

# GRADUATE PROGRAM HANDBOOK TEMPLATE

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## Introduction

Program handbooks are essential for welcoming new students and for supporting existing students. Handbooks help students understand their rights and responsibilities and in this way support degree completion and minimize stress. They can also help faculty and staff and the program overall to ensure quality and integrity. Furthermore, the Handbook should be a part of all new student and faculty/staff orientations.

All program handbooks must contain information on course and program requirements, standards for professional conduct in your field, procedures for the selection of a faculty advisor and the formation of a guidance committee, requirements for examinations and graduation, and other program policies, including professional conduct, safety, and conflict resolution.

For more information refer to the sections outlined in this template and to the sample handbooks provided by the Graduate School. All students (current and prospective) should have access to the unit Handbook; thus, it should be available on the [Provost website](#) after Dean of Graduate School approval.

The Graduate School and other units (Human Resources, the Office of International Programs, Parking and Transportation, Student Health and Wellness Center, Counseling and Psychological Services, etc.) provide students with information by linking them to information on each unit's departmental page. In this template, that information is included in the form of links to policies and procedures (up front) and resources (at the end of the document). We recommend that programs do not summarize information from other campus units to avoid discrepancies and outdated information. The Graduate School provides a list of resources for students in our online [New Student Guide](#).

Programs may also provide complementary information that might not be immediately evident when students are navigating through processes. A good example of creating complementary information can be found in the Psychology Department's handbook (Section I), which addresses what students should expect in their first bill, especially if they are out-of-state applicants, and informs students who will be employed that they will need to wait until October/February to receive their first paycheck.

While programs are welcome to include this kind of information in their handbooks, it is probably best to start with the most basic and crucial information first and then add this. You can also direct students to materials and policies the Graduate School has recently developed such as the [in-state tuition guide](#) and an infographic and extended guidelines for [incoming international graduate students](#).

It is important that units review their handbooks for accuracy annually and send updated official versions to the Dean of the Graduate School. The Graduate School can provide advice and review handbook drafts upon request. The Graduate School will also inform units of changes to graduate education policy that will affect their handbooks. All units should include a clause in their handbooks stating that University policies, such as those found in the HoOP and

in the Catalog, override any inconsistencies in information found in program/department handbooks.

Programs must ensure that the degree requirements listed in the Handbook align with those in the Graduate Catalog. To make changes to the Graduate Catalog, programs must obtain approval from Departmental Committees and Chairs and the Academic Dean. Then they can submit the proposed revisions to the Graduate Dean and Graduate Council. For more information contact the Office of the Provost.

HOW TO USE THIS TEMPLATE:

#### Links to Select University Policies and Procedures

[Graduate School New Student Guide](#)

[Guidance for New International Students](#)

[In-State Tuition Guidance \(to be submitted by departments before Census Day\)](#)

[UTEP Graduate Catalog \(2021-2022\)](#) Scroll down to find general information on

Attendance and Grading

Course Adds and Drops

Course Registration

Planning Your Degree

Graduation Requirements

Student Life Policies and Procedures

[Human Resources Student Employment Guidelines](#)

[Disability and Reasonable Accommodation Policy](#)

[Guidelines for Academic Integrity at the Graduate Level \(coming in 2022-2023 Catalog\)](#)

[Title IX Anti-Discrimination Policy](#)

[Graduate Advisor Handbook](#)

#### Graduate Handbook Sections: Purpose and Examples of What to Include

## 1. Program Overview

### Purpose

This section should help students understand the program's mission and how it fits within its home department. It should help students begin to get a sense of what to expect.

### What to Include

- ✓ Explain how the program is aligned with the goals of the field and how it prepares students for certain types of and/or diverse careers.
- ✓ Discuss any program/departmental highlights.
- ✓ Program expectations: include formal and informal education and training such as attendance at program and departmental events, professional meetings, etc. Where possible, list annual events and approximate timeframes.

[\[Link to Sample Text\]](#)

## 2. Program Components/Plan Options/Degree Requirements

### Purpose

This section should describe the curricular elements of the unit/program, including the different tracks, Masters options, fast-track options, dual degree or interdisciplinary program options, and policies on transfer credits. Rather than replicating the catalog, include information about categories of classes (e.g., core, specialization, research, etc.) and provide link to the program catalog page.

### What to Include

- ✓ Provide an overview of the official plan of study, required coursework, and other program components: capstones, certificates, thesis/dissertation/project.
- ✓ If applicable, provide a link to or include your program's doctoral milestone's agreement as an appendix—found under Forms: <https://www.utep.edu/graduate/forms.html>
- ✓ If applicable, explain if and how the program works as a dual degree or interdisciplinary degree, or if any graduate certificate courses count toward the course requirements.
- ✓ Describe each element in more detail, explaining *how* it works, or what the student needs to do to meet its requirements:
  - Comprehensive list of requirements, including course requirements, language requirements, research requirements, teaching requirements and any other requirements such as for labs, internships, or apprenticeships.

- Rather than duplicating what is in the Catalog, try to link to the Catalog and use this space to explain rationales or processes for how things work.
- Explain goals and purpose of a qualifying exam, portfolio, or equivalent milestone procedures, policies, and deadlines. Include how faculty participate in this process and if the process includes faculty from other units, adjuncts, etc. Also include the number of times the exam can be taken/portfolio defended/etc. and procedures for dismissal and/or appeal.
- If your program requires levelling work or has a provisional acceptance policy, explain what the requirements are and how/by when they are met.
- If applicable, describe the policy for undergraduates' dual enrollment or any other special program details.
- Describe thesis, dissertation, or project requirements in detail, including proposals, defenses, and timelines. If applicable, refer students to your unit's supplementary policy documents on acceptable work, policies, and supplementary materials.

[\[Link to Sample Text\]](#)

### 3. Selection of Thesis/Dissertation Advisor/Mentoring

#### Purpose

Mentoring is crucial to students' school and career success. The purpose of this section is to explain how your unit organizes mentoring practices, both formally and informally.

#### What to Include

- ✓ Describe your unit's overall mentoring philosophy.
- ✓ Explain how your unit is working to ensure students are supported academically, relationally, culturally, and in any other ways that are important to students' experience.
- ✓ Explain how semesterly advising functions in your unit. Who does it and when, what is expected of students, and what can students expect?
- ✓ Explain how annual reviews are conducted in your unit. Encourage students to fill out and update their annual review documents or individual development plans (IDPs) on a consistent basis (annual reviews can be mentioned here and discussed in greater detail in its own section).

- ✓ Describe the timeline for the selection of a permanent advisor or dissertation/thesis/project chair.
- ✓ Describe your unit’s policy on dissertation/thesis/project committee composition as well as the role and responsibilities of each member, including the student. Refer to the Graduate School’s policy on approving committee members from outside the institution.
- ✓ Describe any policies on resolving conflict with advisors and changing advisors when necessary due to fit or advisor temporary/permanent leave/retirement.

[\[Link to Sample Text\]](#)

#### 4. Academic and Professional Performance

##### Purpose

Use this section to explain how graduate students’ academic and professional performance is assessed in and out of courses. Units should have procedures in place to review students’ academic and professional achievements, conduct, etc. annually (can be done more often based on unit needs). Outline expectations and policies as well as consequences for specific failures to meet them. Include the program’s milestone agreement as an appendix to this section.

##### What to Include

- ✓ Each unit must define what it considers to be “satisfactory progress toward” a degree. Communicate this with students here and let them know how and when they would be informed about unsatisfactory progress.
- ✓ Provide information grade policies and appeal procedures. For example, some programs have a 2-C policy, meaning that students can only get two Cs or two grades below a 3.0 during coursework. Explain appeal process; refer to [HoOP Policy](#).
- ✓ Provide a policy for incomplete grades and explain the related processes and timelines—highlighting the faculty and the student’s roles and responsibilities.
- ✓ Explain criteria for qualifying exams and procedures for assessing and appealing them.
- ✓ Students have a right to access their educational records. Explain to students how the department/program keeps these records, e.g., give them an example of what is “in their file.” Explain the procedure for requesting educational records.

[\[Link to Sample Text\]](#)

## 5. Academic Integrity and Safety

### Purpose

While UTEP has institutional policies on integrity and safety (refer to [Handbook for Operating Procedures \(section 1.2.3\(a\)\)](#); [the Office of Research and Sponsored Project's Research Integrity Policy](#); and [Environmental Health and Safety manuals](#)), departments and programs have related roles and responsibilities.

### What to Include

- ✓ Provide links to the style guide(s) most common in your discipline and information about authorship and collaboration in your discipline.
- ✓ Explain expectations of research training and links to UTEP's [Institutional Review Board](#) procedures and [Responsible Conduct in Research](#) policy and [CITI training modules](#).
- ✓ Explain plagiarism expectations within the discipline/program and refer to [University HoOP plagiarism requirements](#).
- ✓ Communicate program authorship guidelines and process for students to discuss authorship with mentors.
- ✓ Communicate policies related to lab safety and security.
- ✓ Describe safety in travel procedures and include a link to the [Student Travel Policy](#) in the Catalog.
- ✓ Provide information on department safety policies and include a link to [Student Emergency resources](#) from the Dean of Students Office.

[\[Link to Sample Text\]](#)

## 6. Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution

### Purpose

This section should explain expectations of student conduct and the department's conflict resolution policies and procedures.

### What to Include

- ✓ Describe clear expectations for graduate students' professional behavior in and out of the classroom and online. Provide criteria for dismissal.
- ✓ Explain that students who are facing life or medical difficulties are eligible for a leave of absence. Information on that can be found in the [Graduate School's Advisor's Handbook](#).

- ✓ Encourage students to utilize services of the [Center for Accommodations and Support Services \(CASS\)](#) if they need accommodations (including temporary ones).
- ✓ List the program/department/college policy for grievances and appeals. Explain the roles of the program director, chair, and program committee (refer to the HoOP Graduate School: Sections 3.5, 3.5.1, 3.6, and 3.6.2).
  - Give explicit guidance on what a student should do if they have a conflict or grievance relating to another student, a faculty member, a graduate advisor, a unit staff member, etc.
  - Explain what a student should do if they wish to appeal a decision or sanction.

[\[Link to Sample Text\]](#)

## 7. Work Related Policies

### Purpose

This section should explain expectations, policies, procedures, roles, and responsibilities related to graduate assistantships in your unit. All policies must be consistent with the guidelines posted on the [Human Resources](#) website and in the HoOP, such as [academic policies and faculty personnel matters](#) or [employment under a contract or grant](#).

### What to Include

- ✓ Describe the criteria for awarding, renewing, and terminating graduate assistantships.
- ✓ Describe any unit policies for appointments, onboarding, etc.
- ✓ Explain the enrollment requirements for graduate assistants and the policy for assigning types (TA, GA, RA, AI) and stipends.
- ✓ Explain the unit's policy for different types of absences (illness, grief, jury duty) and leave for graduate student employees: medical, vacation, FMLA. You can find information about students taking a leave of absence of up to one year in the [Graduate School Advisor's Handbook](#).
- ✓ Describe the unit's remote work policy for graduate student employees.
- ✓ List any policies related to work outside of the unit—including in addition to the graduate assistantship.
- ✓ Refer international students to the Office of International Programs for their rights and responsibilities concerning eligibility for work, number of hours per week allowed, summer employment, and Optional Practical Training options.



- ✓ Explain if and how students can make use of office supplies, equipment, computers, printers, copy machines, and space in the unit for work purposes.

[\[Link to Sample Text\]](#)

## 8. Funding, Travel, and Awards

### Purpose

This section should help students become aware of funding, travel, and award opportunities in the unit, college, and institution.

### What to Include

- ✓ Explain departmental funding options and their eligibility and application guidelines, including
  - Internal scholarships, fellowships, and endowments
  - Opportunities for summer work
- ✓ Provide guidance on Financial Aid eligibility, funding for international students, scholarships and awards, grant-funded positions.
- ✓ Explain the unit's expectation for external resource seeking and include a list of fellowships and opportunities for which students in your field might be eligible (e.g., NSF GRFP, Ford Foundation, Fulbright).
- ✓ Describe the departmental travel policies and procedures. List funding options for students, including those at the college or institutional level (e.g., [Graduate School](#)).
- ✓ Describe departmental awards for graduate students and application/nomination processes and timeframes.

[\[Link to Sample Text\]](#)

## 9. University Resources

### Purpose

This section can list campus and outside resources useful to most students. Units can annotate the list below and/or add resources relevant to their program(s) and discipline(s).

### What to Include

- [Dean of Students Office](#)
- [Graduate School](#)
- [Counseling and Psychological Services](#)

- [Student Health and Wellness Center](#)
- [Graduate Student Assembly](#)
- [Student Travel Approval Process](#)
- [University Library](#)
- [Technology Support](#)
- [Office of International Programs](#)
- Resources provided by the unit, the college, and field-specific professional societies.

## 10. Appendices

### Purpose

This section should include any additional documents or supplemental guidelines students might need.

### What to Include

- ✓ Advisor Contracts
- ✓ Committee Composition Guidelines
- ✓ Dissertation Defense Guidelines
- ✓ International Student Advice

# Appendix A

## Sample Text from Approved Program Handbooks

### 1. Program Overview

This graduate program offers courses in a variety of core and applied areas pertaining to the background and interests of those in the field. The program offers numerous opportunities to be involved in interdisciplinary research that includes researchers from several different disciplines and areas of focus.

Description/Duties of Graduate Program Committee

The Graduate Program Committee (GPC) consists of the Graduate Program Director, who serves as the chair of the GPC, and several graduate faculty members in our department. The committee oversees the graduate program; managing admission procedures and practices; monitoring graduate course offerings, independent study courses and their appropriate use in the program; improving the quality of student services, including advising and mentoring; reviewing conflicts among the graduate advisor, faculty members, or students involving degree program compliance; and ensuring the continuous improvement of the program.

## 2. Program Components/Plan Options/Degree Requirements

During your three years of studies, you will need to complete the coursework described in this chapter. Some courses, such as those required for first-year students or thesis hours for third-year students, must be taken in the corresponding semesters. The order in which you take the other courses will depend on your overall plans for your academic journey, which you should discuss with your program director or coursework advisor.

Regardless of how you plan your coursework, if you are a full-time student, you should complete your graduate program in three years. Please, consider the following:

- You need to complete 48 hours of coursework in 6 semesters.
- In your first 5 semesters, you need to register for 9 hours (3 courses) to be considered a full-time student (a requirement for all students holding a teaching assistantship; see page 15).
- You may take courses in our summer sessions. These courses may count towards your 48-hour requirement, but they do not count towards your 9 hours requirement to be a full-time student in Fall and Spring.
- You will enroll in GRAD 5398 Thesis I in your fifth semester, concurrently with two other courses to complete your full-time requirement.
- GRAD 5399 Thesis II, which you take in your sixth, and last semester, counts as full time enrollment.

The thesis should consist of a challenge or barrier in Graduate Education faced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century institution. All topics will require approval from thesis advisor and program advisor (if not the same person). Please create a clear problem statement for submission to department prior to beginning your researching and writing of thesis.

## 3. Advising/Selection of Thesis/Dissertation Advisor/Mentoring

The Director of Graduate Programs will serve as academic advisor for all doctoral students for the duration of their studies. In addition, the student should complete a plan of study in coordination with their Dissertation Advisor.

Academic advising includes the following elements, designed to ensure that students remain in good academic standing and make satisfactory progress through the program:

- Check the student's coursework with the graduate program degree plan to determine if the student is making progress toward the requirements of the program and the milestones (results are documented in the doctoral progress report and discussed with the student and supervising committee);
- Discuss recommendations on course selection that align with the student's plan of study;
- Work with the student and Dissertation Advisor to determine if modifications are necessary in the Degree Plan and ensuring that the appropriate paperwork for approval of exceptions is filed;
- Discuss the composition of the Dissertation Supervising Committee and the requirements for successful completion of the dissertation; and
- Promote opportunities that can provide the student with experiences that will enhance their career prospects and success.

### **Pre-Advising**

Students will be added to a Blackboard shell where they must complete pre-advising procedures each semester. These may include, uploading an updated CV/resume, completing a student information survey, submitting an IDP, scheduling an advising appointment.

### **Mentor-Student Contract**

Design a contract whereby mentoring expectations and aspirations are outlined, including goals, meeting days/times, frequency, duration, who will schedule meetings, ground rules for discussion, guidelines should problems arise in the relationship, focus of initial meetings, how/when relationship will end, additional issues/ideas.

### **The Dissertation Advisor**

A student formally requests that a graduate faculty member serve as his or her Dissertation Advisor by filing the appropriate College paperwork. Students should select a Dissertation Advisor as soon as possible after entering the program, within the first year of study. The Dissertation Advisor will:

- Supervise and guide the student's dissertation research and course selection; and
- Work with the student to form a Doctoral Advisory Committee subject to the approval by the Graduate School.

## **4. Academic and Professional Performance**

### **Standards for Progressing Through the Program**

The goal of this graduate program is to produce highly knowledgeable, clinically competent, self-aware and ethical professionals. Course grades reflect your performance in classes that are designed to increase your knowledge, refine your skills, enhance your self-awareness, and confirm your commitment to ethical behavior in the clinical mental health counseling field.

- **Grading Standards and Grade Appeals: Content Course Curriculum**

Grades in content curriculum will be based on your academic performance, as evidenced in a variety of ways including tests, papers, presentations, skill performance, and class participation. Your classroom behavior, including professionalism, respect for others, and personal integrity, also influences your grades. As indicated in the UTEP Graduate Catalog, if you believe that a course grade is inaccurate or that an instructor is not teaching the material in the syllabus, you first should discuss the problem with your instructor. If the issue is not resolved to your satisfaction, make an appointment to discuss it with your Faculty Advisor, the Mental Health Counseling Program Coordinator and/or the Department Chair. If the matter is still not resolved to your satisfaction, you may make an appeal to the Dean of the college. Note: If an issue or concern emerges during a course, try to address it immediately, rather than waiting until the course is over.

## 5. Academic Integrity and Safety

A fundamental principle for any educational institution, academic integrity is highly valued and seriously regarded at The University of Texas at El Paso. More specifically, students are expected to maintain absolute integrity and a high standard of individual honor in scholastic work undertaken at the University. At a minimum, students should complete any assignments, exams, and other scholastic endeavors with the utmost honesty, which requires students to:

- acknowledge the contributions of other sources to your scholastic efforts;
- complete your assignments independently unless expressly authorized to seek or obtain assistance in preparing them;
- follow instructions for assignments and exams, and observe the standards of your academic discipline; and
- avoid engaging in any form of academic dishonesty on behalf of yourself or another student.

For the official policies on academic integrity and scholastic dishonesty, please refer to the University's Student Conduct and Discipline policy located in Chapter 1 of Section 2 in the Handbook of Operating Procedures located at: <https://www.utep.edu/vpba/hoop/> Provide information on department safety policies and include a link to [Student Emergency resources](#) from the Dean of Students Office.

## 6. Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution

### **CODE OF STUDENT RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND CONDUCT**

While enrolled at the University, a student neither loses the rights nor escapes the responsibilities of citizenship. Any student who engages in conduct that is prohibited by the Board of Regents' Rules and Regulations or University rules or by federal, state, or local law is subject to discipline whether such conduct takes place on or off campus or whether civil or criminal penalties are also imposed for such conduct. All students are expected and required to obey the law, to show respect for properly constituted authority, and to observe correct standards of conduct. The University of Texas at El Paso administers

student discipline according to established procedures of due process. Procedures are defined and described in the Rules and Regulations of the Board of Regents, Series 50101, and in the Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOOP), <http://hoop.utep.edu>.

## STUDENT GRIEVANCE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

**Grade Appeals.** A student may challenge his/her grade as determined by a member of the faculty of the University during or within one year after the end of any credit course, qualifying or comprehensive examination, for which the student has been enrolled or three months following the term the graduate degree was awarded. A challenge to a grade may be pursued only on the basis of malice, bias, arbitrary, or capricious grade determination, or impermissible discrimination. In no event shall a challenge be pursued on the basis of the standards employed in setting grades, so long as those standards are employed impartially.

**The student must first attempt to resolve the question through consultation with the faculty member who assigned the grade.** The student should then attempt to resolve the question through consultation with the administrator(s) to whom the faculty member reports. Having failed to resolve the matter after consultation with both the faculty member and her/his supervisors, the student may consult with and/or file a challenge with the Chairperson of the Student Welfare and Grievance Committee. Students should contact the Office of Student Life for specific information or download a copy of the grievance form and instructions on the Office of Student Life web page at <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students-office/resources/grade-grievance.html>.

**Student-Student Conflict.** In the event where it may be necessary to report students whose behavior could be harmful to themselves and others, you can submit a [Student of Concern report](#) with the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR). The report is designed for faculty, staff, and students to provide information to the university about a student who may be struggling or experiencing difficulties at the university. Reports are reviewed daily and a case manager will follow-up with both the submitter and the student(s) being reported. This includes, but is not limited to, students who exhibit an abrupt change in performance or behavior, engage in behavior that causes you or others concern for safety, or threatens to harm him/herself or others.

**Student-Faculty Conflict.** In the event that a conflict arises that is not addressed by an existing University, Graduate School, or program policy, the student and faculty member should attempt to work out the issue. Each party should document when meeting(s) occur and briefly summarize how attempt(s) to create a mutually satisfactory resolution were approached.

If the parties cannot reach a mutually satisfactory resolution, the graduate program or home department should attempt to facilitate the resolution. These efforts may be undertaken by the director of graduate studies, department chair, dissertation committee, or another faculty member. The program may have specific guidance within its handbook that outlines the program's procedures. In all cases, local resolution should be attempted by the graduate program or home department before the matter is escalated. In rare

cases, the student can bring the issue directly to the Dean of Students Office through their [Student Outreach and Support \(SoS\) Program](#).

**Non-Academic Grievances.** Non-academic grievances of policies and procedures of University departments related to matters other than discrimination, such as the application or interpretation of student policies, must be initiated by making an effort to resolve the matter with the individual involved in the interpretation or decision. If the matter is not resolved, it must be submitted in writing to the Provost or his/her department within 10 working days of the questioned decision or interpretation.

## 7. TA/Al Appointments

### Graduate Assistant – Assistant Instructor Assignments

#### Considerations

- Students who are interested in pursuing a career in academia may be encouraged to develop course preps and take advantage of our more formalized training for AIs. To be competitive in the job market having taught formally can bolster one's CV.
- In times when AIs are needed, volunteering to AI a course can be seen by a student's mentor as departmental service (which may be a nice addition to recommendation letters).
- Moving forward, Teaching Assistantships will be more comprehensive such that "light load" TA assignments will be augmented to include other important departmental needs (e.g., Digital Measures entry).

#### Incentives

- Give priority for summer teaching positions to students who are willing to serve as AIs during the school year.
- Allow students to teach two courses in one semester with release time in the following semester (allowing for greater focus on non-teaching responsibilities).

#### If Incentives do not yield needed AIs

- Student assignments are at the discretion of the department. Students who have attained a certain level of advancement in the department (e.g., post-Master's) may be required to teach rather than serve as teaching assistants if they are being funded by the department.
- In the case of needing to assign AIs if funded by the department, the department will attempt to:
  - Make entering students aware of the possibility of being assigned to AI
  - Be sensitive to timing such that assigned AIs will have time to prepare for teaching
  - Rotate assignments so that non volunteer assigned AIs are not assigned as AIs in multiple semesters

## 8. Funding, Travel, and Awards

### Professional Contact

An important aspect of professional life is being aware of the activities of other professionals. Students are expected to become acquainted with current research of others by engaging in the following activities:

**Program Colloquia.** The program offers a weekly colloquia series in which visiting and local speakers discuss their current research. Students are expected to attend most departmental colloquia, and most informal functions with visiting speakers, such as meetings or social gatherings with visiting researchers or prospective faculty. Discussions at more informal functions can be very useful and informative because they can provide students with the opportunity to make contacts that may lead to collaborative research and job opportunities.

**Scientific Conferences.** Scientific conferences provide students with the opportunity to (1) learn of recent research that may not appear in print for a year or more and (2) present research to others and obtain valuable feedback. In addition, conferences offer a means of making contact with colleagues from other institutions. Thus, students are strongly encouraged to attend and present research at scientific conferences.

### **UTEP Research and Travel Support for Graduate Students**

UTEP provides various scholarships and grants to support student research and professional development. Graduate Students are strongly encouraged to visit the Graduate School's webpage on Internal Funding for UTEP Graduate Students and apply for funding from the sources listed there, including the following:

#### **Office of Fellowships and Awards:**

#### **Office of Scholarships:**

**Travel Awards:** These awards provide financial support for graduate students who are travelling to professional conferences to present their research.

**Graduate Student Research Assistant Summer Program:** This program provides summer support for graduate students who are pursuing their research

**Dodson Research Grants:** These grants provide students with funds to cover the expenses of their dissertation and thesis research.

### **Awards for Graduate Students**

Our graduate program bestows annual awards for (a) Best Thesis and (b) Best Dissertation. Nominations for these awards are usually made in early Fall of the academic year for theses and dissertation defended during the preceding academic year. For instance, in early Fall 2021, nominations were made for Best Thesis and Best Dissertation of 2020, and all theses and dissertations completed during the 2020 Academic Year (Fall 2019, Spring 2020, Summer 2020) were eligible for nomination.



Nominations for Best Thesis and Best Dissertation may be made by any member of the Graduate School faculty, including the mentor, and must be approved by the mentor of the nominated student. Nominations should be sent via email to the Head of the Department's Award Committee or the Graduate Program Director. A nomination must include pdf copies of (a) the final version of the approved dissertation/thesis and the (b) Learning Outcome Assessment ratings of the dissertation/thesis by the members of the dissertation/thesis committee. The Head of the Award Committee or the Graduate Program Director will nominate the Best Thesis and Best Dissertation Awards of the college.

Our graduate program also bestows the following annual awards to Graduate Students:

- (a) Research Award (Best Article Published by a Graduate Student)
- (b) Best Graduate Teaching Assistant (TA)
- (c) Best Graduate Associate Instructor (AI)

Nominations for Research, TA and AI Awards may be made by any Faculty Member or Graduate Student in the Department. Nominations should be emailed to the Department's Award Committee or the Graduate Program Director. Application Forms and Protocols for the Awards are posted on the department's webpage for Information for Current Graduate Students.

### **Incentives for Graduate Student Publications**

When the Department assigns graduate students as AIs for summer semesters or allots departmental travel awards, special consideration will be given to students who meet the following criteria (in order, from highest priority to lowest priority): (a) The student has had a first-author publication, either published or accepted for publication, during the prior 12 months; (b) The student has had a secondary-author publication, either published or accepted for publication, during the prior 12 months; (c) The student has submitted a first-author publication with a faculty coauthor during the prior 12 months; (d) The student's work has been published during previous years in the program, although not during the prior 12 months.

### **Graduate Assistant – AI & TA Award Protocol**

The purpose of the AI/TA award is to recognize outstanding efforts in advancing your graduate program's educational goals. Specifically, we seek to reward those individuals that have provided exceptional educational service to the department in their AI or TA role. To be considered for the AI or TA award in your program, students must complete the requirements outlined below. The award will be presented at the end of the academic year. Students will receive a certificate and an honorarium. In order to be considered, students may either self-nominate for the AI or TA award, or students may be nominated by a fellow graduate student, faculty member, or student in one's class. If someone is nominated by another party, it is required that the nominee also fill out a nomination form as well. In the case of the TA award, students will be asked to provide a letter of recommendation from their current course instructor, who must also fill out the TA evaluation form.

### **Review process**

The applications will be reviewed by the AI/TA award committee, which will consist of three members of the Graduate Program Committee. A committee of three is suggested. However, in the case that a committee member's own advisee is nominated, another GPC member may serve or the advisor must abstain from voting. A committee will fill out assessments on several dimensions and overall quality of the nominee's application on a 1-10 scale and rank order fashion, in addition to providing scores and ranks, a brief description of overall quality will be provided. The committee will then review the assessments and vote. In the case of TA awards, the course instructor will fill out an evaluation form. This form will comprise 50% of the evaluation with the other 50% will consist of the average score across the three committee members. The selected AI and TA winners will then be provided with a departmental certificate and an honorarium. Although applications may be collected all year round, the committee will decide on the AI/TA award once per year in May

**Requirements (in sum):**

A completed AI/TA form by self, other, or both (both preferred)

- A current CV of the student (both AI / TA)
- A letter of recommendation from the course instructor and evaluation form (TA – only)
- Course evaluations (when possible – AI only)
- Observation evaluations (when possible – AI only)

**Scoring procedures**

The TA award decision will be based on the average of two scores:

- A composite score by the instructor on the TA form provided
- A composite score across the three committee member evaluations.

The AI award decision will be based on the composite score of the overall evaluations of the three committee members.

**9. Doctoral Milestones (for Doctoral Programs Only)**

The following Table IV lists the Ph.D. degree milestones and expected times of achievement for students who enter the program with a master's degree. Students entering the program with only a bachelor's degree or with a Master's degree in another area typically take one additional year to achieve these milestones.

Table IV: Degree Milestones and Expected Times of Achievement

MILESTONE	EXPECTED TIME FOR ACHIEVEMENT
Review of student's progress with doctoral studies committee	Every semester
Successful completion of qualifying process	End of first year

Coursework successfully completed	End of third year
Dissertation Committee appointed and approved by Graduate School	End of second year
Research protocols and/or IRB approval (as applicable)	End of fifth semester
Dissertation proposal completed and approved	End of fifth semester
Student admitted to doctoral candidacy	End of third year
Dissertation completed, successfully defended, and approved by committee	End of fourth year
Student completes and files all paperwork required for graduation	End of fourth year
Dissertation accepted by Graduate School	End of fourth year
Exit interview completed	End of fourth year
Survey of Earned Doctorate submitted	End of fourth year

#### What to Include

- ✓ Provide a link to or include your program's doctoral milestone's agreement as an appendix)—found under Forms: <https://www.utep.edu/graduate/forms.html>

## 10. University Resources

#### Purpose

This section can list campus and outside resources useful to most students. Units can annotate the list below and/or add resources relevant to their program(s) and discipline(s).

#### What to Include

- ✓ [Dean of Students Office](#)
- ✓ [Graduate School](#)
- ✓ [Counseling and Psychological Services](#)
- ✓ [Student Health and Wellness Center](#)
- ✓ [Graduate Student Assembly](#)
- ✓ [Student Travel Approval Process](#)
- ✓ [University Library](#)

- ✓ [Technology Support](#)
- ✓ [Office of International Programs](#)
- ✓ Resources provided by the unit, the college, and field-specific professional societies.

## 11. Graduate Assistantships

### Research Assistants, Teaching Assistants, and Graduate Assistants

Our department appoints graduate students in three different types of assistantship positions, depending on our needs and availability of funding. Research assistants (RAs) work in labs or in other research settings; Teaching Assistants or Assistant Instructors (TAs/AIs) either support faculty in teaching or, in specific cases, teach their own sections. Graduate Assistants (GAs) perform duties that are important to the unit/institution but that don't qualify as research or teaching. For example, a GA might serve in a support role and acquire experience in their field of study.

### Applying

Applications for graduate assistantships are accepted between admission and enrollment. To be eligible, students must be full-time. Assistantship information can be obtained at [website/e-mail].

### Getting Paid

To get paid, you must be "appointed." University rules generally require graduate students to be registered full-time during the semesters that they have a job appointment. The definition of "full-time" can be complex and there are exceptions for students who qualify, e.g., are at the dissertation stage. This policy is explained in detail in the [General Degree Requirements](#) of the UTEP Graduate School.

### Tuition and Health Insurance

All PhD and MA students who have job appointments with the university during a particular semester are eligible to pay tuition at the in-state rate during that semester, even if they are not already Texas residents. [Refer to Resources: [In-State Tuition Guidance](#)]

### Health Insurance

All graduate students with official job appointments in the university (Teaching Assistants, Research Assistants, and Assistant Instructors) receive health insurance at no cost under the Student Health Insurance Program ([SHIP](#)). Coverage for new graduate students begins at the time they receive their first official job appointment, usually two to four weeks after the Fall semester begins. It is generally safe to assume that coverage will begin by October 1 of your first

year in the graduate program. Thereafter coverage extends during the school year (Fall and Spring) and continues during the summer whether or not you work during the summer.

In addition to the basic SHIP insurance, graduate students can obtain (a) health insurance coverage that is more comprehensive than SHIP, or (b) coverage for spouse and dependents. However, these additional forms of coverage are paid for by the student, not by the university.

### Office Supplies

Our department office is open Monday – Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. There you will find your mailboxes, which you should check often during the workweek. You can submit copy requests by filling out the required forms. At present there is no charge for reasonable use of copy machines. You can also request PDF scans using these copy request forms, and these are sent directly to your UTEP e-mail address.