



Graduate Program Head Responsibilities

SPARK Program:

The Role of Program Chair and Graduate Program Head and Onboarding Faculty, Post Doc, and Graduate Student Onboarding

Dave Vanness, Senior Associate Dean

Doug Orzolek, Associate Dean

J. Jeffrey and Ann Marie Fox Graduate School

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Outline

- Organization of Graduate Education at Penn State
- Graduate Program Head Responsibilities
- Support for Graduate Program Heads



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Organization of Graduate Education at Penn State

Graduate Education is a partnership

Academic Authority

- Board of Trustees
- President
- University Faculty Senate
- Graduate Council
 - Chair: Kathryn Brasier, Professor of Rural Sociology

Administrative Authority

- Board of Trustees
- President
- Provost
- Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Fox Graduate School, Levon Esters



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Fox Graduate School Support for Graduate Program Heads

People

- Senior Associate Dean (Dr. Dave Vanness)
- Associate Dean for Graduate Academic Affairs (Dr. Doug Orzolek)
- Associate Dean for Graduate Educational Engagement (Dr. Stephanie Preston)
- Associate Dean for Program Assessment and Data Analytics (Dr. Bill Clark)
- Assistant Dean for Graduate Student Services (Dr. Michelle Corby)
- Director of Graduate Fellowships and Awards Administration (Brooke Snider)
- Director of Graduate Council Administration (Rob Bannon)

Systems

- [Fox Graduate School Resource Portal](#)
- [Graduate Program Management System \(GPMS\)](#)
- [Graduate School Application and Graduate Admissions Decision System \(GRADS\)](#)
- [Graduate Awards Tracking System \(GRATS\)](#)
- [Fox Graduate Executive Information Suite](#)
- [Fox Graduate School Doctoral Placement Portal](#)
- [LionPATH](#)
- [Starfish](#)
- [Curriculum Inventory Management System](#)
- [eCRM](#)



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Organization of Graduate Education at Penn State

Graduate Education is a partnership

Academic Authority

- The Graduate Council defines all *academic* policies for graduate students
 - Basic admission requirements
 - Basic degree requirements
 - New and revised program and course review
 - Etc.

Graduate Council Academic Policies

<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac>

Administrative Authority

- The Fox Graduate School
 - Implements all Graduate Council policies
 - Defines and implements all *administrative* policies for graduate students
 - Registration policies
 - Graduation policies
 - Etc.

Fox Graduate School Administrative Policies

<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gsad>



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Organization of Graduate Education at Penn State

- Historically, graduate education was organized by departments, and the department head was the head of the graduate program
 - This is still the case for many programs, but not all...



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Organization of Graduate Education at Penn State

- We also have...
 - Academic departments offering 2 or even 3 different graduate major degree programs
 - In some cases, the department head has formal responsibility for all the graduate programs
 - In some cases, the department head has formal responsibility for some of the graduate programs
 - In some cases, the department head has formal responsibility for none of the graduate programs
 - Interdisciplinary graduate programs that cross departmental boundaries
 - Intercollege Graduate Degree Programs (IGDPs), offered by faculty members from multiple colleges, with no academic department involvement



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Organization of Graduate Education at Penn State

- From the perspective of the Fox Graduate School, each graduate degree program has a *Graduate Program Head*, who is responsible for the program.
 - The Graduate Program Head may delegate most day-to-day responsibilities of running the program to a *Director of Graduate Studies (DGS)*



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Graduate Program Head Responsibilities

- The Graduate Program Head has four primary areas of responsibility:
 - Academic Leadership
 - Student Recruitment, Admissions, and Support
 - Faculty and Program Coordination
 - Administration



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Graduate Program Head Responsibilities

- Academic Leadership
 - Ensure the quality and academic integrity of the graduate program.
 - Ensure the curriculum stays current (planning, review, revisions).
 - Facilitate the development of new courses or concentrations.
 - Ensure program compliance with university, professional, and (if relevant) accrediting body standards.
 - Guide assessment of student learning outcomes and program effectiveness.



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Graduate Program Head Responsibilities

- Student Recruitment, Admissions, and Support
 - Coordinate recruitment strategies to attract strong applicants and manage the admission to enrollment “funnel.”
 - Work with the program faculty to set admissions standards.
 - Oversee orientation and onboarding for new graduate students.
 - Ensure all students receive quality academic advising.*
 - Monitor student progress toward degree completion (coursework, qualifying exams, research milestones, thesis/dissertation).
 - Support student career and professional development.
 - Address student concerns, grievances, and conflicts.



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Graduate Program Head Responsibilities

- Faculty and Program Coordination
 - Convene and chair program faculty meetings.
 - Facilitate faculty involvement in graduate admissions, recruitment, advising, and student committees.
 - Promote faculty mentoring of graduate students.*
 - Serve as the primary liaison between program faculty and the Fox Graduate School.



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Graduate Program Head Responsibilities

- Administration and Compliance
 - Ensure adherence to university, Graduate Council and Fox Graduate School policies.
 - Oversee assistantship assignments and allocation of graduate funding.
 - Manage program-level student records.
 - Participate in Graduate Council program review and evaluation.
 - Advocate for program needs (funding, staffing, facilities) to college leadership.
 - Delegate responsibilities to the Director of Graduate Studies as appropriate



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Mentoring Blueprint Workbook

A Developmental, Policy-Aligned Institutional Guide for Mentors and Mentees



Tips for Finding Mentors

Get advice and guidance on finding a mentor and answers to frequently asked mentoring questions.



Degree Journey Map

Recommended ways to develop skills throughout graduate school in five key areas: degree milestones, research and scholarship, teaching and pedagogy, career exploration, and personal growth and development



Mentoring Resources

Find dozens of offices and resources to support graduate mentoring and, more generally, graduate education at the University.

Mentoring Fox Website

<https://gradschool.psu.edu/student-support/mentoring>

Blueprint Tips Journey Resources

Specific Fox Tools...

- **Focus on Relationships**
- **Consider Environment**
- **Support, Enable, Strengthen, Inspire, Equip, Empower**
- **Parameters, Guidelines, and Reminders**



Blueprint for Mentoring



**Mentor/Mentee
Expectation Compact**



**Graduate Student
Journey Document**



Mentoring Map

Summary

- Graduate program heads serve a central and crucial role in offering high-quality graduate education.
- The Fox Graduate School supports Graduate Program heads in this important work.



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Thank You!

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