

## Graduate Faculty Advisors of Option 1 M.S. or Ph.D. Graduate Students

Department of Agronomy & Horticulture Graduate Programs

### Responsibilities of Advisors – Commitments & Expectations

Graduate Faculty in the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture are responsible for the administration and conduct of the Departmental Graduate Programs. However when an individual Graduate Faculty serves as the principal Advisor of a Graduate Student, he/she is thus ultimately responsible for the administration and conduct of his or her Advisee's graduate program. The purpose of this document is to outline the responsibilities of Graduate Faculty who elect to serve as an Advisor for a Departmental Graduate Program Applicant. This document will be forwarded to any Graduate Faculty who notifies the Departmental Graduate Committee of a declaration to serve as the Advisor of an Applicant that has been judged by the Graduate Committee to be qualified for entry into the graduate program.

Once you agree to serve as an Advisor to a graduate applicant, you are making a moral and financial commitment to your Advisee that you will provide him or her with the resources needed their degree objective within a reasonable timeframe (i.e., 2.5 years for a M.S. or 3.5 years for a Ph.D.). This timeframe assumes that the Advisee is satisfactorily progressing towards their degree objective as documented in the Annual Progress Reports that Advisees & Advisors submit each March. The word "commitment" as it is used here is not meant to imply a legally enforceable duty, but it does mean that you will do your utmost to ensure that your particular commitment to your Advisee is a *bona fide* one. So, what are your commitments to your Advisee relative to the word "resources"? Let us consider first the financial ones, *to wit*:

- If you took on the role of Advisor with the agreement that the Advisee's living expenses were to be supported by (1) a Grant-funded GRA, (2) a Department-funded GRA, (3) a Government-funded Scholarship (USA or other country government or agency, including the USA 2-year Fulbright and other such limited year awards), (4) funds provided by the Advisee's family, OR (5) funds provided personally by Advisee *per se*, and if the funds provided by the GRA, Scholarship, family, or Advisee eventually prove to be not of long enough duration or insufficient for the living expenses purpose, then you as the Advisor have the responsibility of helping your Advisee secure alternative funding such that the Advisee can still complete the degree objective within the previously agreed-upon timeframe. We are well aware that grants are sometimes not renewed, that Federal and State budgets can be cut, that foreign governments can topple, that families do not always come through with funding, and that personal funding may not be enough. Your commitment is to simply do your best to ensure that your Advisee can complete his or her degree.

- As an Advisor, you are responsible for funding the Advisee's M.S. Thesis or Ph.D. Dissertation research project. Depending on the nature of the thesis or dissertation research, this could require significant and substantial expenditures in terms of materials & supplies, as well as instrument & equipment purchases or rental fees, and perhaps even some assistance in terms of hourly support. Simply put, an M.S. or Ph.D. student must be provided by his or her Advisor with the resources needed to conduct peer-acceptable (i.e., where the peers are the Department Graduate Faculty serving on the Supervisory Committee) "original" research leading to a thesis or dissertation.
- An M.S. (thesis option) degree or a Ph.D. degree provides the student with training in the scientific method and results in the student acquiring experience and expertise in conducting original research. That said, the graduate degree would be incomplete unless the student is provided with the opportunity to present his or her "original" research findings to a national or international audience of peers at one or more scientific meeting(s). For that reason, it is incumbent upon the Advisor to secure the funding needed to allow his or her Advisee to travel to such meetings (at least once during a 2.5-yr M.S. program, and at least twice during a 3.5-yr Ph.D. program).
- The successful award of an M.S. or Ph.D. degree is not the end of your commitment to your advisee. The Advisor must follow-up with the Advisee to ensure that the "original" thesis or dissertation research is submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. This ensures that your Advisee's research undergoes the final stage in science – archival of scientific data, hypotheses tests, and conclusions generated in the thesis or dissertation research.
- Finally, most Ph.D. students and many M.S. students go into academic or other careers that will involve the teaching of science. The Advisor has a commitment to support his or her Advisee's instructional teaching activities, whether this is accomplished by directly working with the Advisee to have him or her co-teach an Advisor-taught undergraduate or graduate course, or whether this is accomplished by directing the Advisee to serve in a one-semester GTA role to teach in a non-Advisor-taught undergraduate or graduate course.

The above is a list of financial commitments to your Advisee. Below is a list of graduate program commitments that you also personally assume when serving as an Advisor:

- You should meet with your Advisee frequently, to monitor the academic and research progress of your Advisee towards the degree objective. Meeting with your Advisee at least once a week is not too frequent; meeting only once or twice a semester is simply too infrequent. This also includes attending your Advisee's first Departmental Seminar (which may be his or her first attempt to present a Scientific Seminar).

- If your Advisee was granted only provisional admission due to a coursework deficiency, you need to ensure that your Advisee takes the action specified by the Departmental Graduate Committee that is required to clear that provisional admittance within one year of that provisional admission.
- You need to ensure that your Advisee completes all forms required by UNL Graduate Studies and does so by the relevant deadlines. This includes organizing a Supervisory Committee that you will Chair and that will meet with your Advisee usually in the second semester after the Advisee's first (after admission) semester, but no later than the semester when just more than half of the degree credit hours will be completed at the end of that semester by your Advisee. Go to this UNL Graduate Studies Website to find this information: <http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/degrees/>
- Your Advisee must submit a Progress Report each March to the Departmental Graduate Committee to document your Advisee's progress towards the degree objective. You must ensure that your Advisee visits with you and the Supervisory Committee (either formally or informally) before completing that March Progress Report.
- As an Advisor, you need to ensure a good faculty and student turn-out for your Advisee's final thesis or dissertation seminar by sending a formal announcement of that seminar to the Peer Group faculty and to the Department as a whole.
- As an Advisor, you need to insist on your Advisee presenting his or her ongoing thesis or dissertation research at local UNL events such as the Graduate Student Research Poster Presentation Competitions sponsored by the UNL Vice-Chancellor's Office (Research Fair) and by the Sigma Xi Scientific Honor Society every spring.

NOTE: This document will be e-mailed by the Departmental Graduate Committee Secretary to any Departmental Faculty member who notifies the Graduate Committee that he or she wishes to take on the responsibility of being an Advisor to a graduate applicant that the Graduate Committee has judged to be qualified (fully or provisionally) to pursue an Option I M.S. degree or a Ph.D. degree in our Departmental Graduate Program. This notification will be automatic irrespective of whether the Departmental Faculty member has been previously notified.