Graduate Students Bill of Rights

University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

At the University of Hawaii at Manoa we recognize that all university graduate students deserve the best possible graduate education. We also recognize that graduate students contribute to the mission of the University by providing high quality undergraduate instruction, conducting quality research, and participating in campus administration and governance. In order to ensure that all UH Manoa graduate students receive appropriate preparation for their future careers and are free to learn, research, and teach in accordance with standards of scholarly inquiry, we feel that it is important to articulate the rights and responsibilities of graduate students in their various roles as students, employees and members of the campus community.

I. Graduate students are, first and foremost, students.

Right to Advising

Graduate students have the right to adequate and timely academic and professional advising which includes regular, substantive feedback and guidance concerning their academic performance, career preparation and progress toward degree. Graduate students have a right to arrange regular face-to-face meetings with their advisor on a mutually agreeable schedule at least once per semester.

Graduate students have the right to change their faculty advisor(s) and the right to alternative supervision upon request. This alternative supervision may be external to the university, if necessary, in cases where the student’s primary advisor terminates the adviser-student relationship.

Termination of an adviser’s relationship with a graduate student for any reason must be preceded by advanced notification within a reasonable period of time—typically understood to be one (1) full academic semester.

Right to Quality Degree Programming

Graduate students have the right to expect high standards in the design and implementation of UH Manoa graduate degree programs. Degree requirements should reflect actual course offerings and be periodically updated to reflect trends and innovation in the field as well as shifts in departmental focus. Degree programs should be designed to meet specific student learning outcomes and should not require extraneous work.

Each degree program should have a clearly articulated and published timeline to degree that gives students an outline of degree benchmarks and objectives.
A sufficient number and variety of core-requisite and elective courses should be made available with adequate frequency and in appropriate sequence for graduate students to progress through their degree programs in a timely manner.

Graduate students should have the ability to enroll in seminars offered by any graduate program, provided space is available and they meet the prerequisites. Coursework obtained from outside student’s home department that addresses core / elective requirements of degree program should be counted toward the degree.

Graduate students should be provided with an opportunity to give feedback on the types of course offerings in the department and indicate interest in future offerings before they are finalized for the upcoming term. For the purpose of degree planning, whenever possible, a list of planned course offerings for future semesters should also be made available.

**Right to Professional Development/Career Preparation**

Graduate students have the right to the professional development and career path preparation necessary to become successfully employed in their chosen field upon graduation. Academic departments should offer training and education that is applicable to a range of career paths, including both academic and non-academic. Training and advising provided by faculty should be of a consistently high quality, regardless of a student's projected career path.

This includes access to professional training relating to research methodology, ethics, conferences, mock interviews, writing CV/developing portfolio, effective job searches, interviewing techniques, grant writing and publications as well as equal access to apply to any graduate assistantships, internships and practicums within their department or relevant to their academic and professional goals.

Graduate assistantships should represent professional development by being either relevant to student career goals or providing critical skills for future success. Graduate assistants who teach must be afforded comprehensive and ongoing training for teaching responsibilities and graduate assistants who conduct research must be afforded comprehensive and ongoing training for their research responsibilities.

**Right to Transparency in Funding & Academic Processes**

Graduate students have the right to transparent disclosure and perpetual access to Departmental, College, Division, University rules and policies. Current program requirements, expectations and timeline to degree must be articulated in writing, approved by graduate division, communicated at the beginning of a student’s graduate program and published to department website for easy access.

Graduate students have the right to have any pre-admission offers of fellowship or financial support provided in writing. Policies regarding financial support of graduate students should be transparent and implemented in a consistent manner.
Any modification to rules, policies, program requirements and/or funding availability must be conveyed to students in a timely manner. Changes to degree requirements that would effect the currently enrolled students of a program will not apply to them unless the student requests to be subject to the new requirements.

**Right to Fairness in Evaluation Processes**

Academic progress and performance should be judged in accordance with criteria that has been made known to the student in advance. Policies regarding academic progress and performance should be applied to all students within a department equally.

Evaluations should be truthful, specific and made available to the student within a reasonable period of time. Written evaluations should be provided to the student following major program milestones (such as preliminary exams, pre-thesis, etc) and/or in cases where student performance is deemed unsatisfactory.

**Right to Notification of Deficiencies/Fair Dismissal**

Graduate students have the right to be notified of any deficiencies in their academic performance, be given specific recommendations and requirements to remedy the situation and a reasonable period of time to make recommended corrections before punitive action against the student is taken.

In the event of major examination failure or unsatisfactory performance, reasons for such assessment will be provided to the student in a clear, written evaluation.

There will be clear guidelines for the dismissal of a graduate student from an academic program. Any intent to dismiss a student from a graduate program for academic reasons must be preceded by specific written performance evaluation well in advance of actual dismissal, with a clear and specific opportunity to remedy deficiencies. There will be an appeal process by which a graduate student can challenge the dismissal in a fair manner.

**Right to Graduate**

Graduate students will be guaranteed the right to graduate upon successful fulfillment of the graduate division and degree requirements. Departments and/or advisers may not hinder or prevent a graduate student from graduating without undue cause.

**Student Related Responsibilities**

Graduate students are responsible to strive for excellence in the pursuit of their academic and professional goals and devote appropriate amount of time and energy toward achieving an
advanced degree within normative time frame. Graduate students are responsible to understand and fulfill degree requirements as they have been articulated by graduate division and department and to communicate difficulty to their advisor in a timely manner.

Graduate students are responsible to become familiar with, respect and uphold all relevant university, graduate division, college and department policies as well as student bill of rights and responsibility. Students are responsible to seek clarification if they do not understand any of these policies.

Graduate students have the responsibility to understand their role in the development of advisor-student relationships and behave respectfully toward senior colleagues. This includes being respectful of time, monetary and other constraints on placed on faculty and program staff. Students are responsible to communicate regularly and respectfully with faculty mentors and advisers especially in matters related to research, progress toward degree, and understanding student requirements and responsibilities.

II. Graduate students have a number of rights and responsibilities as members of the academic community.

*Right to Environment Free of Exploitation*

Graduate students have the right to study, conduct research and work in an environment that is fee of exploitation. No individual or unit associated with the University of Hawaii at Manoa shall perpetuate or endorse the exploitation of graduate students in their role as students, in their role as University employees or in their role as junior colleagues.

*Right to Receive Credit for Work*

Graduate students have the right to receive appropriate credit consistent with the conventions of their field for co-authorship in publication that involve a significant contribution of ideas or research work from the student and/or first authorship for publications which are comprised primarily of the creative research and writing of the student.

*Right to Equal Treatment*

Graduate students have the right to fair and equal treatment from University administrators, departmental staff and faculty and have the right to study, research and work in an environment that is free of harassment and discrimination. This includes but is not limited to the right to freedom from unlawful discrimination on the basis of race, gender, religion, color, age, national origin or ancestry, disability, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, or status as a military veteran.

University, college and departmental rules and requirements must be applied equally and consistently to all students. All graduate students have the right to equal access to program resources including enrollment into courses and seminars for which they meet the official
Status as graduate students or graduate assistants may not form the basis to impinge upon the civil liberties of any individual including freedom of speech and freedom of assembly.

**Right to Confidentiality**

Graduate students have the right, within reason, to confidentiality and professional treatment. Discussion of the student among academic colleagues will be of a professional nature, will be limited to the student’s academic performance, and will not be made in a discriminatory or derogatory manner.

When presented with the opportunity to evaluate their professors, graduate students have the right to do so without fear of retribution and with the assurance of confidentiality.

**Right To Safe Environment**

All members of the campus community should be provided with a safe university environment which includes safety from crime, as well as facilities that comply with federal, state and local laws and regulations regarding environmental and occupational safety standards.

**Right to Access to Unbiased Arbitration of Disputes**

Every member of the campus community has the right to an adequate and permanently accessible grievance process. In the case of dispute or perceived violation of student rights, the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa is required to provide an impartial grievance process, and mediate between effected parties in good faith effort to resolve conflict in a mutually agreeable manner. Graduate students shall have equal access to both formal grievance and informal dispute processes with no threat retaliation against students for filing grievances or initiating a dispute claims.

Graduate students have right to receive mediation and/or arbitration in the case of 1) the rights and responsibilities outlined in this document have been infringed 2) violation of university policy 3) in the case that graduate students receive disciplinary actions or dismissal for any reason 4) cases of harassment or discrimination 5) or any other dispute between graduate student(s) and members of the university community

**Right to Participation & Representation**

Graduate students should be afforded the opportunity to make meaningful contributions to the betterment of their department, college and the University – including opportunities to learn about and participate in governance and collective bargaining whenever appropriate. Graduate students should be afforded opportunities to give feedback and participate in departmental decision-making processes whenever decisions impact graduate students within the department.
All graduate programs should include graduate student representatives in committees that make decisions affecting graduate student policies and academic requirements. All Search Advisory Committees for new faculty who would teach or mentor at the graduate level must include a graduate student representative from the hiring unit(s).

**Responsibilities as Members of Academic Community**

Graduate students are expected to behave in a professional and ethical manner that positively reflects upon the university and to treat every member of the campus community with professional courtesy and respect. UH Manoa graduate students shall not participate in or endorse the exploitation, harassment, discrimination or unethical treatment of any person for any reason.

Graduate students are responsible to learn and adhere to ethical norms in research and scholarship in their field and provide accurate and honest reporting of research results, methodology, and scholarship. Students must comply with university policies, as well as federal laws regarding human subject research. Graduate students must comply with standard academic requirements and guidelines regarding the production of original research and the appropriate acknowledgement of sources used.

Graduate students are encouraged to contribute to the administration and ongoing improvement of their graduate program, to participate in governance both on the departmental and the campus-wide level and to become critically engaged in the issues and problems facing the campus community.

**III. Graduate students have a number of important responsibilities as employees and members of instructional & research teams.**

**Rights as Employees**

Graduate Assistantships must comply with graduate division policies regarding types of work, maximum hours of work, number of courses/sections per semester and minimum allowable level of compensation.

Graduate students will be given clear and reasonable work expectations. Terms and conditions of employment will be clearly communicated at the outset of the employment agreement.

Graduate Assistants shall be provided with the resources necessary to perform the duties they have been assigned. (Depending on specific duties of graduate assistantships, this could include but is not limited to: work space and/or access to meeting spaces to perform confidential advising, reasonable access to lab and/or office equipment, software and/or access to printing and supplies) and will be granted a reasonable time frame to complete tasks that are requested of them.

As university employees, Graduate students must receive adequate compensation for their work. Graduate stipends, including those earned through work as graduate assistants should minimally
provide a living wage and should be adjusted to reflect inflation & cost of living on a regular basis.

Graduate students have the right to object if work duties consistently require hours that exceed the terms of appointment, if duties contradict with other responsibilities, or if tasks are inappropriate or appear unrelated to the employee's job description. Graduate students will not be coerced into performing unreasonable, dangerous or unethical tasks.

Graduate Assistants have the right to be evaluated objectively for job performance on an annual basis. Any recommendations or disciplinary action from such evaluation will be confidential and will be addressed directly to the employee.

Graduate students hired as casual-hire employees cannot be required to perform the duties of a graduate assistants or (otherwise above their pay scale) unless they are compensated for the higher level of responsibility at a level commensurate with graduate assistant employees.

Graduate students have a right to bring student employment issues to the attention to University administration. An official standing meeting between the University Chancellor, the head of Graduate Education and Graduate Student Organization leadership will be set up at the beginning of every Fall and Spring semester.

Employment & Funding Related Responsibilities

Graduate assistants are expected to fulfill their job responsibilities in a conscientious and timely manner to the best of their knowledge, training, and ability and abide by all relevant University, state and federal government rules and regulations. Graduate assistants should conduct themselves with the same diligence and professionalism demonstrated by their faculty colleagues, should interact with their supervisor in respectful and professional manner and should seek clarification if any aspect of their duties is unclear.

All UH Manoa funding (including graduate assistantships) is contingent on adequate progress toward degree. Any student whose funding or employment is jeopardized based on academic progress must be informed and allowed to correct deficiencies before funding is revoked.

Graduate students are responsible to participate in university-wide efforts to fund graduate education including but not limited to applying for fellowships, collaborating on grant applications and/or communicating with funding donors as required by department or college.