



Spring 2025

WORKSHOPS

FOR GRAD PROGRAM LEADERS

How to Create or Review Your Graduate Handbook

January 30, 9:30-11:00 a.m.

Keeping Students on Track with Annual Academic Reviews

March 11, 2:30-4:00 p.m.

Supporting International Students and Applicants

April 24, 12:30-2:00 p.m.



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How to Create or Review Your Graduate Handbook

PANELISTS

- **Marygold Walsh-Dilley**, Geography & Environmental Studies
- **Kathryn Frietze**, Biomedical Sciences
- **Michael Andersen**, Biology

PRESENTER AND MODERATOR

Maria Lane, Dean of Graduate Studies

WORKSHOP AGENDA

9:30 Welcome and Opening Activity

9:45 Presentation: Best Practices

10:10 Panel: Grad Program Directors

10:35 Q&A

10:50 Final Activity

OPENING ACTIVITY

1. Find two people who have been Grad Director (or other position) for the same amount of time as you.
2. Find one program that has a handbook with the same status as yours, e.g. it's perfect, it's currently in revisions, handbook is non-existent, we have no idea, etc.
3. Write down a goal for what you hope to get out of this workshop.

BEST PRACTICES FOR GRAD HANDBOOKS

- What a grad handbook is (and isn't)
- Content: what to include
- Format: structure and presentation
- Revision: what to change and how often
- Communication: how, when, with whom

WHAT A GRAD HANDBOOK IS (AND ISN'T)

UNIVERSITY GRAD CATALOG

- Policies that govern graduate education across the institution
- Admissions info for each grad program
- Curriculum and basic requirements for each grad program

GRAD PROGRAM HANDBOOK

- Clarifies policy details specific to a program
- Provides guidance and expectations re timing and performance
- Identifies resources to support student success

GOVERNANCE DOC or DEPT BY-LAWS

- Defines responsibility for graduate program leadership and policy enforcement
- Identifies a timeline and process for leadership transition

CONTENT: WHAT TO INCLUDE

- Basic Information
- Program Requirements
- Policies and Procedures
- Program Pathways
- Expectations and Code of Conduct
- Student Support Resources

CONTENT: WHAT TO INCLUDE

Basic Information

- Program focus, goals, highlights
- Contact info for faculty & staff leadership
- Facilities info
- Communications

Program Requirements

- Curriculum and requirements
- Milestone exams
- Program specific:
 - GPA minimums
 - Clinical training
 - Skills proficiency
 - Etc.

Policies and Procedures

- Milestone exams: process, requirements and outcomes
- Required forms and how to complete them
- Transfer credit rules
- How to petition
- Time limit, suspension

CONTENT: WHAT TO INCLUDE

Program Pathways

- Paths for different degrees, areas, or concentrations
- Standard timeline for full-/part-time student
- UNM and program milestones

Expectations, Code of Conduct

- Academic dishonesty
- Expectations for attendance at dept events or colloquia
- Proper use of facilities
- How funding works, expectations for funded students

Student Support Resources

- Advising structure
- Campus resources
- Financial aid and scholarships
- Student groups
- Grievance how-to

CONTENT: KEY ITEMS TO INCLUDE

- Details about milestone requirements/exams
- Where students can go with grievances
- Info about funding and other critical resources
- Code of conduct, clear suspension policy
- Info for both students and faculty in program

CONTENT: WHAT **NOT** TO INCLUDE

Don't repeat the general sections of the grad catalog.

Don't try to cover every possible scenario.

Don't include unnecessary info that requires updating.

Don't include policy that faculty haven't agreed to yet.

Don't contradict the UNM catalog.

FORMAT: STRUCTURE AND PRESENTATION

Structure

- Any logical structure can work!
- Distinguish general policy from program- or track-specific policies
- Consider appendices for frequently updated items

Presentation

- Use clear labels (numerals/letters) for each section
- Use tables or graphics for course lists, timelines, milestone paths
- Include a table of contents and page numbers

REVISION: WHAT TO CHANGE AND HOW OFTEN?

What to change

- New curriculum, new policy
- Loopholes
- Confusing policy, process
- Areas where students (or faculty) need more detail

How often?

- Annual updates track best with academic year
- Frequent updates make it hard for students to keep track
- (But urgent policy changes sometimes necessary)
- Issue a new edition each year and label it

REVISION: WHO DOES IT AND HOW?

Who
revises the
handbook?

- Graduate faculty responsible for curriculum, requirements
- Your governance document should define a process for who participates in curriculum/policy changes

How are
revisions
made?

- DGP usually has leadership responsibility for this process, often with a committee
- Program/department can define this however they want
- Make sure you have a process for voting/approval

COMMUNICATION

HOW

- Handbook should exist as a document
- Easily available to all faculty and students in program
- Everyone should know when and where to expect updates

WHEN

- Handbook review as part of orientation
- Regular reminders of handbook location
- Annual posting of the new handbook edition

WITH WHOM

- New and returning students
- New and returning faculty
- Regular (annual) session to review changes and offer Q&A/training

PEER WISDOM

- Marygold Walsh-Dilley,
Geography & Environmental Studies
- Kathryn Frietze,
Biomedical Sciences
- Michael Andersen
Biology

PANEL QUESTIONS

1. How well would you say students know what's in the grad handbook? How do you communicate with them about handbook content or updates?
2. How well would you say faculty know what's in the grad handbook? Do you have any recommendations for keeping faculty up to date on changes?
3. How do you know when something needs to be revised? What are the biggest obstacles for making revisions?
4. What part of your handbook is the most confusing for students or faculty? Why?

FINAL ACTIVITY

1. Identify the biggest challenge you need to work on with your program's handbook.
2. What's the first step to address this challenge?
3. What resources do you need to take this step?
4. What timeline will you target to address this challenge?

Need a consultation?
mdlane@unm.edu



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