Biophysics and a Teaching Assistant in Linguistics spend their days very differently, but both operate under the same faculty-student power differential. Both are subject to highs and lows over the course of their grad school career, and need a steady support network.
How would each of them use the information in this book differently? The RA might look to her research group as her primary source of support. It’s a ready-made circle of people that she interacts with daily, and they share a common work agenda. The TA might be more isolated than that, teaching his sections solo and then going back to an office of peers who do other things. The RA probably is more tightly tethered to her department than the TA. The TA’s social network is likely to be aligned more with his research interests than with his assistantship work. Don’t insist that your support groups be drawn from here or there. They can come from anywhere.

**Funded, or Not?**
While some departments admit only as many grad students as they can support with assistantships or fellowships, in others it’s a mix. Often, students with funding tend to form the core group at the center; they’re around all of the time because of their work, so they appear to have greater cohesion and get more attention from the faculty.

If you have to disappear every afternoon to go to an off-campus job, you may find it especially hard to feel connected with the action in your department. What can you do to keep yourself in the mix, so that you get the same benefits of interaction and professional development as the funded folks? As your schedule permits, join (or start!) an intramural sports team or an ad hoc committee. Seek out grad students with funding and ask them about their RA or TA work. Ask your adviser, the department chair, or other grads to fill you in on what’s going on, and to notify you of talks, seminars, or other events that bring grads together. Form a study group with people in a seminar. Get an office or a desk on campus.

**Master’s, Ph. D.**
Most departments have a mix of students working toward Master’s and Ph. D. degrees. Many departments have an explicit mission to produce the next generation of professors in their discipline, so their priority is given to Ph. D. students headed for academic careers. Sometimes, there’s an attitude present that looks upon Master’s and Ph.D. students not going into academia as second-class citizens. This can be tough to deal with, but here are tips for keeping your chin up under those circumstances:

1) You have a right to be there, just as much as anyone else.

2) Someone in your department believes there’s a need in the world for people with Master’s degrees in your discipline, or you wouldn’t have been admitted; find those people.

3) Take your work and your career goals seriously -- just as seriously as you see the Ph. D. candidates taking theirs. Treat your stint in grad school as more than just a continuation of college, even if most of your time is devoted to taking more classes. The faculty members who have this class bias generally respond well to anyone who is intellectually engaged in their work. You’ll probably be wiser not to state your career goals as making a lot of money or getting a 9-5 job. Figure out how to articulate the reasons that you think your professional path is worthwhile, and articulate them, early and often.

**Culture**
Cultural differences can manifest themselves in subtle and unrecognizable ways, and yet they can keep you from thriving in grad school. If your culture dictates extreme deference to status, you might find it hard to become friends with a faculty member. If you grew up in a culture where men and women were kept quite separate, you might not interact comfortably with the opposite sex. There is a certain “when in Rome” attitude necessary to success and yet you are not required to relinquish your cultural heritage just because you enroll in grad school. Be reflective about what role your culture is playing in your day-to-day interaction with faculty members and peers. Informal and social activities with other students are a great time to explore these differences, and decide which of your own cultural traits or those of others might be getting in the way of your personal and academic goals.

**Teacher/ not**
The U of M is a “Research I” university. This is the top rung in the food chain of academic research.
Recently, teaching is valued here more and more, but many factors are at work to place the emphasis while you’re in grad school on your development as a researcher, to the exclusion of everything else. If you are passionate about teaching and want to become as good as you can be at it before you finish, there are resources outside of your department to draw upon (Center for Teaching and Learning Services, (www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/). If you have an assistantship with tuition benefit, plan to take these for-credit courses while you still are taking classes and before you reach the Advanced Master’s or ABD status. (www.grad.umn.edu/current_students/registration/) If you perceive that teaching is undervalued by your adviser or program and you’d like to try to change that, take the same approach as with the Master’s: learn to articulate your values about teaching, and articulate them in the appropriate settings. Then, be sure that your attention to your research program is above reproach. You’ll help those around you value teaching more, but they’re still not likely to approve it as the higher priority. Many of us are aiming at teaching careers at undergraduate institutions where research is secondary. Nevertheless, we are stronger teachers if we have our research credentials as well.

Race and Ethnicity
Academia in general has some distance to go before it reflects the demographics of the country’s population, and only a small proportion of Minnesota’s population is of non-European descent. So, you may find yourself as the only person of color or of a particular ethnicity within your program. For some this is not an issue at all. Others can find it isolating. And, in rare cases, it can cause real problems. The university has very stringent anti-discrimination policies, and is proactive about enforcing them. If you feel that any problem you’re having is related to your race or ethnic status, you should talk to the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action (http://www.eoaffact.umn.edu). There also are many student groups on campus where you can turn for support, even if you’re having no problems at all (http://www.sao.umn.edu). Involvement in these groups can enrich your grad school experience, provide a safety net should you ever run into problems, and give you a whole extra set of friends and activities outside of your department.

Sexual Orientation
Gay, lesbian, transgender and bisexual students are at additional risk for isolation and discrimination, whether they are out or not. There are support resources and advocacy groups to connect with on campus, listed in the resource pages of this booklet, including the GLBT Programs Office, (http://www.umn.edu/glbt).

Region
The U of M attracts many students from the Twin Cities, Greater Minnesota, other regions of the country and the world. Regional cultures differ, and Minnesota is distinct in many ways. Here are some translation tips:

1) You may have heard about ‘Minnesota nice’. Most of it is quite genuine. The ways people may reach out and help you are often baffling to newcomers. If a local invites you to Thanksgiving dinner, don’t look a gift horse in the mouth. They’re probably as eager to have you as they appear. Students who come here from elsewhere are often shocked by the way strangers will look you in the eye as they pass, give you accurate (if complex) directions, and stop to ask if you’re all right if you’re lying on the sidewalk bleeding. There’s a grain of truth in every stereotype.

2) The flip side of the coin is the conflict-averse nature of Minnesota culture. Students from elsewhere can get into trouble by being blunt and direct, which makes Minnesotans shut down or burst into tears. Conversely, these same students often run out of the room screaming because they can’t get their Minnesotan counterparts to say what’s on their minds. We include these tips to support this small truth: faculty advisers may not reveal their true opinion about you, your work, or your prospects for success, because they are conflict-averse. You have a right to know these things; it is part of the professional guidance to which you are entitled. Learn to gently elicit the truth, early and often. Don’t take it personally, but use it to guide your path.

Nationality
International students face special challenges when they study abroad. Minnesota is unusually receptive
to and interested in international students, and the U draws a huge population of grad students from other countries. You probably will be able to find a useful student organization or cultural group of students and émigrés from your country. Seek them out for support while you’re away from home. For bureaucratic problems, there are support services both on campus and in the Twin Cities (International Student and Scholar Services, http://www.isss.umn.edu). One of the main sources of isolation for international students within departments is the language barrier. It often drives them to seek out others from home, which only exacerbates the problem. If your English is not yet fluent, your highest priority should be to improve that. Spend your time with native English speakers; get them as roommates if you can. There are a variety of credit and non-credit ESL classes offered on campus that you can take along with your regular courses (http://www.cce.umn.edu/esl/index.html). Join coffee klatches and conversation groups. Contact the Minnesota International Center for host-family connections (http://www.micglobe.org).

Gender
Gender bias is pervasive throughout academia, period. Depending upon your program and discipline, it will lean one direction or another, but it will be there, in the heads of individuals if not within your department’s culture. This is a good thing to talk about with current students when you visit the department. Gender balance is often, though not always, a predictor of gender bias. If you don’t have that chance, it’s likely that something is written about your discipline in one of its professional journals, or in a higher ed publication. Check it out, especially if you sense some bias coming your way. If you perceive explicit bias that affects your success in school, there are resources on campus to turn to (see resource list). If it’s clear that your adviser responds better to the other gender than to yours, you might want to shop for another adviser. Most gender bias is subtle and subliminal, though, so you should develop some coping skills. Again, if you present yourself as a serious student, you often can preempt much of the problem. Remember, many of our senior faculty members have lived a whole lifetime in which it was acceptable to regard men and women quite differently, and only recently have been chastised for it. Many of them still don’t understand what the problem is. Conversely, you should be vigilant about eliminating favoritism by faculty members toward the opposite gender. On your list of characteristics to look for in an adviser, add gender-indifferent. If you dwell in a department where your gender is the minority, reach outside. There is an Office for University Women, (432 Morrill Hall, http://www1.umn.edu/women/), and many affinity groups for men in female-dominated disciplines. Find them. Use them.

Age
In the grad school setting this is among the last types of difference that are discussed as possible sources of isolation. For older students, it is often a challenge to fit in with younger cohorts. Look for the commonalties, and don’t view much-younger people as though they can’t become friends. It may be a shock at first to come back to school and be surrounded by much younger people. Make that a positive thing. If they don’t share your life experience, they may want to learn from it. If they don’t share your current extracurricular interests, go out for coffee and talk about school. If being far from your college years is making your school work harder, talk about that and ask them for help and support. You are mutual sources of information and support for each other.

Family
If you are balancing family and grad school, you face an extra set of challenges. Many of your peers will be unable to understand why you have to rush home so quickly at the end of the day, or have to miss seminar once in a while to stay home with a sick kid. Others may question your devotion to your degree program. There’s not a great deal you can do about this, but remember that most faculty members have families, and increasing numbers of post-college students do as well. You don’t have to apologize for having a family, or for making your family your priority. On the other hand, you made a choice to take on grad school at the same time, so you do have to keep up. Seek out others who are in the same boat.

Handle Feedback/ Criticism From Your Adviser
First of all, remember that feedback is necessary for growth. How else are you going to improve? Feedback gives you the opportunity to learn from your successes and mistakes. When your adviser offers feedback or criticism, don’t be defensive or take it personally. They are only trying to help you do your best. If the feedback is vague, ask for specific steps you can take to improve your performance. With your adviser, create a blueprint for improving your weak points. Be certain to ask for specific information about
your progress so that you are clear on what needs to change. Here are some sample questions to ask if you would like to initiate a conversation with your adviser regarding your progress:

- Am I making acceptable progress?
- What steps can I take to improve my academic performance/progress? What areas do you see as my strengths?
- Am I achieving the goals that we established in my long-term plan?
- What research skills can I improve?
- What teaching skills can I improve?
- Ask your adviser to work on a specific aspect of your data/experiment/thesis project with you to get direct input.

These are just a few examples of how you can start a conversation about your progress with your adviser. It also may be helpful to ask others you have worked with to provide feedback. For example, ask other faculty members who know your work, such as course instructors, to provide feedback.

What if the feedback is unsolicited and negative? Remember, you can turn negative feedback into a positive exchange by using good communication skills. Your adviser may not be use to giving feedback in a constructive manner, and may not have the supervisory training on how best to give constructive criticism, so this is your opportunity to teach them a thing or two about human relations! Try not to use blaming language or use personal attacks (e.g., Why are you criticizing me so harshly? Instead: I'm feeling confused about your mention of my poor progress, can you be more specific?). Always ask for clarification if you do not understand the criticism. Even using the best communication skills, sometimes it is difficult not to get defensive when we are being criticized. Take a step back from the situation to give yourself time to process the message that was conveyed to you. After you have thought it over, approach your adviser again with specific questions about the feedback.

Another approach is to get additional feedback from others to get another perspective on how to address the issue with your adviser. Ask other graduate students about their experiences with your adviser to see how they handled tough situations.

Yet another option is to consult University Counseling and Consulting (www.ufs.umn.edu) to get advice about handling conflicts with your adviser. Don’t be shy about using this service; that’s why it’s there!

Making use of constructive criticism to improve yourself is the mark of a wise graduate student! Take advantage of any feedback you can get and turn it into something positive, by learning from your weaknesses and honing your strengths.

**First-Year Checklist**

**1st Month:**

- Practicalities: Get U Card, register for classes, access e-mail account (note: You are responsible for information sent to you via your U-assigned email account. You may have several accounts depending on if you are a TA, and other factors; get this clarified.), arrange for transportation and parking, locate bookstore, etc. Most importantly, buy a day planner! You will need it to organize your life.
• Who to meet: Meet with your grad program staff person, DGS, other graduate students in your department, and other students with the same adviser. These individuals can help you determine what you should be doing and how to do it.

• First meeting with your adviser: Discuss course selection, develop goals for the year, and inquire about future funding opportunities, office space, and what software/programs you will need to do your work.

• Health insurance: If you have an assistantship, get this activated right away! It is not automatic. Details about eligibility, dependants, enrollment forms, etc. can be found here: http://www.bhs.umn.edu/insurance/graduate/index.htm.

6th Month:
• Have your long-term plan in place (see Planning Your Future section).

• Apply for next year’s funding (TA/RA, fellowships, etc.). Some fellowship applications are due as early as December!

• Identify possible support network (faculty members, mentors, students, etc.).

• Attend pertinent research labs, conferences, committees, and discussion groups.

• If you are required to do a first-year project, is it under way? What are your other program requirements? Are they being accomplished? If you have a lab rotation, are you making progress?

• Check in with your adviser to determine if your progress is acceptable.

• If your department has a deadline for choosing a thesis adviser, make sure you meet it. Get started early.

1st Year:
• Did you accomplish your goals for your first year? Refer to your long-term plan and revise as necessary.

• Set concrete goals for year two.

• Have you decided on a minor? Or a supporting program? If so, plan your course work wisely. Many graduate students end up taking minor program classes during the time when they should be concentrating on their dissertation.

• Have you established a solid research topic that most interests you? What steps can you take/are you taking to begin your research program?

• Check in with your adviser to determine if your progress is acceptable.

• Identify faculty members that could serve on your committee and begin to interact with them.

• Fill out a degree program form (http://www.grad.umn.edu/current_students/forms/index.html).
Part II: Staying On Course -

For Graduate Students: How to Help Yourself Be Proactive

Although this may seem obvious, it is worth mentioning explicitly: the main responsibility for your success in graduate school lies with you. Remember that this is your graduate program; you will get out of it what you put into it. Your adviser cannot anticipate your every need, nor meet every single one of your expectations. Learn how to take care of yourself. Get to know where to find information and/or help when your adviser is either unavailable or unwilling to assist you. For example, your adviser might not know what classes fulfill your program requirements. Find out for yourself. Be self-sufficient and do not rely on only one person for information. Here is a short list of things that you should take responsibility for yourself:

1. **Find a good adviser.** Is it important that you share research interests with an adviser, or that you have a good personal relationship, or both? Take responsibility for finding the kind of adviser that best suits your needs.

2. **Fill out the right forms.** See the Graduate School Web site for all the forms that you need to complete on the road to getting the Ph. D. and Master’s degrees. ([www.grad.umn.edu](http://www.grad.umn.edu))

3. **Take the right classes.** Ask more senior students for advice, and ask your DGS if the classes you plan to take fulfill program requirements.

4. **Plan your research program.** If your adviser cannot help you design a research program, carefully plan one yourself and get feedback from others.

5. **Generate enthusiasm for your research/research interests.** If your adviser is not thrilled with your research, find a group of students or faculty or a lab group who are! That doesn’t mean you have to change advisers; just find other outlets.

6. **Get funding.** Your adviser should help with this, but be proactive. Ask your department about funding opportunities. Check the Graduate Assistant Employment/Office of Human Resources ([http://www.umn.edu/ohr](http://www.umn.edu/ohr)) for teaching and research assistantships that you may qualify for in other departments. Do it early! Plan ahead! Some are due Fall Semester.

7. **Investigate career options.** Your adviser’s goals or ideals may be different from your own; advisers may assume that you want a career just like theirs. Explore the range of options available to you, both on campus through other faculty members and students and, more broadly, through professional societies and by keeping abreast of marketplace trends.

8. **Review Graduate Program Handbook and Graduate School Catalog.** The Graduate School Constitution requires all graduate programs to have up-to-date graduate program handbooks that spell out requirements/expectations.

9. **Dissertation Calculator.** ([http://www.lib.umn.edu/help/disscalc/](http://www.lib.umn.edu/help/disscalc/)) This calculator was designed to help graduate students be proactive and to put good tools for the dissertation process into a useable format.

**Get More From Your Adviser**

Here are the top ten kinds of assistance that you can and should expect from your adviser. Consult your committee, other faculty members, and students as well. However, your adviser should be your main resource for these elements.
Constructive feedback on research: This is an important role for an adviser. However, if your adviser is not aware of the status of your research, it will be difficult to give you feedback, much less constructive feedback. Also, be aware that your adviser is a very busy person, who may not have your dissertation progress as a top priority. Make sure that you are in regular contact with your adviser and that you give frequent updates on your progress toward your dissertation. Schedule regular meetings, and show up for them. At the conclusion of every meeting, set up realistic deadlines for what is going to happen next. Always have a plan. Also, before you conclude each meeting, make sure that you have gone over everything you wanted to cover, and be sure to schedule the next meeting. Effective means of communicating between meetings are email or phone. Do not wait for your adviser to get in touch with you; you could wait a long time. Seeking advice is your responsibility. Be proactive. Remember, this is your degree. Nobody cares about it as much as you do.

Assistance in setting up realistic goals. The goal when entering a graduate program is to finish the program and graduate in a reasonable amount of time. What is reasonable depends on a variety of factors. Set up intermediate goals. It is difficult to set up benchmarks without prior knowledge of all the steps that need to be accomplished in order to graduate. Your adviser can be of help in determining what can and should happen, and when. Sit down with your adviser and have a frank discussion about when you intend to be done. Find out what the things are that need to be done, and whether you can accomplish all of the necessary tasks in the amount of time you have allotted. Some considerations when setting goals are: the availability of funding, the availability of employment, and your own personal commitments. Make sure your adviser is fully aware of these issues. If your adviser does not bring them up, you should. If you don't, you may end up being unpleasantly surprised. The Graduate School Constitution requires all grad programs to provide each student with an annual performance evaluation. (note: How the evaluation is conducted is up to each grad program.)

Information about funding opportunities. Be proactive. Ask your adviser about any funding opportunities for your research. Hopefully, your adviser has funds available to support you. If not, do not wait for your adviser to suggest funding opportunities. Feel free to ask other faculty members and fellow graduate students if they are aware of funding opportunities. Remember that it takes effort to find money to support your own research. The Graduate School Fellowship Office, 321 Johnston Hall, has information about dissertation and other fellowships, as does the college to which your department belongs. Your graduate program secretary can be an excellent resource. Also, the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students (NAGPS) may have fellowship and grant information (www.nagps.org/). Be proactive. If you need the money, you need to be willing to find it. More opportunities are described on these websites: http://blog.lib.umn.edu/clagrant/grantopportunities/ & http://www.lib.umn.edu/libdata/page.phtml?page_id=782

Conferences. Hopefully by now in your graduate program you have become familiar with professional organizations in your discipline and maybe even joined a few. These can look impressive on your CV. The cost of a student membership in many of these professional organizations is very low, so take advantage of this perk. Often these organizations hold annual regional, national, or international conferences. Conferences are a great way to meet other professionals in your field, to network, and to find out about prospective jobs. Many of the conferences have a job bank. Ask your adviser about various conferences in your field, which ones you should attend, and whether your department can cover the cost of registration or the cost of the travel and accommodations. If not, there are some creative ways to get around the cost of attending conferences. Your department may have a booth at the conference, and you can volunteer to work at the booth. Get in touch with the conference organizers and find out if there are any opportunities to volunteer. The bottom line: let your adviser and other faculty members know that you are interested in attending conferences; often they will try to help.
• **Professional connections/networking.** Your adviser can serve as an excellent liaison to help you develop professional connections. In most disciplines, as in life, a lot happens behind the scenes; a lot of deals are brokered behind closed doors. Make sure that you are in the academic loop with the help of your adviser. Where you get your first post-doctoral appointment or your first faculty position may be greatly influenced by who your adviser knows. Conferences also are a great place to initiate professional acquaintances. Talk to people, keep in touch with them via email, and make sure that your adviser introduces you to friends and colleagues.

• **Help on your curriculum vitae, resume, and cover letter.** As you get closer to finishing your dissertation and begin the adventurous task of seeking employment, remember that your adviser can and should be a valuable resource for feedback on your CV or resume, and cover letter. Since this may be the first time that you are looking for a professional job, you may be unaware of the specific norms for these items. First, you should learn the difference between a CV and a resume. For academic/research jobs, the professional biography usually submitted is a *curriculum vitae*, which includes your education, research output, and teaching experience. When you apply for non-academic jobs, you should prepare a *resume*, which generally is shorter and focuses more on professional experience than on academic credentials. Ask your adviser to review the format of your materials: how they look, what needs to be included or not, and what needs to be highlighted and what does not. Advisers often have been on search committees for faculty positions, or consultants in the corporate setting, so they know what the CVs/resumes of qualified candidates look like. Ask your adviser to show you some good models. Having examples can make the task much simpler. When preparing resumes, remember that some advisers may have little or no experience in the real (non-academic) world, so you may want to solicit help with your resume from a career services office or a professional society. There are many books and articles on how to prepare these documents. Departments and student groups can also contact Customized Teaching and Learning Workshop ([http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/](http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/)).

• **Your career search.** Embarking on the search for your first professional job can be both exciting and intimidating. Knowing what your interests are and what options align with your interests simplifies the process a great deal. Involve your adviser in your job search. An adviser who is well aware of both your interests and your research can be a great asset in this adventure. Advisers and professors often are aware of available options, vacancies and opportunities, through their professional networks. Ask questions, and solicit advice and feedback about how to market yourself. Ask what they think you should or should not be doing.

• **Professional development opportunities.** Your adviser is a great resource when it comes to ways to improve your CV and to enhance your chances of getting the job of your choice. Ask about seminars, internships and special events to attend. Ask to be informed about any upcoming events. Network within your department with other faculty members, and let them know of your interests. If you show initiative, you will capture the interest of both your adviser and other faculty members. Present yourself as someone who is motivated and takes initiative in building leadership skills.

• **Space.** Ask your adviser or other departmental personnel to help you get a mailbox and a desk in or near your department. Having your own space within your department can be crucial to your success in graduate school, by keeping you connected with your department. Don’t overlook this simple idea.

• **The Big Picture** (or, how your research fits into the broader context of the field). The research interests of graduate students appropriately tend to have a limited focus. Given the number of hours that we invest in our particular areas of specialization, there’s not much time left to focus on the larger discipline. Given the changing workplace, it may become necessary for us to re-engineer ourselves for the job market. Understanding how very specific research in one subfield fits within the broader context of the discipline can be an asset in marketing yourself. There may not be many jobs in the specific area that you are studying, so having a broader
perspective can expand your opportunities. Your adviser can help you to increase your marketability by discussing how your research fits into the broader context of your discipline. You also can broaden your knowledge by attending seminars, journal review groups, etc., that are in your field but not part of your specialization.

Get the Most out of Meetings with Your Adviser

Try to establish a regular meeting time with your adviser; once every week or two is typical. Once you’ve established a meeting time, there are some simple ways to make that time as productive as possible.

1. Be sure you show up. If you’re going to be late or have to reschedule, call well in advance. Nothing will make you look non-serious faster than being careless with the time of your busy adviser.

2. Be sure that you do what you have said you would do between meetings or at least have made a good-faith effort to do it.

3. Before going into the meeting, have a clear idea of what you’d like to accomplish in the meeting (for example, particular questions about your academic program, or help focusing your research project, or choosing your committee). The clearer you are about what you’d like to accomplish during the meeting, the more likely you are to be successful.

4. For most situations, it’s also helpful to let your adviser know in advance in writing what you’d like to discuss, and what information/inspiration you are looking for. This will allow your adviser to be more reflective and prepared as well.

5. During the meeting, it’s a good idea to take notes. You needn’t try to capture everything that is said or be tremendously thorough, but your notes should cover the main points or tasks that you will want to keep fresh in your mind and refer to later. Many advisers also will jot down brief notes to jog their memories later as well.

6. By the end of the meeting, you should have an agreed-upon plan of action and a clear idea of what to do next. If you don’t feel clear about your next step, discuss it and try to get clarity before the meeting ends. If time is running short, ask to schedule another meeting or continue the discussion via e-mail (depending, of course, on how friendly your adviser is to that mode of communication). Part of your plan of action should include a time line for completing the next steps (be they academic requirements, a literature review, or steps in a research project), and a time for your next meeting. It is generally easiest for you and for your adviser to keep up a regular meeting schedule or even regular phone or e-mail communication.

Case Study: Writing Grant Proposals

A third-year student in a laboratory science field is working on a project for which his adviser has no funding. His adviser is harried and overworked, and doesn’t have enough time to write grant proposals to support his students. This is extremely frustrating for both the adviser and his students. The students constantly have to borrow equipment and reagents from other groups in order to do his research. When the third-year student confronts him about the lack of funding for the project, it’s more than the adviser can take. The adviser responds that if the student wants funding for the project, he should write a grant proposal. The adviser then hands the student all of the paperwork necessary to write a major proposal.

Q: When is it acceptable for grad students to write grant proposals? To what extent should grad students be involved in writing major proposals? How could this situation be used as a valuable professional development experience for the student? What are advisers’ responsibilities for the professional development of their grad students?
**Handle Problems with Your Adviser or Other Faculty Members**

You are entitled to good advising. It is not a luxury; it is part of the graduate school package. When you pay for dissertation credits, you are paying for contact hours with your adviser. If you find yourself in difficulty with an existing advising situation, remember that you do not have to simply accept it. You can change it. Here are some suggestions for how to do that:

- Talk to your fellow graduate students particularly those who have been in the program longer than you have. Ask them for suggestions and advice.
- Talk to the Director of Graduate Studies or Chair of your department; explain your situation and ask for advice.
- Talk to other faculty members, especially your committee, and solicit advice.
- Be proactive on your own behalf.

If you aren’t getting what you need from your adviser, don’t despair. Often you can find other faculty members who are both able and willing to assist you with specific problems such as reviewing your CV or giving you names of persons to contact. Remember that you can also talk to fellow graduate students and faculty members about your research. This often helps to develop a different perspective. If you sense that departmental politics are keeping other faculty members from giving you the help that you deserve, seek out your Director of Graduate Studies or Department Chair. If they are unable or unwilling to help, it is time to move up the Food Chain (see below).

You may find that your adviser or a supervisor is being unreasonable, insulting, abusive, or is harassing or discriminating against you. Learning how to deal with this effectively is crucial to getting through graduate school and life. Document everything. Keep a written record with dates and exactly what was said and done by everyone present (to the best of your memory) and where the events took place. If things get to the point of requiring formal dispute resolution or legal action, this record will be very important. The very act of writing out what happened can help you to maintain perspective, validate your experience, and be cathartic. It also can help you to remember events much later, which can be important for your confidence if faced with a confrontation.

At any point, it may be worthwhile to confront the difficult person, because they really may be unaware that they are offending you or making your life difficult. If you decide to try this approach, schedule an appointment with the person. Don’t just drop by unannounced. Rehearse what you are going to say with someone. Saying it aloud will help you formulate your argument. If you are afraid you’ll start to lose your composure in the meeting, rehearsing will really help. You’ll be able to reassure yourself that your complaints are real, that you sound perfectly reasonable, and that you have a right to be heard – all things that difficult situations tend to strip from you.

If there are other people in the same situation as you (hostile classroom environment, bad PI in a lab setting, head professor of a course with many TAs), try to get one or more of these other people to go with you. It can be easy for an unreasonable person to dismiss a complaint brought by only one person; two people make the message much more convincing. If the problem is harassment or discrimination, it carries a lot of impact to add the voices of people from other racial, religious, sexual, disability, or status backgrounds. Have an agenda for the meeting. List the complaints (“I wish you would stop asking me to run personal errands for you.”). Avoid character attacks; as tempting as they may be, they will only put the other person on the defensive. State why the particular behavior is offensive or unreasonable (e.g. “Using that ethnic term not only offends the members of that ethnic group, it makes everyone in the group uncomfortable”, or “It’s not fair to expect me to work in the lab on Christmas Day when I want to see my family and I work hard all year, and here’s the University policy on the issue.”). Suggest a way to change, and the potential reward for changing the behavior (“The morale in the class/lab will really improve if you
start expecting the same amount of work from the women in the class as the men”, or “A little bit of positive feedback once in awhile is a much stronger motivator for me than consistent negative feedback.”). Remain calm throughout the meeting.

If this approach doesn’t lead to any changes, or if you get a hostile reaction, be prepared to move up the Food Chain (see below). Remember that it’s usually OK to consult with an administrator for advice on how to handle the situation without committing yourself to having that person intervene for you. You also can use the services of either the Student Dispute Resolution Center (http://www.sos.umn.edu/) or the Office for Conflict Resolution (http://www1.umn.edu/ocr/). The staff in both of these offices can offer advice and suggestions for how to handle the situation, without requiring you to commit to a formal intervention or grievance procedure.

You are protected from harassment and abuse by a number of University policies (see Appendices), including the Graduate School’s Mutual Responsibilities in Graduate Education document. Section 5 appears below; the entire document is reproduced at the end of this book.

RESPECTFUL EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

University faculty and staff are responsible for assuring that graduate students are able to conduct their work, as students or students/employees, in a manner consistent with professional conduct and integrity, free of intimidation or coercion. Students who are employees also have the protection of all University employment policies and laws.

Graduate programs are responsible for providing clear communication to students about the possibility for appeal to a third party for assistance in resolving disputed issues.

Students are responsible for reporting unprofessional conduct to the appropriate body or person, as defined in the academic or employment grievance policy; they should be able to do so without fear of reprisal. Students are responsible for acting in a respectful and fair manner toward other students, faculty, or staff in the conduct of their academic work or work they may do in connection with an assistantship.

The Food Chain

As a grad student you might think that part of the socialization into the profession is to be treated badly or to be ignored. THIS IS NOT TRUE! You have a right to be treated with respect. If you’re unhappy, figure out why and do what you can to change it. While learning to deal with difficult people is a skill that will likely serve you well throughout your life, you should know that you do not have to put up with bad advising or abuse.

The power structure that grad students must successfully navigate is sometimes referred to as The Food Chain. If you have some problems along the way, you should start at the bottom and work your way up. Learning how to use this structure to your advantage will serve you well in many pursuits beyond grad school.

• Senior Grad Students and Post-Docs are relatively powerless, but they can provide valuable insights, and sometimes they have the ear of faculty members.

• Your Adviser, Your Advising/Examining Committee Members, Committee Chair, other faculty members with whom you feel comfortable

• Program Secretary/Director of Graduate Studies
• Department Administrator (Not every department has one.)

• Department Chair/ Departmental Affirmative Action Officer or Committee (Every department has one.)

• College Dean’s Office

• Graduate Student Services Office

• Associate Deans of Grad School

• Graduate School Dean’s Office

Again, at any point in the process, feel free to avail yourself of the services of the Student Dispute Resolution Center (SDRC), University Counseling and Consulting Services, or the Office for Conflict Resolution (OCR). All of these can give informal advice about how to deal with something back in your department, and you don’t have to file a formal grievance in order to talk over the situation with them. If you choose to file a formal grievance, SDRC and OCR can help you through the process.

**Get More From Your Department**

Your department can be an amazing resource to help you in professional development activities for you and your fellow graduate students. Departments have a vested interest in how well their graduates do once they graduate. The graduates of the program are their ambassadors to the outside world, and how well they do will determine the quality of future graduate students, grants, and rankings. So it is to a department’s advantage to ensure that their students are provided with very good professional development activities. Accessing these resources, however, can be a difficult proposition. Here are some ways in which departments can help:

• Be supportive and show interest in providing professional development activities.

• Provide financial assistance for some of the activities, such as for attending conferences.

• Provide space and other resources for these activities.

• Organize bag lunch talks and seminars.

• Have visiting scholars and professors give talks, and provide them with honoraria.

• Support and encourage student groups within the department.

Also, every department has funds to support student travel to talks, conferences, and seminars. Often these funds are not advertised, so again your graduate program secretary or your adviser is a wonderful source of information about available funds.

If your department is not keen on providing assistance for professional development, here are some hints to help change that:

• Organize small-scale professional development activities with your fellow graduate students, such as faculty talks on relevant issues (getting published, writing grant proposals, seeking a job); or student research presentations.
• Take the initiative and make the event a success. Advertise it widely, and encourage faculty members to attend and participate in the discussion.

• Highlight the success with your department head and other key faculty members. The important thing is to give a stake in the activity to a majority of the students, and faculty members, if possible, in the department.

When your department sees that graduate students are involved and that the events are a success, they will be more inclined to support further efforts.

Be a Citizen
While you are a graduate student, it is incumbent upon you to ensure that your department and the university are better than when you arrived. There are several ways that graduate students can help to improve departments in particular, and the university in general:

• Make your voices heard and make them matter. You can do this by getting involved in departmental committees, most of which have student representatives. Let your Department Chair or Director of Graduate Studies know that you would be interested in serving on a committee. Search committees in particular are a great way to find out what matters in academic hiring.

• Many departments have graduate student organizations. Get involved in them. If your department does not have a graduate student organization, take the initiative and start one. Having a strong graduate student organization often can translate into greater leverage with the department for graduate student issues. See http://www.sua.umn.edu/groups/ for information about how to start a student group.

• Emphasize an environment of acceptance and tolerance of varied viewpoints. Remember this is an institution of higher learning; a place where ideas are born, debated, and changed.

• Work to enhance the diversity within both the faculty and the student body. Get on a faculty search committee. This will give you first-hand experience with hiring decisions, and can be a great learning laboratory for you as you begin your job search.

• Get involved in student governance. Become active in the Council of Graduate Students (COGS). Find out if your department has a COGS representative; if not, take the initiative and ask the Director of Graduate Studies to nominate you as the representative, or nominate yourself. Work to increase awareness of COGS among your fellow graduate students. The COGS office is located at 405 Johnston Hall. Phone: 612-626-1612; Email: cogs@umn.edu. URL: http://www.cogs.umn.edu

To reiterate: be proactive. Remember, this is your graduate program and you have to take control of it. You will get out of it as much as you put into it.

Forms, Forms, Forms

The Graduate School has a list of steps, and the requisite forms for each of those steps that you must complete on the way to your degree. You can pick up a copy of the list outside of the Graduate School Student Services Office at 316 Johnston Hall (612-625-3490), or view it on the Web: http://www.grad.umn.edu/Current_Students/forms/index.html.

Master's and Specialist Degree. The main forms are the Degree Program Form and forms related to graduation. The timing for filing the Degree Program Form is different for Master’s and Specialists; check
the web site for the policy. Master’s students need the paperwork prior to the exam. Request a grad packet be sent via the web site. http://www.grad.umn.edu/Current_Students/forms/masters.html

**Doctoral Degree** You are strongly advised to check out the Student Services Office Web site. (www.grad.umn.edu/Current_Students/forms/doctoral.html) You can obtain information, forms and can request your graduation packet through this Web site. If you hold the one-credit advanced Master’s or advanced Doctoral status, there is a form the “Application for Full-time Status with One Credit Registration” form you must complete every term that also is available on this Web site. In addition to lists of the required forms and the actual forms downloadable as PDF files, there is information on the site about most of the policies and procedures that you’re likely to run into. Check there first to see if you can answer your own question!

The main forms for Ph. D. students are the Degree Program Form, forms for the written and oral prelim exams, and forms related to graduation. Remember, you must schedule both your oral prelim and oral final exams with the Graduate School at least one week in advance.

**Taking Classes: You’re Not in College Any More**

One of the most important adjustments to make upon entering graduate school is to realize that it is not simply an extension of college, where racking up classes inevitably leads to a degree. Graduate school is a gateway into a profession. Becoming a professional means not only acquiring greater expertise but also becoming self-directed in applying and developing that expertise further. It requires a shift in mindset to a new role with greater responsibilities, more autonomy, and great personal rewards. The program of classes and seminars that you and your adviser plan for your degree should provide a foundation for your further development as a scholar outside of the classroom, through individual independent and directed study later, or through your group research. Your discipline and your individual program will dictate whether most of your classes are within your field or in cognate fields. If you are a history student headed for a dissertation on some aspect of social history, for example, you may be directed to coursework within sociology. Some programs have highly structured programs of coursework, with few or no electives; in others, you may be faced with important choices. Make them wisely. In the first year you may have the luxury of exploring your interests through a variety of coursework, especially if you did not major in your graduate field as an undergraduate. Soon, however, you’ll need to focus and start building a foundation for your thesis or dissertation. You’ll be surprised at how short the available time is to take classes.

If your department brings in visiting scholars who teach for a semester or two, some faculty members will advise you to be sure to attend their courses even just to audit in order to get to know someone who is based at another institution. You may wish to apply for a job there someday; even if not, knowing the person will expand your network of colleagues. Other advisers will tell you that there’s no reason to spend time on a class from anyone who cannot be on your examining committee. It’s an individual decision.

Finally, if it fits your program strategy, try to move from courses to seminars as early as possible, or at least take a good mix of the two. In general, courses are more structured and more often in a lecture format, whereas seminars are smaller and more specialized. Seminars usually have a reading and discussion format, with a substantial paper required. This format can help you to engage in the subject matter more deeply, and it requires more input and involvement from you than a class usually does. All of this will help you in the transition of moving beyond college.

**Establish Your Expertise**

**Teaching.** If you plan to seek an academic job, experience is essential. Especially if you plan on an academic career, your coursework should prepare you to teach in multiple areas of your field. For any career, the public speaking skills you gain will be helpful. Take advantage of opportunities to present seminars and conference talks; it will help you organize your research, think about it in a broader context, and gain important experience in presenting your ideas in public. Go to conferences and use this time to network and learn more about your field. If you don’t present anything, make one of your goals for the
meeting to learn about effective presentation skills by observing others (and sometimes learning what not to do).

**Research.** Your coursework should help prepare you for your research or other work in your field. Use it well; plan your courses to help you fulfill your goals. You should strive for both breadth and depth. Your project may be narrowly focused, but be sure you understand and can explain its broader context and implications. You also should gain experience in proposing and developing your own ideas and conducting research to test your hypotheses. Set a long-term research mission early on in your graduate career, and then break up your project into manageable chunks for each week, month, and year. You should also be learning how to write and talk about your research and convey its importance to many different audiences. Ideally your research also will teach you skills such as computer and Internet skills, working in teams, and establishing collaborations.

**Service.** Determine how important service this is to you as a person (do you *need* to feel that you are contributing to your community, or just *like* to?), and to your career goals (it’s a definite plus for academic jobs, and ranges from “nice” to “essential” for others). This kind of experience usually demonstrates to others your ability to work as a part of a group, as well as your leadership abilities. It also can give you experience in meeting etiquette, time management, public speaking, managing conflict, persuasion, budgeting, etc. all of which are important skills for any career. Finally, do you know how to say no to additional responsibilities without burning bridges?

For “non-traditional careers,” you need another set of skills beyond your expertise in your discipline. Make sure you know what these are and use the relatively safe environment of graduate school to develop them. You can get more information from Career Services (www.career.umn.edu), University Counseling and Consulting Services, your adviser, DGS, committee, or an alumni network.

**Choose Your Doctoral Committee**

For some disciplines, especially those in the humanities or social sciences, selecting the faculty members who will serve on your doctoral examining committee will be one of your more important decisions, with many unwritten rules attached. Your doctoral committees will make the final decision about whether you’ve fulfilled all the requirements of your doctoral program, with particular attention paid to the quality of the contribution that your dissertation makes to research in your field.

Your department can require you to have either four or five faculty members on your committee; you should check with your DGS about your department’s policy. In either case, three of these (including your adviser) come from within your department. The other one or two must be from outside your department, from a field related to your research interests. If you declare a minor, the faculty member must hold a graduate faculty appointment in the minor. You might also choose outside member(s) on the basis of their methodological expertise (such as a stats expert if your research is heavily quantitative).

From this group of four or five committee members, three will serve as readers, one of them must be an outside member, which means they will read your work with a fine-toothed comb. You can wait and name your readers after you’ve gone through your preliminary oral exams; this will allow you to see who is most interested in your work and can give the most useful feedback, and with whom you would like to have fairly regular and intense interaction.

In general, you will want to choose a committee that will help you learn the most during the dissertation process. They should be interested in you and your work, have time to devote to meeting with and helping you, and be knowledgeable and respected in their fields. Another consideration, however, is how well these individuals function as a group. Committee meetings can sometimes bring out departmental politics and rivalries that can shift attention away from you and your work or, at worst, get you caught in the crossfire. You should not avoid choosing the best individuals for your work even if they have some
conflicts, but knowing about these ahead of time will equip you to cope with them. You may be able to enlist the help of your adviser or committee chair to keep the discussion on task.

Although it’s impossible to gauge how people will react in every setting, doing a bit of research on potential committee members can give you a better sense of what you can expect from this group. You should discuss potential committee members with your adviser in any case, in order to better understand their perspectives when they ask questions or make comments during your exam.

Ask who your adviser thinks would be an asset for your work, and who would be involved and supportive in a committee setting. Other students in your department also are good resources for this kind of information. If a faculty member has demonstrated less-than-helpful tendencies in past committee meetings, word will travel quickly. Your adviser and other students also can help you understand which individuals are likely be thorough, critical readers of your work, but will not bring biases to their reading (such as a strong distaste for qualitative work, or a political objection to your approach).

This committee should be a positively challenging and supportive group that helps guide you through the dissertation process, and can even help launch you in your career. With a bit of background work, you can help ensure that you derive from them the greatest benefit possible.

**Preliminary Exams**

Ph.D. students must pass written and oral preliminary exams (commonly called prelims, or orals) in order to achieve Ph.D. candidacy. Ph.D. students also have a final exam.

The format of written exams varies by program. They can take the format of a test with questions and answers, a series of papers on various topics, a research paper, and/or a thesis or mock grant proposal or syllabus. You should be able to find out from your adviser or graduate studies office what the format of your exam will be. Some programs have deadlines by which the exam must be taken and/or passed. They may also have requirements for specific formats. It might be helpful to obtain copies of old exams or samples of papers that scored well, if that is permissible.

Oral prelims also can vary widely from program to program. In some cases, they are based completely on coursework. In others, students present a thesis proposal or a proposal unrelated to the thesis, or some combination of these. Oral prelims also can be a defense of your knowledge based on an extensive literature review. Typically, students review the literature and then make suggestions about how to resolve inconsistencies in the literature. But, mostly, the oral is a test of your knowledge in your area.

Be sure to find out rules relating to these exams, such as time limits for completion, format, committee size and make-up, etc., from your graduate program office. The requirements for the exams should be made clear to you. If you don’t understand what is expected of you, be sure to keep asking questions.
You will do better on both of these exams if you start planning early. That might mean studying notes from your courses or writing outlines and gathering references. If your written exam is any kind of a paper, be sure to have as many people as you can proofread it, both for grammar and for content, if this is allowed by the guidelines. (Sometimes it's acceptable to have students, but not faculty members, read your written exam; sometimes no one else is allowed to read it. Find out from your program what the rules are.)

The oral exam often is the most stress-producing event of a graduate career, because it requires us to think on our feet. This anxiety is largely unnecessary. Talk with students who have passed the exam. In some departments, it is perfectly acceptable to ask individual faculty members for examples of questions they might ask. The best advice for getting through the experience is to start preparing early, practice often and before many different audiences (here is where your network of senior grad students will really pay off!), stay calm, and don’t get defensive or angry during the exam. It is okay to say “I don’t know” in the oral prelim. If you don’t know the answer to a question, you should say that and then tell your committee that you will speculate based on your knowledge of the topic. They want to see how you think as well as how much “at-hand” knowledge you have.

Remember to maintain perspective. If you fail the exam, you usually can re-take it. Also, remember that the committee is judging only the extent of your expertise thus far (and sometimes not even that!), and not your worth as a person. Most people who have failed prelim exams go on to successful careers and fulfilling lives beyond grad school!

**The Thesis Prospectus**

Every program has its own idea of what a thesis/dissertation prospectus or proposal is, or what it is called, but all agree that it is your blueprint to what you will be doing for your thesis or dissertation (e.g. the question(s) you will address, the methodology you will use to address the question(s), etc.). Your prospectus may or may not be part of your oral or written prelim exam. Regardless, the prospectus is a document that provides a quick review of the literature and your objectives, followed by your methodology, materials, how you will analyze the data, hypotheses, etc. Members of your committee then meet with you (either in a group or individually) to determine whether your project is reasonable and/or what changes should be made. Be sure to check with your DGS, fellow grad students, and adviser about the requirements surrounding the prospectus. Some departments require students to decide on a dissertation topic and have their prospectus meeting as early as the second year of the program. Other departments may require grant proposal prelims instead.

If your department does not require you to have a prospectus meeting, it still might be advisable to have one. Getting your committee to agree on the way in which you plan to address your research questions prior to the execution of the dissertation will ward off any surprises along the way, including at your final defense. Addressing the issues that committee members have about your dissertation before you execute it will make the whole process, including your defense, go much more smoothly (see below for the Final Oral Defense). In addition, getting feedback about your project will only improve its quality!
the actual prospectus meeting, know that your committee may ask you to add some unreasonable variables, experiments, analyses, etc. This doesn't mean that you have to do them. Collect all the comments and issues that your committee generates, and then have a one-on-one meeting with your adviser (come prepared), to discuss which of the suggestions are reasonable for your dissertation. Remember, too, that your methods and experiments may change depending on the outcome of the meeting. If you decide not to address some of the issues that came up during your prospectus meeting, be prepared to at least mention the issues in your dissertation and explain why you chose not to pursue them, most likely in the discussion section or during your final oral defense.

**Join the Profession**

Your field may have one or many professional societies that you should consider joining. Most have student rates. These organizations usually are the major sponsors of conferences. Local sections of professional societies vary widely in their membership and activity level. Find out about those you can use to network effectively and then attend their meetings. Ask if your department has funds to help students attend professional meetings; if they don’t, ask how such funding could be developed.

Your adviser or committee members should be able to tell you which conferences are the best ones to go to if you aren’t sure. At different points in your graduate career, you might have different needs. Pick the most appropriate conferences, since you are likely to have limited funding for travel. Near the end of graduate school, you can use these conferences for finding a job or good leads. You also can use conferences to build your network and interact with the heavy hitters in your field. Getting to know them will be particularly important if you pursue an academic career.

Reading journals in your field ought to become a regular habit during graduate school. It’s good to set aside some time every day or week to read articles and scan the latest journals. It can be helpful to join a journal club or discussion group (or start one if there isn’t one that meets your interests), to discuss research with other graduate students and/or faculty. If you're starting a new group, it can be as informal as you like, as long as it’s productive. There is a definite hierarchy of journals in any field. Your adviser should be able to tell you which ones are the best and most important, and which ones are the best places for you to submit your work.

Some other activities you can become involved in include participation in site visits and program reviews; committee experience; grant-proposal writing (even if you don't plan to pursue an academic career, it’s important to be able to write about and justify your research), and internships. Take advantage of opportunities to supervise and/or mentor and advise undergraduates or junior graduate students. Management and interpersonal skills are crucial for success in any career. Do your adviser and other faculty members model good professional and ethical behavior? Are you developing a set of professional models and mentors to whom you can turn for advice and insight? At some point in your graduate career, you should begin to make the transition between being a student and being a colleague. Does your adviser know how to navigate this change? Do you? If not, enlist others to help, such as your DGS or thesis committee members.

**Professional Experiences Outside of the University**

Another way to help bolster your vitae and help you to figure out what you'd like to do after graduation is to seek out work or an internship experience outside of the University. Some graduate programs have built-in requirements for internships, practical, or co-op experiences; many others do not require outside work experience but would agree that it can enrich the graduate experience and help with the transition to a post-graduation career. While the U certainly offers some great work experiences that not only cover your tuition but give you valuable experience and insight into how a major research university functions, you may find it beneficial to explore other opportunities. Naturally, these potential opportunities are
dependent upon your disciplinary field and ultimate career goals. A good place to start is with your adviser or someone in your department who is familiar with the type of work experience you’d like to gain (such as a faculty member who has consulting experience or has done work for an independent research organization, policy center, business, or non-profit organization). Your college’s career services office also will have information on internships. Much of the guidance may be tailored to undergraduates, but if you sincerely want to explore a particular area or organization, you can use the office to help you investigate the possibilities. The local community is a great place to start looking for opportunities that are not only appropriate to your interests but are more flexible and suited to your schedule; you don’t need to apply to an international research group to gain valuable experience and practical knowledge of the field. Overall, the best opportunities for work outside the U are those that will allow you to do real work (as opposed to merely support work) in the field, and give you exposure to what that career area is like.

Local and national disciplinary societies also are good resources. These organizations generally keep extensive information on work and internship opportunities for graduates and students in the field. There are many opportunities for summer internships, both locally and nationally, especially for students. As a general rule, even if an organization or institution does not have an established internship program, they might be interested in an offer from an enthusiastic graduate student. Often, they might not have thought there would be sufficient student interest to start an official program, or hadn’t envisioned how they could provide a useful experience for a graduate student. If you express your particular interest in and goal of an internship experience, organizations may be very eager to take advantage of your training, enthusiasm, and vision of what you could contribute. Another good way to begin your explorations is with local and national organizations that you respect, or know something about. Then, you can do some informal research on the range of work those organizations do, and whether they have an internship program; much of this can be done fairly easily through the Web. As with most of graduate school, have in mind what you would like to explore and ultimately accomplish, and then look to find the best opportunities to get that experience, whether or not they have established work programs for graduate students.

Present Your Research

It is always a good idea to practice presenting your research. Research presentations will not only provide helpful feedback, ideas and suggestions about follow-up research, but also will give you an opportunity to practice your job talk if you plan on an academic career. (Some industrial and private sector interviews also will require a seminar.) There generally are three avenues for presenting your research: informal encounters, department bag lunches/ lab meetings, and conferences.

Informal encounters. You should be prepared to give clear, compelling presentations about your research in a variety of informal situations. Take a cue from Stanford University, where students prepare the elevator talk, the hallway talk, the office talk, and the guest-lecture talk. The elevator talk is a 30-to-60-second, two-to-four-sentence response to the question, “So, what is your research about?” It is the no-notes, no-illustration comment that you give in an elevator between the second and sixth floors at a convention or professional-society meeting. Try it and you will understand why simple and easy are not always the same things. In the hallway talk, you have a bit longer, up to five minutes, to answer the same question, but again with no notes and no illustrations. For the office talk, which can take up to 10 minutes, you can write on a piece of paper or use a white board, but still no notes. The guest-lecture talk gives you up to 20 minutes to make a compelling case for what you are doing and why anyone should care. You can refer to your notes, and you can use a maximum of three overhead transparencies.

Departmental opportunities. Take every opportunity you can to present in your lab meetings or at other departmental functions. Some departments even offer mini-conferences for students to present their research to faculty members or prospective students. If your department does not offer such an opportunity, create one!
**Conferences.** Conference presentations look sooooo good on your vitæ! They show your experience and interest in research and the research path that your career has taken. There are typically two formats for conference presentations: the poster format and the spoken paper format.

**Posters.** Presenting a poster is an excellent (and not so intimidating) way to get researchers in your field to discuss your work with you. This is a great networking opportunity. But take your poster session seriously! Prepare in advance and have fellow grad students/your adviser look over your poster prior to the conference. Be certain to dress like a professional. Your physical poster needs care as well: typeface should be large and your message/data should be concise. People at conferences don't have time to read fine print and details that's what you're there for! Sometimes it is useful to provide handouts so that if some conference-goers don't feel like reading your poster on the spot, they can read about your research at another time. Be sure to include your name and contact information on your handouts. Unfortunately, in some highly competitive fields, you may have to protect your data, protocols, and ideas for future work from being borrowed by other researchers. In these extreme cases, it may be wise to never leave your poster unattended (or hanging up over night). It also may be a good idea *not* to provide handouts that include a description or parts of your data. Although the entire purpose of having a conference is to share research findings, it also serves an opportunity for individuals with loose ethics to take advantage.

**Spoken Papers.** Take the plunge! Giving an oral presentation is a great way to get feedback about your research, and to be seen by other researchers in your field. Fellow researchers will begin to see you as a colleague, not just a student. Unfortunately, not all conferences allow graduate students to present papers, so be sure to determine if your conference allows student presentations. If you are lucky enough to have the chance to present at a conference, run through your talk at least a few times with your research lab or fellow grad students. The side benefit to presenting in public is that it gives you the chance to brush up on your teaching skills. After all, you do hope that your audience learns something, right?

**Publishing Papers.** Published work is the currency of academia. It is important to know, however, that of all of the things that vary among academic disciplines, publishing of research results may be the most variable. The one universal truth is that publishing at least one sole-authored or first-authored paper while you're in graduate school is likely to help your job prospects. Before you start any project with anyone else, be sure that everyone involved understands the criteria for authorship. The disciplinary society in your field almost certainly publishes a guide for determining authorship.

*How does one get from here to there?* When you first entered graduate school, it may have been beyond your imagination that you would some day see your name in print, in the same table of contents as your most revered heroes. Tuck that memory away in your pocket full of things to demystify for your own advisees when the time comes. Now that you’re farther along, have spent a lot of time with the scholarly literature in your field, and have worked closely with some of the very people who write it, chances are you’ve begun to see what’s inside the black box. We do research, we reach conclusions, we write up the results. That may be where the commonality among disciplines ends, however, so let’s talk about different paths to publication.

**Group Work.** If you've spent your graduate school time as one research assistant in a group working on the project of a professor, there's a good chance that your life in publishing never will be a solo act. While you're a student, the Principal Investigator (PI)'s name is likely to appear on all research results from a project. Even after you've achieved the lofty heights of a post-doctoral position or an assistant professorship, you may find that you're still working with a senior colleague, whose shadow haunts you wherever you publish. If that's typical in your discipline, fine; strive to be a senior partner yourself.
Who's on First? You'll soon learn that in multiple-author publications, the order of authors listed becomes important. Often, the person who did the most work is listed first. The name of the PI can be first or last, depending upon the norms of the field. Finally, some groups simply list everyone alphabetically, to finesse the issue entirely. Again, local and disciplinary practices rule. Be vigilant, however, for abuse of the system. There is a fuzzy but discoverable ethical boundary between appropriate claims to authorship (those who actually contributed substantive effort) and bogus ones (those whose first contact was signing off on it, or honorary authorships). The latter case is one to seek independence from as quickly as possible certainly once you've finished graduate school.

The ethics of publishing is another discussion entirely, but it is difficult to separate from the mechanics of getting published. The positive aspect of group publishing with your PI is that it gets you publications while you're a student. The negative aspect is that you're never alone, and readers (and prospective employers) won't be able to tell what you specifically contributed. If your circumstances allow you to venture out solo while you're still in school, do it. You'll be one step ahead. Some journals have begun to list the contributions of each author (e.g., J. Smith designed and built the instrument; S. Jones conceived the project). This may become a more general practice in the near future.

Solo Acts? Okay, so you're ready to strike out on your own. Either you've forged ahead of your research group, or you're in a discipline where individuals work alone. Now things get even more complicated. Not only do practices vary by discipline; they vary even by individual scholarly journal. Worse yet, the practices of a particular journal can change with each editor! The good news is that the variations won't be wild; the practitioners in your field wouldn't stand for that. So, if you get a general idea about how things work you won't go too far astray.

Ready to Write? Now, you've got your eye on a favorite journal where you'd like to see your work appear. What, exactly, do you have to say?

A couple of other universal tenets for scholarly publishing:

# 1) It must reflect original work; and
# 2) it must be tied to previous work within your field (through a literature review or other evidence that you know where it fits within the field).

Unless you have a handle on # 2, you won't be able to judge whether you've met # 1.

If you've been working on a funded research project, chances are you can spin off a piece of that for yourself. You also should plan your dissertation as a source for publication. This can be done either by constructing each chapter with stand-alone articles in mind, or by thinking of the dissertation as a draft of a book. This is a much more ambitious undertaking, but in some disciplines it is standard practice. In such cases, writing with publication in mind will save a lot of revision later. Don't worry too much at the dissertation stage about the quirks of specific publishers (unless you already have one lined up); the main goal is to make the work the best it can be and let the rest take care of itself (with the help of your adviser!).

Authorship and Credit

Case # 1: The Principal Investigator on a project assigns a small writing task to a new student, in order to assess the student's skills. The piece is incorporated into a paper that a team has produced, but the new student is not given authorship because she is too junior. This is standard practice in the lab, but the professor hasn't yet had a chance to provide much orientation for the first-year students. At the next lab meeting (which included three professors), she brings it up with the group. She is asked to leave the room while the group discusses the matter. When she returns, she is told that there were already too many authors on the paper and her name will be omitted.

Q: Is it ethical to require new students to pay their dues before their work on an article is acknowledged? Was there a better way to handle the situation once the issue was brought up? How should authorship be determined?
Another tenet: don’t publish before the work warrants it. If you get into the game of trying to beat your competitors to the punch in the literature, you’ll set yourself up for one of those ugly headlines in the Chronicle of Higher Education, where Big Mistakes are reviewed and debated regularly (with names attached). Be sure that what you plan to say is defensible by the work before you submit your article.

Outline a write-up of the results according to the typical structure of journal articles in your field. It can be helpful, especially for social and natural/physical scientists, to start with lists of likely figures and fill in the outline from there. Fill in the sections in a first-draft mode and show it to someone you trust for feedback. Revise it and ask for feedback again. When you’re comfortable with your draft, ask for a last-pass review and commentary from the highest-status professional to whom you have access: your adviser, PI, or someone who has published in the same journal (there may be overlap among these three). The more refining you do before you submit the thing, the fewer rounds you’ll have to endure with the editor and reviewers of the journal.

**Which Journal?** Some journals simply do not accept sole-authored papers by graduate students. Find this out in advance. If you want in to such a journal while you’re still a student, consider asking your adviser or PI to be a co-author.

Most journals include instructions to authors in each volume, post them on a website, or send them to you upon request. Get these for each journal you have in mind, and pay close attention to them. You increase your chances of getting published if you cooperate with the rules, and your editor will appreciate you (never a bad thing!).

Seek advice early about which journal would be most appropriate for the article you have in mind. The same group as above (adviser, PI, etc.) can help. You can glean some impression of this yourself simply by skimming the journal series in your field. Target your article to the specific journal that you choose not all are written in the same style or for the same audience. Disciplines often have a flagship journal that publishes work from all sub-disciplines, plus a variety of journals from various subfields. Explore this structure within your own field.

**Page charges:**
Be sure to check with the journal that you are considering about whether or not they impose page charges upon authors. These are per-page fees designed to help offset printing costs, and they can add up to sizable sums.

**A Conference Paper is Not an Article, Is It?** Papers that you see in print often began life as conference presentations. Reflect upon that for a moment, if you’ve ever been to a disciplinary conference. For starters, the way that we understand speech is not the way that we take in the printed word, and it shouldn’t be. If you are building your journal article from a conference presentation, revise it accordingly. The level of formality of conference papers varies, but they hardly ever (except in a few disciplines)
consist of article manuscripts read aloud. If it works that way in your field, congratulations; you've saved a step. Otherwise, treat the two as separate types of pieces.

Is This Worth Your Time Now? Finally, remember that working on a paper for publication, while a worthwhile undertaking, adds yet another time-consuming task to your already-heavy workload. Seek advice early and often about the appropriate timing of such efforts over the course of your program. For some, graduate school means one paper per year. For others, one paper by the time the degree is finished will suffice. Local practices rule. The most important thing to remember is that a sole-authored publication won't help you much if you fail to complete your degree!

The Mid-(Graduate)-Career Blues

Perhaps the biggest hurdle to finishing your degree is keeping up your motivation to complete the $%&@#! thing. For Master's and Doctoral students, this may become a big issue as you move out of the class-taking phase and into focusing on your own projects. One of the biggest transitions from college to graduate school to a career that involves research is to become self-sufficient, and like it. As important as group support and networking are, it is essential to your success that you develop internal self-propulsion mechanisms. If you don't, your career will be one of constant struggle.

As the steps to completing your degree become less regimented by your program and more determined by your own motivation to accomplish them, you may feel a bit at sea. Also, the size and scope of your thesis or dissertation may seem overwhelming and sap some of your focus and drive, especially if you feel isolated in this process.

If any of this starts to sound familiar, don't be alarmed; it's one of the most common sensations encountered in graduate school. The first hurdle is to realize that you're in a temporary lull; the second hurdle is to do something small, but positive, to reinvigorate yourself. Maintaining contact (or reconnecting, if it's been awhile) with your adviser is a priority. Your adviser is the person who should be helping you set manageable goals and stick to them. If you find that you're having trouble meeting the goals in the timetable you both had worked out, it's a good idea to revisit your plans and adjust them. (For example, if you're feeling the scope of your literature review is too broad and unwieldy, your adviser should be able to help you clarify and refocus your analysis. Your adviser also should help guide you through the oral exam processes, and encourage you to set the dates for these exams only when you both feel you're well prepared.)

Unless you're in a lab or other setting where you're guaranteed to see your adviser on a very regular basis, make sure you don't let too much time go by without scheduling a meeting. Advisers and other faculty members usually are willing to schedule regular meetings with their graduate students so they stay in touch; it's much easier for them to give advice and discuss problems as they arise than be called in to help fix a major dilemma. Also, these regular meetings are what you're paying for, in effect, through the mandatory registration for dissertation credits. You might as well get their full value, and it's a fundamental part of the job of being an adviser.

If your adviser is not around when you need input, either due to a sabbatical, extended travel, or an overly busy schedule, draw on your support network of other faculty members, current graduate students, individuals in your field outside of your program, and other students who have graduated (see Building your support network in Navigating Your First Year). These people usually will be willing to help you, and often can give very candid and constructive advice, both in terms of completing the steps to your degree and aligning those steps with your intended career after you graduate. In addition to your long-term support network of friends and family, the other graduate students, both within your program and throughout campus, have faced many of the same issues as you have, and they often have tried-and-true strategies to surmount them. One source on campus that can be helpful is the U Consulting and Counseling Services (http://www.ucs.umn.edu/), which offers graduate student support.
Break it Into Bite-size Pieces
Regardless of what is behind a lapse in motivation, the best way out of it is to make small but consistent accomplishments on a project or toward a goal. If you’re in the writing stage of a literature review or data analysis section, set a manageable daily writing goal. It may seem inconceivable to sit down and draft an entire dissertation, but 3-5 pages in a day is much more plausible. If (when) setbacks do occur, try to take them in stride, as inevitable stages of a larger project or goal. Don’t be too hard on yourself if you need to keep readjusting your goals and timetable. It isn’t a sign of weakness or lack of fortitude; it just means you’ve improved your understanding of your goals and how you can best accomplish them, while you keep a grip on the rest of your life as well. Take a break and do something invigorating or that you feel passionate about, whether or not it’s related to your studies. This can help to reenergize you and build up the drive to meet your goals. (Provided, of course, that you can then channel that energy into your work, as opposed to moving to Borneo to take up life as a beachcomber.) Although it may seem antithetical to graduate school culture, maintaining some kind of balance between your work, studies, and the rest of your life is going to help you not only stay saner and happier, but also will keep you more motivated and successful in meeting your goals in graduate school and beyond.

Re-Entry, With Parachute
At the beginning, graduate school looked to most of us like a multi-year excursion into intellectual riches, career mobility, a rewarding professional life, earnings enhancement, and lifetime freedom from manual labor. That’s quite a stake to have in an uncharted path like graduate school. If, in the midst of your degree program, something goes wrong in your work, your relationships at school, or your personal life, it can look like the end of the world.

Despite all good intentions and plans, you might stray from your path and your attention may be distracted during your time in graduate school. Whether it’s because you switch labs, change projects, get married, get divorced, get past prelims, become a parent, have a health setback, lose a friend or family member, go through a period of personal evaluation, family adjustments, career doubts, loss of enthusiasm, or some combination thereof, re-entry into your work and project may become necessary. It isn’t the end of the world, but it may be the end of how things were, and you must allow yourself to adjust, heal, grow, and move on.

Realize that you are not the only one who has needed to re-enter graduate school work. In fact, folks around you might be trying the same thing, but be unable to admit it. It is more admirable (and more difficult) to turn and face the challenge of re-entry than to give up and let the temporary distraction throw you off course permanently. Each person’s re-entry will be different, and may take different lengths of time and levels of intensity. Here is a list of things you might try to help you focus:

1. Find a work buddy who can gently check in with you periodically.
2. Set small and reasonable goals for yourself. Accomplishing a few specific things per day will increase your feelings of success and help give you something tangible to do when you feel overwhelmed. Set daily, weekly, and monthly goals.
3. Renew or find a new hobby that re-energizes you and gives you something to look forward to, or as a reward when you have stuck to your plans.
4. Realize that plans have to be honestly re-evaluated sometimes.
5. Some days you just have to make yourself stay at the office or lab for a certain number of hours. Have dinner with a friend or plan some small reward for sticking it out.
6. Remember your health. If you aren’t exercising, it might be a good time to begin. Create a workout plan that makes you feel as though you are making progress.
7. Keep in touch; let your adviser know that you’re working, even if you don’t appear to be making progress. If meeting your adviser on a regular basis is a stumbling block, set up the next meeting before you end the present meeting.

8. Be someone else’s work buddy, so that you feel accountable to a friend.

9. If your adviser isn’t supportive of your current re-entry efforts, find others who are.

10. If you need assistance beyond your adviser or fellow graduate students, such as counseling, don’t be afraid to seek it out.

**The Second Degree/Third Degree**

**Mastering the Master’s**

If your program will require a Master’s degree before the Ph. D., or if you’re here for the Master’s alone, you may have the option of a Plan A (thesis) or Plan B (papers) route to the degree. Both have classroom credit requirements, but the written work required can be quite different. The choice should be made in consultation with your adviser and, if possible, with other faculty members who are aware of your future plans. Sometimes, the choice may effectively be made for you because your program feels that only one of the options is appropriate for your discipline.

If you plan to continue into a Ph. D. program, you should consider the Plan A/thesis option simply to gain the experience of writing a thesis-length tome. On the other hand, depending upon your longer-term interests, writing two or three Plan B papers might support development of a Ph. D. dissertation that brings together several aspects of a topic. Thus, the Master’s can be a stand-alone effort or it can be a running start on the Ph. D. It is not uncommon for Plan B papers to form the initial chapters of a dissertation.

**Where to Start?** Plan B Master’s papers often evolve out of seminar or even upper-division course papers. The number, length, and depth of coverage of a Plan B paper are a matter of local standards. The Graduate School sets minimum requirements, but you should find out early on exactly what your program requires beyond that. If you have your eye on a particular job or profession after the Master’s, strategize about the subject matter of your papers (just as you should about your whole program) so that they will support both your job prospects and your ability to perform the job. You may wish to publish from these papers if you are headed for a profession where publication is expected.

It is not necessarily a good idea to look at the theses and Plan B papers of students who have gone before you to get guidance on how to do your own. Keep in mind that the faculty committee’s comments are not attached to these, so some of them may not have been seen as A+ work. At the very least, if you feel the need to see models, ask the same people who will judge your work to point you to some good examples.

Make a time line for completion of your degree. The Master’s program should usually be two years at most, including the time for taking required classes. If you are on a fellowship or other full support and do not have to work on anything but your own program, you could conceivably finish a Master’s in one year of full-time effort. (Note: International students should be very aware of time limits for degree completion imposed by the federal government, in addition to program and graduate school time limits.)

**The Master’s Oral Exam.** If your program requires a final oral exam, you will be asked to demonstrate that you have learned what your program reflects. It is legitimate to ask your committee members what they think the exam will cover. Some will tell you, some won’t; but there’s no harm in asking.

The committee will vote to pass or fail. At the exam they also will tell you whether they will require any revisions to your written work before they sign the final approval (more common with a Plan A thesis). If you get any such comments, you should write them down in full prose immediately after your exam (That
beer can wait!), so that you don't forget important details that can haunt you later and hold up your graduation. The exam committee is expected to put revisions required in writing to the student.

If you have a final exam, you must take responsibility, with your adviser’s help, for recruiting an examining committee, scheduling completion of your papers or thesis so that the committee has time to read your work, ask for revisions, and read it again if needed. You also must schedule the exam itself. Your department’s administrative assistant may be in the practice of helping students with this last task; ask your adviser. Start this process well ahead of time, because you will find it more difficult than you expect to schedule even three faculty members. Avoid scheduling your exam during heavy grading periods, and ask well ahead of time whether your committee members have travel plans or other commitments that will limit their availability.

You should ask your adviser and your peers about local practices regarding exam etiquette. In some departments it is obligatory to provide coffee and cookies; in others the exam is more formal and catering is prohibited. Don’t try to bribe your committee with goodies, and under no circumstances should you provide alcohol. If it is standard practice, however, you might create a more relaxed atmosphere if there are some light refreshments at the start.

In the unfortunate event that one of your committee members becomes unavailable unexpectedly, it is possible to make a substitution with the approval of your adviser and DGS. These things take time, so plan, plan, plan! Substitutions must be approved by the Graduate School before the exam is held.

After the oral exam, you will be required to turn in a form signed by each of your committee members to the Graduate School, certifying that you are eligible to receive your Master’s degree. Also make sure that you turn in other necessary forms that your program may require, such as foreign language certifications. All the necessary forms can be downloaded from the Graduate School website:
http://www.grad.umn.edu/current_students/forms/masters.html.

The Daunting Dissertation
No matter how qualified you are (or feel that you are) after you’ve completed all of your classes, the universally required evidence of your qualification for the Ph.D. degree is the doctoral dissertation. This work can take different forms in different programs. Check with your graduate program and the Graduate School about format, etc.

There are many guidebooks on the form of the dissertation or thesis. These are listed in the resource section of this book. Your graduate programs will have their own standards, as will your other readers, so consult with them before you begin to write. Graduate School information is available at www.grad.umn.edu/current_students/forms/doctoral.html “Preparation of the Dissertation.”

Getting There from Here. The form of the dissertation is the least of your challenges. Getting to that stage often is the highest hurdle that graduate students face.

Unless you are certain that you will do only a Master’s degree, you should begin talking with your adviser (and others) about the Ph. D. program (including the dissertation) right from the start. The most difficult path through graduate school is one that jerks forward as a series of separate phases, from taking classes, to taking prelims, thinking about the dissertation, doing the research, and writing. The whole program should be planned as a single piece with milestones, so that what you do in Year Next contributes and supports what you do in Year Last. Present your ideas and hopes to your adviser in this way, and they should help you lay out your plan.

So, You’re Ready to Write. . .
Ok, you’ve taken your classes, passed your prelims, done your research. Now, the only thing standing between you and a rewarding professional life with enhanced earning power is. . . THAT BOOK YOU HAVE TO WRITE.

The First Step: stop calling it a book. There are few graduate students who aren’t intimidated by the
thought that they have to WRITE A BOOK in order to get out of school. It doesn’t have to be a masterpiece; it is an exercise in competency, albeit one that should contribute to the thinking in your field. Start to think of this work, instead, as:

- a short piece describing the research you just did
- a short piece describing the methods you used
- your analysis of the research
- a short review of the relevant literature.

After you have these under control, then add a short piece relating the conclusions you’ve drawn from the research.

Finally, when all of these parts are in front of you and completed to your satisfaction, step back and write an introduction to the whole thing, now that you know what it’s about!

The big reward, after you’ve pulled these pieces together, is to sit back and reflect about the people who have helped you throughout your program (both within your department and outside), and write your page or so acknowledging them.

You can ask your adviser and committee members to read each part and provide feedback as you complete a first draft. Some of this will depend upon local practice, so ask your adviser. Or, if you think that the pieces don’t make sense alone, get a first draft down on paper, no matter how rough, and get it into their hands for feedback. Also, very importantly, start to write before you complete your research! Getting your thoughts down on paper will likely trigger more experiments or variables to include making your story more complete and compelling. You also can draw upon other faculty members and your student peers for review and commentary, if they’re willing. More feedback now will save tedious revisions later when you’re more impatient or have a job waiting.

It is an excellent idea to get your final oral committee together occasionally during the research process if they are willing and available. Otherwise email interaction during this phase might work well, to get feedback and perhaps make adjustments in the research plan as needed. Once you’re in the writing stages, most of the feedback can be through individual interaction, but if your committee is willing you might also stage a preliminary group meeting on your first-revision draft.

The Last Word: Your Oral Defense

Pay close attention to Graduate School procedures throughout your graduate program, but pay even more attention to them as you construct your dissertation and approach your defense. There are rules about the timing of your Reviewers’ Report Form and the actual defense, along with other elements of the process. You don’t want any rude surprises at this point in your life. Get the latest word on medium and format for dissertations – the type of paper, margins, and rules about possible digital versions. It is crucial to follow these guidelines to the letter.

Schedule your oral exam far ahead of time. Give your committee plenty of time to read and comment, and give yourself time to revise. Your program’s expectations will dictate just how final the draft has to be when you defend it. It is in your interest to have the dissertation as far along as possible for your readers, however, if only to avoid the psychological dissonance of passing your final oral and then having to revive that pile on your desk for more work. There should be no rude surprises at a final oral exam. However, the end result is not a given. It is not a pro forma exercise. If you’ve had appropriate interaction with your committee leading up to your exam and throughout your program, the defense can be an enjoyable and stimulating discussion of your work, where you demonstrate that you’re ready to go out there and surpass your committee as part of the next generation of scholars.

The exam committee is expected to tell the student in writing what must be accomplished. A timeline is a good idea, too. If your committee gives you any revisions, sit down immediately after the defense and record them in great detail, before you go out to celebrate. The same guidance about catering the exam
applies as well: check local practices before you decide whether to have refreshments at the exam. Again, coffee and slightly above-average cookies are a pretty safe bet.

**Finish Before You Leave**

Many graduate students find themselves faced with job opportunities in their final year of school, while they are still finishing the dissertation. Job markets being what they are, it’s the rare student who will calmly pass by a job ad or turn down an offer just because they won’t have defended before the job’s starting date. Some students actually manage to finish their dissertations while in their first year of a job, but let’s talk about the other group. Too many times, a student will jump at the chance for a job-in-hand, only to find that the demands of the job absolutely preclude making good progress on the dissertation. The new employer probably will require completion of the degree within the first six months of the start date of the job; or, raises may depend upon having the thing finished. In the worst cases, the degree never gets finished and the person loses the job. Or, finishing takes so much of the person’s time during the first year that the production for tenure is slowed, and the other shoe drops at the 3-year contract review or the 7-year tenure review, when publication volume isn’t what it should be.

There is no reason to set yourself up for that scenario. If you’re applying for an academic position and if at all possible, plan your path through school so that you have the dissertation finished in Fall Semester, and reserve Spring Semester for the job search, for turning out a publication or two, and for developing your courses. If you’re headed for non-academic employment, think ahead about the seasonality of the profession you’re seeking and plan your schedule accordingly.

**Prepare for the Career Transition**

If you’re looking for an academic job:

**6-8 months before applying (March-May):**

- Attend one or two of the academic search workshops provided by the U. See the Center for Teaching and Learning Services, University Counseling and Consulting Services, and your college’s career services office.

- Purchase a book that details how to look for jobs; for example, *The Complete Academic and Tomorrow’s Professor*. Check the bookstore for books that are specific to your discipline.


**3-4 months before applying for academic jobs (June-August):**

- Get your curriculum vitae and other job search documents in order. The Center for Teaching & Learning Services has a Web site for help in creating these documents [http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/tutorials/jobsearch/resources.html](http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/tutorials/jobsearch/resources.html). You also can check the bookstore for good reference books. The best resource, though, probably is your adviser and other recent graduate students. Look at their CVs as examples, but be sure to tailor your CV for your specific job goals. It’s also an excellent idea to show a draft of your CV to several individuals (people writing your letters of recommendation, in particular) to get their feedback.

- Construct your research statement. The same rules apply here, depending on what type of job you want. If you want a research-heavy position, think through your statement carefully; it is very
important! Clearly define what your research vision is and how you have begun to accomplish it. Be sure to put your research into context so that readers from outside of your discipline will be able to understand what your research interests are.

• Construct your statement of teaching philosophy. The same rules apply here. Again, if you want a teaching-oriented position, think through this statement carefully. You may want to include samples of good evaluations of your teaching. Consider taking the Preparing Future Faculty Program's GRAD 8102 Practicum course, which focuses on job search planning, creating job search documents, and teaching with a faculty mentor from one of 25 partner institutions. It's best to take this course a year - and at least a semester - before entering the job market. The PFF course GRAD 8101 or its equivalent must be completed before enrollment in the practicum course. Contact PFF for details: pff@umn.edu or 612-625-3811.

• The cover letter. Many individuals write a blanket cover letter that can be sent to any academic position. In this tough market, it is probably a much better idea to tailor and personalize your cover letter to each position. Do your homework regarding the institution and department to which you are applying. Who will your colleagues be? What is the mission of the college/ university? How will you fit into the department, and what will be your particular contribution? Remember, this is your opportunity to sell yourself.

• Ask three or four references if they will write letters of recommendation for you. This should be done well in advance of your job search. Most academic job applications are due in fall/ winter. Try to ask your references to write letters over the summer. Do your best to make their job easier by giving them copies of your CV, research/ teaching statements, and any other information that will highlight your career goals and your accomplishments. Don’t forget to include pre-addressed, stamped envelopes and due dates for your references!

4-6 weeks before job applications are due:

• Get your materials (including envelopes, stamps, and addresses) to your references. Take advantage of technology use printer labels or mail merge so you do not have to address every envelope for every letter of recommendation.

• Start to copy your reprints and other materials that will be included in your applications. Be sure to follow the instructions regarding what the search committee wants. It may put them off if you send more information than is requested. If you just can’t fit everything you want to say within their limits, it is sometimes acceptable to add a more detailed appendix; ask your adviser or other faculty members who have been on search committees about whether this is OK in your field.

After the job search:

Do not get discouraged if you do not get a job on your first try. It takes graduates in some disciplines a few years to get a position! Be sure to talk to your adviser about such a possibility. That is, where is your funding going to come from if you do not get a job this year? Plan for this contingency so that you can sustain the job search without either starving to death or dropping out of the profession.

If you are looking for a job outside of academia:

Several months before you plan to graduate:

• Attend one of the workshops held by the University Counseling and Consulting Services (UCCS) on job searches. They have several tips on how to identify the kind of job you want and how to determine what your strengths and weaknesses are.
• Construct your resume so that it will be attractive and tailored to the type of jobs you want.

• Determine where to look for industry and other jobs outside of academia. Are you signed up for the right newsletters? Web sites? Professional societies? Journals?

• Interview individuals who have jobs that you want. If there is a company you think you might like to work for, you can always make an appointment for an informational interview. This is a non-intimidating way for you to get one-on-one information about a potential employer or a particular field.

Interviewing

• Talk to recent graduates to find out all you can about their experiences at their interviews. Seek out the advice of your college’s Career Services office to find out what you should expect, what you can negotiate, which questions can be legally asked during the interview and which can’t.

• Make sure you wear comfortable, professional-looking clothing especially shoes for all of the walking you’ll be doing on your interviews.

• Find out exactly what your schedule will be. Will you give a seminar? A course lecture? Who will be in the audience? If possible, have a copy of your schedule sent to you in advance.

Get Out Socially

This may seem counterintuitive, but you will be much more productive if you learn how to strike a balance in your life among school, work, play, family, and all of the other parts you may be juggling. Although it is tempting to hide in your lab or office, relaxing and/or having some fun will help you think more clearly when you do go back to work. If your adviser gives you a hard time about taking some time for fun, it is up to you to decide how to deal with such complaints. After all, no one is going to tell you that you are working too hard on your research! We all have different needs and lifestyle preferences. Be your own judge.

So, you’ve decided to take a sanity break. How do you figure out what to do? Check the popular Web page, http://vita.mn/, or the U of M events calendar, for entertainment ideas. If nothing appeals to you, try the following suggestions:

• Take advantage of the U’s Rec Center. Membership is free for fee-paying students and classes are relatively inexpensive. Keeping your body healthy also will add to your total sense of well-being.

Case: Balancing Work and Life

An adviser is impressed by one of his top students, who seems to put his graduate work above all else. The student, in his fourth year, has been living in the dormitory all through graduate school. This is a good arrangement for him and his lab, because he often can stop in the lab late at night to check on things if necessary, and he’s very productive. Just as he is about to finish, he informs his adviser that he plans to get married and would like to take a week of vacation for a honeymoon. The adviser thinks that this will derail the student from finishing, when he could just as well delay his marriage for one year, finish in good style, and have a great job to start along with his marriage. He tries his best to persuade the student to do what he thinks is in his best interests saying “I really wish you wouldn’t do that, and I don’t think you can afford to take that much time off so close to when you should be finishing”.

Q: Can this situation be resolved to everyone’s satisfaction? How?
• Museums! There are several terrific museums around town The Weisman, right on campus; the Walker Art Museum; the Science Museum; and the Children’s Museum, to name just a few.

• Walk/ rollerblade/ bike around one of the many lakes. Try Lake Calhoun, Harriet, or Lake of the Isles. Of course, reward yourself with ice cream afterwards (pssst there are a few great places in Uptown!).

• If you’re more of a river rat, don’t miss the beautiful River Road bike/ walk path. It’s a lovely trail along both sides of the Mississippi River.

• Music. Minneapolis has a great local music scene. See City Pages for a complete listing, or visit their Web page (http://www.citypages.com).

• Live theater and dance. Minneapolis has a fabulous live theater/ dance scene. Again, check City Pages for performance info. (Note: Student rush tickets usually are sold right before performances and are rather inexpensive. Call the theater you will be attending and ask about their rush ticket policy and availability.) Be sure to check the University’s music and theater productions on the U of M events calendar. The Rarig Center and Ted Mann theaters have great musical and theatrical productions. Take advantage of what we have here on campus!

• Join clubs or organizations that interest you. If politics is your interest, join the League of Women Voters or MPIRG. Volunteering for a cause that you are passionate about also increases your chances of meeting others with whom you have something in common.

• Organize a lab/ office outing! Drag your fellow graduate students down to your local brew house for a happy hour one day after work. Or extend it into an evening by organizing a dinner or attending an event together as a group.

• Take a fun class at the U. There are dance, music, sports, and art classes that can be fun and relaxing!

Mental Health

Sometimes you can take a situation only so far by yourself and only expend so much energy before you need assistance in seeing your options, validating yourself, or just being heard. Seeking counseling doesn’t have the awful stigma that it used to. Even folks who look very balanced and happy often talk with therapists. A good therapist doesn’t tell you what to do, but rather supports the idea that the answers and choices are within you; you just need the energy and validation to see them yourself.

Boynton Mental Health Services has several counselors, who come highly recommended by students who have used them. Students enrolled in the graduate assistant health plan usually are covered. University Counseling & Consulting Services (UCCS) also offers many services and sessions, which may be free or offered at low cost to students. These include workshops on advising relationships, thesis-writing support groups, dealing with stress and motivation and other issues in grad school, all free to any grad students making progress toward their degree. These services are well worth checking out. Also, see the list of trouble signs and warnings that you ought to seek more serious help in “Navigating Your First Year.”

Disability Services. Many students tackle graduate school with physical, mental, or learning disabilities. This is a courageous move, but if you have or think you might have any of these disabilities, you should know that the U of M Disability Services office is available to assist you. Individuals may have an initial screening free of charge. Later referrals for testing will be at the student’s expense. If a student is deemed to have special needs, a counselor will be assigned to the student based on the disability. Then, as the student needs assistance or guidance, the counselor can be contacted individually. Where appropriate, letters from a student’s counselor may be sent to professors to explain what is necessary to
accommodate the needs of the student. If you feel that this service may be of help to you, contact them. This isn’t about being pampered, and isn’t anything to be ashamed of. It is about giving you the assistance that you need to do your very best while you are here.

**Resources for Graduate Students**

**Academic/Professional Resources**

- Center for Teaching and Learning Services, [http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/](http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/) 
  612-625-3041, 315, Science Classroom Building, 220 Pleasant St. SE
- Preparing Future Faculty Program, [http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/pff/](http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/pff/) 
  612-625-3811, 315 Science Classroom Building, 220 Pleasant St. SE
- The Graduate School, [http://www.grad.umn.edu/](http://www.grad.umn.edu/) 
  612-625-3490, 316 Johnston Hall,
- Thriving Through the Experience, a book of questions to prompt reflection on what you want to get out of your graduate experience. Available in print from the Office for University Women [http://www1.umn.edu/women/](http://www1.umn.edu/women/)
- Office for University Women 
  432 Morrill Hall, 100 Church Street SE, 612-625-9837, [http://www1.umn.edu/women/](http://www1.umn.edu/women/)

**Financial Assistance/ Employment**

- Graduate Assistant Insurance Office 
  612-625-6936, N-323 Boynton Health Service, [http://www.bhs.umn.edu/insurance/graduate](http://www.bhs.umn.edu/insurance/graduate)
- Graduate Assistant Employment/Office of Human Resources 
- Funding/aid: 
  [http://onestop.umn.edu/onestop/financialaid.html](http://onestop.umn.edu/onestop/financialaid.html) 
  [http://www.grad.umn.edu/current_students/funding/](http://www.grad.umn.edu/current_students/funding/)
- Jobs: 
  [http://www.umn.edu/ohr/](http://www.umn.edu/ohr/) 

**Graduate Student Government Organizations**

- Council of Graduate Students (COGS) 
  612-626-1612, 405 Johnston Hall, [http://www.cogs.umn.edu](http://www.cogs.umn.edu)
- Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GAPSA) 
  612-625-2982; 234 Coffman Union, [http://www.gapsa.umn.edu](http://www.gapsa.umn.edu)
Health/Counseling

- **Crisis Counselor**
  612-625-8475, N-406 and 408 Boynton Health Service

- **Disability Services**
  612-626-1333, 180 McNamara Alumni Center
  An individual counselor is assigned to each student based on their disability and specific need.
  [http://ds.umn.edu](http://ds.umn.edu)

- **Health Service: Boynton**
  (Mpls.) 612-625-8400
  (St. Paul), 612-624-7700; Coffey Hall
  [http://www.bhs.umn.edu](http://www.bhs.umn.edu)

- **Mental Health Clinic**
  Appointments: 612-624-1444, [http://www.bhs.umn.edu/services/mentalhealth.htm](http://www.bhs.umn.edu/services/mentalhealth.htm)
  Consultation: 612-625-8475
  N-400 Boynton

- **Office for University Women**
  612-625-9837, 432 Morrill Hall, [http://www1.umn.edu/women](http://www1.umn.edu/women)

- **Aurora Center for Advocacy & Education**

- **Sexual Violence Crisis Line**
  612-626-9111

- **Suicide Prevention**
  612-347-2222

- **University Counseling and Consulting Services**
  612-624-3323, 109 Eddy Hall (Mpls.)
  651-624-3323, 199 Coffey Hall (St. Paul), [http://www.ucs.umn.edu](http://www.ucs.umn.edu)

Conflict Resolution Resources

- **Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action**
  612-624-9547, 419 Morrill Hall, [http://www.eoaffact.umn.edu](http://www.eoaffact.umn.edu)

- **Student Dispute Resolution Center**

- **Student Emergency Loan Fund**
  612-625-2650; 231 Coffman Union, [http://www1.umn.edu/self](http://www1.umn.edu/self)

- **University Student Legal Services**
  612-624-1001, 160 West Bank Union-skyway, [http://www1.umn.edu/usls](http://www1.umn.edu/usls)
Student Groups and Cultural Resources

- **Black Student Union** formerly the Africana Student Cultural Center  
  612-624-8938, 209 Coffman Memorial Union, [http://www.duluth.umn.edu/mlrc/aa/contact.html](http://www.duluth.umn.edu/mlrc/aa/contact.html)

- **American Association of University Women**  

- **American Indian Student Cultural Center**  
  612-624-0243, 204 Coffman Memorial Union,  
  [http://www.sua.umn.edu/groups/directory/show.php?id=274](http://www.sua.umn.edu/groups/directory/show.php?id=274)

- **Asian American Student Union**  
  612-624-9824, 219 Coffman Memorial Union, [http://www.tc.umn.edu/~asu/](http://www.tc.umn.edu/~asu/)

- **Multicultural Center for Academic Excellence**  
  612-624-6386, 185 Klaeber Court, [http://www.mcae.umn.edu](http://www.mcae.umn.edu)

- **Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, & Transgender Program Office**  
  612-625-0537, 138 Klaeber Court, [http://www1.umn.edu/glbt](http://www1.umn.edu/glbt)

- **Hillel (Jewish Student and Faculty Center)**  

- **International Student and Scholar Services**  
  612-626-7100, 190 Humphrey Center MN, [http://www.isss.umn.edu](http://www.isss.umn.edu)

- **Minnesota International Student Association**  
  612-625-6119, 201 Coffman Memorial Union, [http://www.tc.umn.edu/~misa/](http://www.tc.umn.edu/~misa/)

- **La Raza Student Cultural Center**  
  612-625-2995, 211 Coffman Memorial Union, [http://www.tc.umn.edu/~laraza](http://www.tc.umn.edu/~laraza)

- **Lutheran Campus Ministry**  
  612-626-8401, Room 226E, Coffman Memorial Union [http://www.tc.umn.edu/~umism/](http://www.tc.umn.edu/~umism/)

- **Office for University Women**  
  612-625-9837, 432 Morrill Hall, [http://www1.umn.edu/women](http://www1.umn.edu/women)
Bibliography and Internet Resources


Survival Guides for Academic Life


**Mentoring**


Job-Hunting


The [Chronicle of Higher Education job section](http://www.chronicle.com/jobs/notify.htm) offers an e-mail notification service that e-mails list of institutions offering jobs in your particular field. You do not have to be a Chronicle subscriber to use it. Other recent columns of interest on the Chronicle’s job site include:


The [National Research Council Career Planning Center for Beginning Scientists and Engineers (CPC)](http://www.nationalacademies.org/) includes a bulletin board, an on-line mentoring center, data on trends and changes in the job market, and links to the many useful on-line books, job and research funding listings, and disciplinary society Web sites.

The [American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Science’s NextWave](http://www.nextwave.org). The NextWave has open forums on topical issues, feature articles on alternative science careers, site reviews, news articles, and nuts-and-bolts science career advice columns.

Gender, Cultural, and Disability Issues


The Association of Women in Science (http://www.awis.org) and the Society of Women Engineers (http://societyofwomenengineers.swe.org/) provide guidance or a link to a related discipline-specific organization.

Resources for students with disabilities include: the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD); 614-488-4972, which promotes education, communication, and training; Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) 800/848-4815; Higher Education and Adult Training for the Handicapped (HEATH), now renamed Persons with Disabilities 800-544-3284, 202-939-9320 for help with transitions from high school to college, college to graduate school; Job Accommodation Network (JAN) 800-526-7234 for laboratory or workplace accommodations for persons with a disability; National Information Center on Deafness 202-451-5051 for resources for deaf and hearing-impaired students; and the President’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities 202-376-6200 http://www.dol.gov/odep/.

51
Responsible Conduct of Research


Special Issue on Research Ethics. 1995. Professional Ethics, Vol. 4, Nos. 3 & 4, Spring/Summer.


Scientific Careers


52


**Communication**


**Time Management**


**The Writing Process**

Note: The information in this section is useful to students as well as faculty.

Part III: Lighthouse Beacons and Other Navigational Aids
For Faculty Members/Advisers: How You Can Help

This booklet is written by graduate students (albeit with a collective student experience of about 50 years), so we can't claim to know yet what it's like to be in a faculty member's shoes. The ideas and suggestions that follow are drawn from our own experiences, and from the input of many students at the U of M and across the country. Perhaps some of you will disagree with what is said here, or would have something to add. We hope that this booklet might serve as a discussion piece within your own department, with your own advisees, or with other faculty members. The booklet will be revised again in subsequent years, based on feedback from you.

Professional Development

- Career planning: Help students devise a long-term plan to help them achieve their career goals. Students need advice about how many research projects they should plan to finish, how many publications are appropriate, whether they should get teaching/practical experience, what timeline they should be on to achieve these things, etc. You may or may not agree with students' choices of career goals, but if you've provided them with information on a full range of options and a candid assessment of their abilities, then support them in whatever career path they choose. For example, many doctoral students decide upon non-academic careers. In today's market, this might be a wise choice, because it can be difficult to obtain an academic position.

- Networking: You are an expert in your field. Most likely, you know other top researchers in your field. Help your students get connected by introducing them to your colleagues at conferences. Plan dinner meetings and invite several of your colleagues to join you and your students! Have students work on joint projects you're involved in with other researchers. The more people they know, the more likely it is that they will do well on the job market.

- Academic advising: Take note of what courses your previous students have liked or disliked. Let your students know what classes are recommended by others and/or are important for their marketability or research interests. If you do not know the ins and outs of program requirements, refer your students to individuals in the department (the DGS or DGS assistant) who are in the know.

- Timely progress: Be sensitive to the time line that is unique to each student. Some students may be highly motivated and may wish to graduate quickly. Other students may have a variety of obligations (e.g., families) that may extend their programs. Help students make timely progress that is reasonable to their current situation and career goals, keeping in mind your own resources of time and financial support.

- Be honest with your students about what kinds of support you or the department will likely be able to offer them, and how long the support will last. They don't want to be surprised two or three years into their graduate program to find out that they won't receive the support they've been counting on.

- Help students honestly assess their own skills. What are their strengths and weaknesses? You can help them to recognize what they need to improve upon, and to set reasonable goals for doing so. Also, it will keep them motivated if they have a clear vision of what they need to focus on, and what types of jobs will be appropriate for their skills and goals.
Research Advice/ Technical Advice

One of your most important roles as an adviser is to guide students in the development of their research skills and a solid research program.

- Research skills: Oversee your students on their research projects. Try to be available to answer questions regarding the details of experiments/studies. If you have many students, a good way to be sure all your students’ research needs are being met is to have periodic lab/group meetings where your students update you on their progress. For quick questions, e-mail also is a good way to help students with their research.

- Research program: Assist your students in developing a program/blueprint of research projects. What is their overarching question? What studies/research projects will be used to answer those questions? How do all of the studies fit together? Help your students to avoid a hodgepodge of experiments that appear unfocused.

Your Expectations of Your Advisees

Make your expectations clear. Sit down with each new advisee as soon as possible, and make sure that you both understand the workload requirements of any assistantship and the level of interaction that you both expect to have. If you are up front with each other from the start, your relationship will run much more smoothly. Also, if you have different expectations, you can problem-solve together to find the best course of action. Maybe your student needs a co-adviser or a different adviser altogether. Your students don’t have to be your friends in order for the relationships to be rewarding and productive, but they do have to respect you. There are several basic tenets to establishing a mutually respectful relationship. For your part, be fair, be a responsible and ethical role model, and be supportive. Most students will respond in kind, with respect, cooperation, and support for your endeavors.

Help Your Students to Stay Motivated

As you may remember, one of the biggest challenges for many graduate students is to maintain their motivation over the course of their degree programs. There are few deadlines imposed on students once they finish taking classes, and this actually makes keeping a research program on track difficult at times. How can you motivate your students without intimidating them? Here are a few ideas:

- Set goals with your students. At the beginning of the semester, have each student set some research goals. What projects will be written up? How much data will be collected? At the end of the semester, check in with your students to determine their progress.

- Recognize your student’s achievements. Congratulate them when they give a good research presentation or pass their prelims. Let them know that you are taking notice of their

Case: Motivation vs. Castigation

Early in his final year, a student complains to his adviser that it is hard to maintain steam on his project at this point in his career. The adviser replies, “Maybe you need to find a different lab”.

Q: Should the student find a different lab? Who else could the student turn to? Should it be the role of the adviser to concern himself with this?
accomplishments. A little positive reinforcement goes a long way.

- If you have to criticize occasionally, try to be constructive, even if your student appears to be slacking off. You can’t always tell what’s going on in a student’s head, without asking explicitly. The student may be simply at a loss, but afraid to seek guidance.

**The Happy Medium**

The major grad student complaints regarding advising often fall into two categories: not enough attention, or too much attention. Try to find that happy medium, which may be different for different students, or at different times in their graduate careers. If expectations of both the adviser and advisee are clearly established at the outset, it will be much easier to determine what the happy medium is for each student. Remember that although graduate students are adults and may even have some professional employment experience, they are still students and still need some guidance from you and other faculty members.

Also keep in mind that few people like to be hovered over while they are working. There may be periods when you meet with a student or group of students every day but, in general, meeting between once a week and once a month is enough to keep most students on track.

### Case: Adviser Apathy?

A student finishes an undergraduate degree in English literature at an eastern college. She takes a local job, but soon decides that she’d like to continue on in school. She applies to graduate school in a social science discipline, and is admitted with a Teaching Assistantship. She takes classes she enjoys and focuses on a new area of the discipline that allows her to engage with literature. She approaches a professor to discuss her interests, and asks if he would serve as her adviser. He doesn’t find much to say to her about her work, but likes her personally and enjoys her enthusiasm and her ability to write. So, he interacts with her about those. She finishes a Master’s and then moves on to prelims. Then she is faced with the realization that, since her topic is not focused on the new areas of the discipline, her chances of obtaining a grant to support her dissertation work are practically nil. When she eventually approaches him about finding financial support for her dissertation project, the adviser is unable to find any substance for a grant or fellowship proposal in her work to date. He is at a loss as to how to help her.

Q: What was the adviser’s responsibility in this case? The student’s? What could the student have done to better understand the culture of the department or the discipline?

**Students Who are Not Your Advisees**

Students who are not your advisees may seek you out on their own initiative, or may be referred to you by their own adviser. By the same token, don’t hesitate to refer your own students to other faculty members for advice. You might have a particular professional experience or expertise that can help graduate students with their research. Or you may have knowledge of a particular institution or region that a student is considering for a job or post-doc. The advice sought even can range to personal issues, such as how to bring up the issue of a partner’s employment prospects during an interview. If you find that you’re overburdened with your colleague’s students, it’s acceptable to set limits. You can do this gently by scheduling brief appointments (with a definite end), or explaining that you’re very busy right now but would be happy to answer specific questions by e-mail. Everyone is served when students have multiple perspectives to consider and there is open communication with colleagues.

Students may approach you with problems they are having with their own adviser. This is a tricky situation, especially if you are an assistant professor. If you’re not in a position to intervene on the student’s behalf, so be prepared to refer the student to someone who can help. Start with your graduate
program office (specifically, the DGS, if that is feasible) and help the student find the route up the Food Chain.

**Help with Graduate Student Problems**

If your students are having problems, whether your advisees or your TAs, the best approach is to ask them what's going on. Often students are reluctant to discuss any problems that they're having – family, financial or otherwise – that they perceive might lead someone to question their dedication to their graduate program. A frank discussion should get to the heart of most problems. If the problem is lack of motivation, help your student figure out why the student’s goals have changed. Is the student having trouble envisioning a future beyond graduate school? Often, staying motivated in the period between oral prelims and the final Ph.D. dissertation defense can be difficult because of the lack of structure and concrete goals along the way. Help your students set and meet periodic goals. Additionally, the beginning of work on the thesis or dissertation research can be a difficult time, because students can feel overwhelmed or under-prepared. Investing a little extra time at the beginning of students graduate careers can do wonders for their motivation and pay off in increased productivity later on.

The Graduate School Student Services office (316 Johnston Hall, 612-625-3490, [http://www.grad.umn.edu/offices-contacts/student_services.html](http://www.grad.umn.edu/offices-contacts/student_services.html)) or the Council of Graduate Students (COGS, 405 Johnston Hall, 612-626-1612, cogs@umn.edu, [http://www.cogs.umn.edu](http://www.cogs.umn.edu)) can help you with referrals to other services (counseling, social service, financial) for more serious problems. If a student is having personal problems, your best approach is to be understanding yet not get too involved. If students look to you for personal advice, be prepared to refer them to a counseling professional. Your students should be comfortable talking to you and alerting you to the fact that they are having problems, but you should try to maintain the boundaries of a professional relationship. You can contact University Counseling and Consulting Services (612-624-3323, 109 Eddy Hall) or Boynton Health Service (612-625-8400) for guidance or referrals on how to approach such a situation.

**Nepotism and Consensual Relations: Why Not?**

Two of the most enduring features of academia among other professions is that (1) junior members look up to senior members, and (2) shared intellectual challenges and discoveries can forge personal bonds in a way that few other endeavors can.

1. Often it is a subconscious/implicit/instinctive recognition of the longer experience, greater accomplishments, and larger accumulated wisdom that creates such deference; sometimes it is simply a response to the same force of personality that got the senior professors where they are. Power can be attractive as well, and for neophytes it can be quite compelling. Especially in the first years of graduate school, students may equate the higher status of faculty members with their character as human beings, and thus the higher the rank, the more implicit the trust. (After all, aren’t those promotions and kudos awarded on the basis of outstanding wisdom and strength of character?) Finally, even when deference to status is a conscious, explicit attitude on the part of students, they may not be able to separate their response to a person’s status from their response to the person. If a professor indicates either implicitly or explicitly a preference for certain behavior in a student, the student may not perceive any possibility of refusal.

2. Now, place this dynamic into a context of heated intellectual debate, faculty-student mentoring, partnerships and teamwork, and shared accomplishments and defeats. The result is a most natural setting for close personal relationships to form.

As compelling as these circumstances are, they contain innumerable opportunities for students' graduate programs to be derailed and for their careers and even their lives to be damaged.
irreparably. Worst of all, this can happen even while everybody appears to be happily engaged and apparently succeeding.

It’s Not Just a Bad Idea; it’s the Law!

The faculty-student relationship is inherently unequal. Start with this as a basic truth. In fact, it is the basis of a university policy, entitled Nepotism and Consensual Relationships (http://www1.umn.edu/usenate/policies/consensualcp.html), which is meant to protect students from incurring negative professional consequences from personal relationships with their employers, supervisors, or advisers. The policy says, simply, that any two people who are university faculty members, students, staff members, or other individual(s) engaged in any university activity or program...and who are in a “married or other committed relationship, significant familial relationship, or consensual sexual or romantic relationship” should not at the same time be in a position to hire, promote, supervise, evaluate, grade, advise, or determine the salary of one another.

The policy requires any two such University members who are or will be in such a position to consult (in confidence) with the appropriate administrator, to ensure that the two people in the relationship are not put in an employment or other situation (as above). Violation of this policy can lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal. The person in the superior position of the two will be presumed a priori to be responsible for initiating the consultation and for any negative consequences to the subordinate if no consultation is sought.

It is interesting to note that, when the most recent revision of this policy was being debated in the University Senate, a handful of people rose to speak against it, citing their own successful relationships or the invasion of privacy represented by the consultation requirement. The policy does not prohibit consensual relationships. It places the responsibility for damage from such relationships onto the superior party in the relationship, and provides some protection for the subordinate.

Students need to be protected from the potential negative consequences of the inherently unequal power relationship that they face with their advisers and employers. Until students have accumulated enough experience with professors-as-people, they may forget that professors are people too. Even students who are practiced in the separation of personal and professional roles need a place to turn when their superiors, whether thoughtlessly or deliberately, misuse their power. It is the responsibility of the employer and adviser to ensure that their positions of authority and trust are not abused.

Senate and Regents Policies
(some of these are currently under review)

http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies.html
Juggling Faculty Roles: Potential Impacts on Your Students

One of the biggest obstacles throughout a faculty career is juggling the commitments and commensurate expectations involved in fulfilling multiple roles: teacher, adviser, mentor, researcher and contributor to the discipline, community, and institution. Learning these roles and how to achieve balance among them is especially difficult during the first years of a faculty appointment, when the pressure to achieve tenure and excel as a scholar is heaviest. When you’re working with graduate students, this can lead to some confusion.

Some professors stress the adviser/mentor role in the years leading up to tenure, by investing heavily in their advisees. Unfortunately, once tenure is achieved this emphasis sometimes is shifted away from graduate students and onto individual research. Still others initially stress their role as researcher, and interact with their graduate students primarily from the perspective of how the students can help them to achieve their research goals. This can lead to burnout for the graduate students and provide them a very narrow experience within academic life. Neither of these scenarios is optimal for the new faculty member or for the graduate student. Faculty members miss learning how to achieve that crucial balance among roles, and graduate students lose the potential for a full mentoring relationship with their advisers, as well as a fuller exposure to the multiple roles of academic life.

Being aware of these challenges to your time and energies is important. Realizing that the way in which you handle these multiple demands also will impact your graduate students is an important part of your role as a faculty member. One way to help get your bearings in this delicate balancing act is through faculty mentors. If your program or department has not set up a formal or informal mentoring program for new faculty, speak with your department or program chair. Even if they aren’t able to start up a program, they should be able to recommend faculty members that would be able to serve as mentors and help you negotiate this experience. Mentoring should not end at the department level, however. Institution-wide events can serve as starting points for meeting faculty members, both veteran and new, from other departments who are coping or have previously coped with similar issues. Getting involved in a campus-wide organization, committee, or cultural group can be another good source for mentors (although you should choose judiciously so that you don’t get overextended with committee or other service-related work).

This broader level of involvement can be especially important for members of minority groups within their departments, who would benefit from interactions with people facing similar issues. Additionally, keeping your network of mentors as broad as possible can be beneficial and provide you with a variety of insights. Faculty acquaintances from your graduate experience and faculty leaders within disciplinary societies can be great resources and valuable assets, as you learn to juggle the multiple faculty roles.

Teacher as Role Model

Growing Into the Teaching Role

Professors value the teaching, research, and service components of their jobs very differently. Each person strikes the balance among the three that best suits their own temperament and tastes, and that meets the demands of their units.

While teaching quality is getting more attention these days, at Research I universities such as the U of M, research remains the top priority, and increasing time commitments to service are required as well. That sometimes leaves teaching as the middle child; it must receive basic attention, but nurturing of the craft may fall short in the crush of competing demands.

The value placed on good teaching also varies greatly among departments. Commonly, teaching is required but teaching excellence goes unrewarded, in both merit pay and tenure considerations, and in
recognition by one’s peers. Even the most dedicated and creative teacher can find disincentives to constantly improve his or her craft, when all of the professional rewards are elsewhere and time is at a premium.

The resulting internal conflict among values can be an enormous source of stress for faculty members especially at Research I institutions as they feel caught between their institution and their students. In addition, a professor whose circumstances prohibit attention to teaching will find it difficult to mentor graduate students to become good teachers, and will not be a good model for this role. This is a problem, since most graduates of Research I universities who go on to academic careers end up in institutions with heavier teaching loads, and often with greater emphasis on teaching quality. Students who approach the academic job market never having taught and having nothing to say about teaching face a disadvantage, both as applicants and as new hires.

Even if their departments do not support teaching development, it is important for students aiming for academic careers to get some teaching credentials, confidence, and experience before they leave graduate school. This can be accomplished without compromising the research programs of either faculty members or students. An important message for your advisees is that, even at this Research I university, teaching matters.

Part of preparing graduate students for academic careers, then, is helping them develop as teachers while they work and study in departments that value research activity first and foremost, and that may frown upon students who devote time to teaching development while they are in school. Students often are told that the most important preparation for teaching is knowing the subject matter well, and that the rest will take care of itself. This is true especially of senior faculty members, most of whom operated on this model and developed whatever teaching skills they have through practice, on their own initiative and good sense.

As graduate students get farther away from taking classes, they may lose the means to develop as professional teachers, especially if they work for several years as Research Assistants. If you become the best teacher you can be, you’ll be a great role model for your graduate students. If you wish to enhance your teaching skills, you can take advantage of the workshops and seminars offered by the Center for Teaching and Learning Services. Your students also can help you to improve on your teaching, if you listen carefully to their comments. It may be helpful to ask your students for more than one evaluation each term. Construct your own mid-semester evaluation form to see what mid-course changes might be constructive.

Teaching Your Students to Teach
If you have grants that allow you to cut down on the amount of teaching you do, it might be a nice opportunity to have some of your students teach. Even many research jobs prefer candidates that have some teaching experience these days.

Allow/ encourage your students to participate in the Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) program. The knowledge gained through PFF will give a huge boost to their employability, even outside of academia. They will need your support in order to take the courses, in a couple of ways: (1) they’ll need your approval to spend time on this course, which prepares students for teaching in their disciplines; and (2) they’ll need early notice of the program in order to work the courses into their academic program while they still have the tuition benefit (if they are Graduate Assistants). If you want more information about the program, including ideas about best timing for taking the course, see the PFF Web site (http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/pff/) or contact them at pff@umn.edu.

Some suggestions:
- As you sit down with your advisees, share your thinking about your course design, lecture style, time management, and the balancing act that teaching, research, and service requires. Give specific examples whenever possible.
- Encourage your students to sit in on your classes occasionally, and to ask you questions about how and why you teach in the way that you do.

- If you have Teaching Assistants, offer them a chance to deliver one lecture during the semester. Encourage them to provide support and peer review to each other.

- Create a central pool of resources both on teaching in general and on the specific course that each new generation of TAs can look to for ideas.

- If your graduate students will be Research Assistants only, you can provide much of the same help by connecting them with your own teaching activity.

Fortunately, both faculty and graduate students at the University of Minnesota have excellent resources to draw upon outside of their departments, to improve and refresh their teaching skills.

The Center for Teaching and Learning Services (www.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn) is the primary source on campus for information and teaching resources, workshops, consultation, and formal courses. Center staff will consult with individual professors, instructors (including grad students!), or departments on instructional development in general, or on a particular course or aspect thereof. Through the Digital Media Center help is available for Web site development. CTLS provides an orientation program for new faculty members, short courses and workshops for current faculty members, and help with English-as-a-second-language issues. One of the CTLS’s most important resources for graduate students is the Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) program.

The PFF program at the U of M is one of only a handful of programs in the country to offer semester-based credit-bearing courses. At the end of the program, students will have received a certificate of completion, put together a teaching portfolio that can be used as part of job applications, have mindfully created a job search plan and portfolio, and established additional mentor-based relationships with at least three professors and countless peers. For students who wish to take a shorter course or to build credits for the first PFF course one-credit-at-a-time, the Program offers a number of GRAD 8200 topics courses; contact the program director for details (612-624-6507) or see the PFF Web site: http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/pff/.

**Teaching Skills Resources:**
For self-paced study on instructional development, we recommend these books:


See also:


*Teaching at the University of Minnesota: A Handbook for Faculty and Instructional Staff.*

*Teaching at the University of Minnesota: A Handbook for Teaching Assistants.*

The last two books are available through the Office of Human Resources or the Center for Teaching and
Boundaries, Power Differentials

In the graduate advising relationship, the power balance is tilted in favor of the adviser. The more aware of this fact that you are, the better an adviser you will be. It can be difficult or impossible for students to say no to requests by an adviser or supervisor. Your graduate student (whether your advisee or your TA) is NOT your secretary, best friend, spouse, child, therapist, host, babysitter, mover, housesitter, or personal shopper. That being said, it is perfectly reasonable to expect students on assistantships in laboratory research groups to pitch in to help run the lab and to train new students. Sometimes subtle pressure to fulfill inappropriate requests from faculty members is applied, through (implicit or explicit) threats of less-than-glowing letters of recommendation, or more subtle signs of disapproval. Try to remain aware of the student's perspective on your status. Even if you are just out of grad school yourself, your title alone now confers a new power and authority that is easy to forget, especially with students close to your own age.

One of the most difficult aspects of coping with the power imbalance between you and your graduate students is the tension between the need to regard them as subordinates in status and to feel somewhat responsible for their welfare and the need to bring them along as professional colleagues. Faculty advisers at all levels of experience often find that tension an obstacle to doing what is in the students best interests. For example, if a student asks you to write a letter of support for a fellowship or a job, and you really cannot in good conscience recommend the student without reservation, the student needs to know that. If you honestly feel that you can’t write a student an enthusiastic and positive letter of recommendation, you should be candid but gentle about it, and be explicit about the reasons. The student may not have other references to turn to and may ask you to write for them anyway, but at least they won’t feel undercut if they discover the nature of your letter, as they likely will eventually.

You are not a graduate student/post-doc any more

Sometimes new faculty hires right out of graduate school feel the need to try to be buddies with their grad students to distance themselves from the new status differential in which they suddenly find themselves. Some graduate students appreciate that, because it makes them comfortable and at ease. This often backfires later, however, if the need arises to redirect the student away from a potential error, or to correct some aspect of the student’s path through grad school. Students need and appreciate an adviser who is friendly, but who doesn’t hesitate to be the professor. Stop and think when you are tempted to make confidantes out of your students. This can place them in very difficult positions and make situations uncomfortable for you as well. Finding a healthy and sensible distance that protects both you and your students, and yet keeps you accessible, is one of the greatest challenges of being a faculty adviser.

Every institution has its own culture and style of operation, which means that you will have to adapt your own style. Draw upon other faculty members and your mentors from graduate school for advice, and as role models. There is no single model for the complex faculty role. Choose the style and practices that make you comfortable and that work well with your students.

Grow Your Own Advising Style?

It will be useful occasionally to reflect upon your own experience as a graduate student. You may wish to use your own adviser as your role model when it comes to developing your advising style, but you needn’t if that model was less than satisfactory. Sometimes new faculty members who had bad advising experiences themselves are tempted to go to opposite extremes when they become advisers. If your adviser was not very supportive, then you are familiar with the consequences of that for the student. That
shouldn’t make you reluctant, however, to be firm with your own students when you see them wandering off in a bad direction. It may take time to work out a comfortable compromise. Be patient with your students and with yourself.

On a practical note, working on your advising and mentoring skills can be a boost to your career advancement. Graduate students talk to each other, and information about good advisers seems to percolate very quickly around departments.

It will pay to reflect occasionally on what kind of adviser you want to be. What experiences would you like your students to have? Be introspective about what is working for you and them, and what isn’t. Your graduate students are unlikely to provide candid feedback on your advising style, because of the status differential. If your graduate students have great experiences in their graduate programs, they will be motivated to work harder and do better quality work, will graduate sooner, and move closer to their career goals.

**When to Say “I don’t Know”**

Being a new faculty member can be very stressful, as you try to be confident and come across as someone who really knows your stuff. This is quite understandable. However, as we all know, it is impossible to know everything. The U is a huge and complicated place! It is okay to admit that you do not know something. Your students will not look down upon you or respect you less. On the contrary, they will appreciate it more if you are honest and admit that you are unfamiliar with something, and say that you will seek out the information and pass it along later.

On the flip side, because there are myriad orientation and welcome activities for new graduate students, you might find that your new students know some of the tricks of navigating the university. Don’t be afraid to ask them questions.

**Be Sensitive to Student Disabilities**

It is very likely that you will teach or in some other way mentor or come in contact with students with special needs or disabilities. Perhaps these students will be obvious to you; or perhaps they have learned to hide their situation. Some students may not even know that they have a disability. The purpose of identifying a student’s special needs isn’t to pamper the student, but rather to bring the issues respectfully to light and create conditions under which the student can perform at her or his best, in spite of the limitations or challenges.

As a teacher, professor, adviser, and/or mentor, you can choose to be a part of making a constructive learning space for the student. You also can unknowingly add to the student’s problems and stresses. If a student has gone through Disability Services and has a counselor who sends you a letter about the student’s needs, the student has done her or his part of working toward a solution. Take the letter seriously, but if you need more information, talk with the student or Disability Services to find out more. Often, confiding about the disability or a portion of it with a new professor is very painful and threatening to a student. Some students might feel comfortable discussing it further, others may not.

If a student has not talked with Disability Services, but discusses a disability with you and the need for extra time or special allowances, it might be appropriate to suggest and guide the student towards Disability Services. This should, of course, be done gently and be accompanied by the assurance that you have the student’s best interests in mind. Disability Services is there to be advocates for all students, staff, and faculty members.
Resources for Faculty Members

Also see the resources list at the end of the Graduate Student section.


Center for Teaching and Learning Services, 612-625-3041, 315 Science Classroom Building, 222 Pleasant Street SE, http://www.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn

*Chronicle of Higher Education* s Web site features articles not found in the print version on career development for young academics: http://chronicle.com


Office for University Women, 612-625-2385, 130 Klaeber Court, http://www.umn.edu/women

Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity, 612-624-9547, 419 Morrill Hall
Appendix 1: Mutual Responsibilities in Graduate Education at the University of Minnesota

(Taken from: http://www.grad.umn.edu/faculty-staff/governance/policies/mutual_responsibilities.html)

Approved by the Graduate School Executive Committee 5/28/97; Amended 11/28/00

Preamble
A major purpose of graduate education at the University of Minnesota is to instill in each student an understanding of and capacity for scholarship, independent judgment, academic rigor, and intellectual honesty. Graduate education is an opportunity for the student to develop into a professional scholar. Graduate research and teaching assistantships offer an "apprenticeship" experience in the academic profession as well as financial support. It is the joint responsibility of faculty and graduate students to work together to foster these ends through relationships that encourage freedom of inquiry, demonstrate personal and professional integrity, and foster mutual respect. This shared responsibility with faculty extends to all of the endeavors of graduate students, as students, employees, and members of the larger academic community.

High quality graduate education depends on the professional and ethical conduct of the participants. Faculty and graduate students have complementary responsibilities in the maintenance of academic standards and the creation of high quality graduate programs. Excellence in graduate education is achieved when both faculty and students are highly motivated, possess the academic and professional backgrounds necessary to perform at the highest level, and are sincere in their desire to see each other succeed.

The following principles illustrate what students should expect from their programs and what programs should expect from their students, to help achieve this excellence.

Principle 1: Information About Policies and Procedures
The Graduate School and graduate programs are responsible for providing students and prospective students with access to information about their graduate program, areas of specialization, degree requirements, and average time to completion of degrees. Graduate programs are responsible for providing access to information about graduate student financial support in the program, such as the prospects for fellowships, assistantships or other financial support and the proportion of students receiving financial support. In addition, graduate programs should provide students and applicants with information about career experiences of graduates of the program. All such information should be presented in a format that does not violate the privacy of individual students. Programs are encouraged to provide relevant information in their handbooks, websites or other readily accessible formats.

Students are responsible for keeping themselves informed about current policies of their program and the Graduate School that affect graduate students. Students and alumni also have a responsibility to respond to program inquiries about their career development.

**Principle 2: Communication About Academic Status**

The Graduate School and graduate programs are responsible for providing students with information about their individual academic status: who in the Graduate School and in their graduate program is responsible for communicating to them about admission issues and progress through the degree program, how the communication will take place, and the possibility for appeal to a third party for assistance in resolving disputed issues.

Students are responsible for communicating with the Graduate School and their graduate program about changes in their circumstances that affect their status and progress toward the degree.

**Principle 3: Research Contributions**

Individual faculty as research directors are responsible for providing students with appropriate recognition for their contributions at conferences, in professional publications, or in applications for patents. It is the faculty member's responsibility to clarify the principles for determining authorship and recognition at the beginning of any project.

Students are responsible for discussing their expectations regarding acknowledgment of research contributions or intellectual property rights with the appropriate person(s) in the research team, preferably early in the project.

**Principle 4: University Governance**

Departments and graduate programs are responsible for defining specific opportunities for student participation on committees as they deem appropriate. The University recognizes that graduate students make important contributions to governance and decision making at the program, department, college, Graduate School and University level; specific roles for participation are defined at each level by the relevant governing bodies.

Students are responsible for participating in University governance and decision making that enrich the campus community.

**Principle 5: Respectful Employment Conditions**

University faculty and staff are responsible for assuring that graduate students are able to conduct their work, as students or students/employees, in a manner consistent with professional conduct and integrity, free of intimidation or coercion. Students who are employees also have the protection of all University employment policies and laws. Graduate programs are responsible for providing clear communication to students about the possibility for appeal to a third party for assistance in resolving disputed issues.

Students are responsible for reporting unprofessional conduct to the appropriate body or person, as defined in the academic or employment grievance policy; they should be able to do so without fear of reprisal. Students are responsible for acting in a respectful and fair manner toward other students, faculty, or staff in the conduct of their academic work or work they may do in connection with an assistantship.
**Principle 6: Conditions of Employment**
The University (through its departments, research projects or other employing units) is responsible for providing to prospective graduate assistants a written offer of financial support before a response to the offer is required. Such communication must indicate their salary and the terms and conditions of their appointment, including the general nature of the work they will be performing, duration of employment, and whether and how this employment is tied to their academic progress. The details of specific teaching or research assignments may need to await later written clarification.

Students are responsible for accepting the conditions of employment only if they believe they are qualified and able to complete the tasks assigned. Students have a responsibility for communicating in writing any changes in their circumstances that affect their ability to fulfill the terms and conditions of their employment.

**Principle 7: Safe Work Environment**
Supervisors are responsible for providing a safe working environment for graduate students, and for developing and publicizing safety policies and training programs to achieve that goal.

Graduate students are responsible for helping to maintain a safe working environment, for adhering to safety policies, for participating in training programs and for reporting safety violations to the proper authority.

**Principle 8: Responsible Conduct of Research**
Students are responsible for carrying out their research in a responsible manner.

The faculty and Graduate School are responsible for ensuring that students receive training and guidance in the responsible conduct of research as appropriate for each field.

**Other University Documents**
These documents may provide information and guidance relevant to the graduate education experience.


University Senate, minutes, April 19, 1990 Student Conduct Code

* * * * *

**Appendix 2: Board of Regents Policy on Sexual Harassment**
[http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/humanresources/SexHarassment.pdf](http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/humanresources/SexHarassment.pdf)
Adopted: December 11, 1998

Section I. Definition.

Subd. 1. Sexual Harassment. Sexual harassment means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/ or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

(1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment or academic advancement in any University activity or program;

(2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis of employment or academic decisions affecting this individual in any University activity or program; or
(3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or academic environment in any University activity or program.

Subd. 2. Member of the University Community. Member of the University community or University member means any University of Minnesota faculty member, student, or staff member, or other individual engaged in any University activity or program.

Section II. Policy.

Subd. 1. Prohibition. Sexual harassment by or toward a member of the University community is prohibited.

Subd. 2. Responsibility to Report. Department heads, deans, provosts, chancellors, vice presidents, and other supervisors and managers must take timely and appropriate action when they know or should know of the existence of sexual harassment. Other persons who suspect sexual harassment should report it to an appropriate person in their unit or to the University equal opportunity officer.

Subd. 3. Administrative Responsibility. Each campus must adopt procedures for investigating and resolving complaints of sexual harassment in coordination with the director of equal opportunity and affirmative action.

Subd. 4. Disciplinary Action. A violation of this policy may lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or academic dismissal.

* * * * *

Appendix 3: Board of Regents Policy on Nepotism and Consensual Relationships

(Taken from http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/humanresources/Nepotism.pdf)

Adopted: September 10, 1971
Amended: September 10, 1993; December 11, 1998; November 10, 2005

Section I. Definitions.

Subd. 1. Member of the University Community. Member of the University community or University member shall mean any University of Minnesota faculty member, student, or staff member, or other individual engaged in any University activity or program.

Subd. 2. Personal Relationship. Personal relationship shall mean marital or other committed relationship, significant familial relationship, or consensual sexual or romantic relationship.

Section II. Employment and Academic Activities.

Subd. 1. Prohibited Activities. A member of the University community may not directly influence the University employment or academic progress of a University member with whom he or she has a personal relationship. Prohibited activities include, but are not limited to, hiring, promotion, supervision, evaluation, determination of salary, grading, and advising.
Subd. 2. Noncompetitive Appointments. This policy does not prohibit noncompetitive appointments of spouses and partners otherwise authorized by University policy.

Subd. 3. Relationships With Current Students. Personal relationships between faculty members or advisers and their current students are very unwise and may violate other University policies, even when prohibited activities have been avoided, because of the trust accorded to faculty members and advisers by students, the power differential inherent in academic associations, the difficulty of making alternative arrangements for grading and evaluation, and the risk of real or perceived favoritism toward the student in the personal relationship and the potential harm to this student and other students.

SECTION III. Administrative Directives.

Subd. 1. Procedures Required. The president shall adopt procedures for the implementation of this policy. The procedures must contain the provisions outlined in subdivisions 2-5.

Subd. 2. Consultation. Consultation shall be mandatory for University members who are or will be in a position to engage in an activity prohibited by section II. A consultation process shall be designed to ensure that:

(1) appropriate steps are taken to avoid the prohibited activity,
(2) steps taken will not unreasonably disadvantage either University member,
(3) the consultation is with an appropriate administrator, and
(4) appropriate confidentiality is provided.

Subd. 3. Goal of Consultation. Compliance with this policy may be achieved either by structuring the conditions of the employment or academic association of the related parties so as to avoid or eliminate the prohibited activities or by avoiding the personal relationship that may lead to the prohibited activities. The structuring of the association must be done after appropriate consultation and must not unreasonably disadvantage either University member.

Subd. 4. Power Disparity. When a power disparity exists in the employment or academic association of the individuals in the personal relationship, the employment or academic interests of the subordinate must be protected when structuring the association to avoid the prohibited activity.

Subd. 5. Exclusions. In exceptional circumstances an exclusion from section II, subd. 1 may be granted when eliminating the prohibited activities would unreasonably disadvantage one or both of the University members involved in a personal relationship. In the event that an exclusion is granted, safeguards must be implemented to help ensure that any employment or academic decisions regarding the involved University members are made impartially.

Section IV. Disciplinary Action.

A violation of section II, subd. 1 may lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or academic dismissal. Participation in and adherence to the consultation process may mitigate disciplinary action.