Roles and Responsibilities of the Graduate Advisor of Record
The roles and responsibilities of the Graduate Advisor of Record (GAR) for doctoral and master’s programs support the mission of the university and reflect the standards for leadership of graduate education as defined by the Council of Graduate Schools. The Council of Graduate Schools states that the coordinator of graduate programs is responsible for a number of activities, such as academic advising of graduate students, admissions decisions, recommendations for allocations of fellowships and assistantships, and the appointment of faculty members to graduate student committees. The graduate coordinator communicates university-wide policies on graduate programs to the departmental faculty and communicates department decisions and recommendations to the Graduate School, through the academic college in which the program is administered. The purpose of this document is to provide GARs with an outline of best practices for organizing and administering their graduate programs and to provide a guide to GARs for advancing the quality of the program(s) for which they are responsible.

Enrollment Management
GARs are responsible for coordinating graduate enrollment management to ensure marketing/recruiting materials and plans yield planned number of applications and planned number of degree candidates who meet criteria for admission and who meet program expectations for quality and diversity.

Recruitment
GARs, in collaboration with program leaders, should review the marketing/recruiting resources and strategy options to identify those that effectively recruit the planned number of qualified applications to the program in order to achieve the program’s targeted number of applications and targeted number of quality candidates. The program should track the applicant pool for quality and diversity and then review recruiting strategies if the targeted pools are not meeting expectations. Consistent response to applicants and to those who inquire about the program is essential to achieving the desired application and candidate pools.

Developing a plan to find program candidates from underrepresented populations should be a part of any program’s recruiting plan.

Graduate programs should provide effective and current web pages that provide prospective applicants with comprehensive information about the program and provide these links and information to the Graduate School. The web page should include the program’s mission, degree/certificate requirements, graduate faculty members, faculty expertise/research/creative activity summaries, career/advance opportunities, and any discipline specific information that advances the program’s ability to secure and retain quality candidates. GARs must have effective processes for responding quickly to electronic inquiries and be able to quickly link applicants with the information that they need. GARs and program leaders should take advantage of electronic communication processes to recruit prospective students. The Graduate School is able to forward e-mail addresses of potential candidates who attend face-to-face recruiting sessions and who
contact the Graduate School about specific programs to the program in which the potential candidate expresses interest.

While electronic communication may meet the needs of most applicants, GARs and program leaders may need to utilize telephone communication with selected prospects and applicants. Personal telephone communication can be the most effective strategy for securing some quality candidates. Similarly, phone inquiries with selected programs at partner institutions may be essential to securing applications from candidates who reflect the quality desired by the program.

The GAR, in collaboration with program leaders, should develop appropriate print resources to support the recruiting/marketing needs of the programs. Materials may include newsletters, brochures, journals, information packets, and advertisements. The Office of Communications provides professional support with the development of program brochures for recruiting and marketing. The Graduate School provides viewbooks with general information about graduate program study options and can send out the specific materials to US prospective students via a mailout packet.

The GAR, in collaboration with program leaders, should develop presentations to present to qualified applicants on campus, such as undergraduate majors in related programs. Programs should offer information sessions and the opportunity for interested candidates to speak with faculty and to learn about the program.

The Graduate School sponsors a Graduate Fair each fall and Graduate Programs Day each spring. These events provide UTSA students with the opportunity to visit with representatives from our graduate programs for the purpose of learning more about graduate study at UTSA and in specific programs. Typically, a representative of every graduate program at UTSA participates in both events.

**Admissions**

GARs, in collaboration with program leaders, develop appropriate procedures for selecting candidates for admission into the program. Processes appropriate to the program should ensure that graduate faculty members participate in the selection process. The selection process should include the use of multiple criteria such as test scores, GPA, essays, portfolios, interviews, or related information appropriate to the discipline that allows the program to select high quality candidates. The criteria for admission must include university-wide criteria, as published in the Graduate Catalog. Any additional, program-specific criteria, must be published in the Graduate Catalog.

The GAR should ensure that consistent communication is established with selected candidates and that all complete applications are reviewed in a timely manner consistent with Graduate School admissions policies. The GAR is responsible for initiating a recommendation for admission decision for each candidate who submits a complete application.

The GAR should ensure that all new students are assigned a faculty advisor.
The GAR should provide a program-level orientation for all new students. The Graduate School provides a university-wide orientation for new students each Fall and Spring. Students should attend this orientation as well as the program-level orientation. Newly admitted international students are mandated to attend an international student orientation hosted by the Office of International Programs before they can register for courses. The GAR should direct new students desiring additional information about the university community to the on-line graduate student orientation. The orientation can be found on the Graduate School’s website www.graduateschool.utsa.edu.

**Student Degree Plans**

GARs are responsible for maintaining and submitting degree plans for each student in the program. The Degree Plan is an approved list of all courses and their recommended sequence that will fulfill requirements for degrees or certificates as specified in the regulations for degrees and certificates specified in the Graduate Catalog. The GAR submits the approved Degree Plan to the Office of the Registrar during the student’s final term of study. Deadlines for students to apply for graduation are published in the academic calendar. GARs must alert the Office of the Registrar if any change in a student’s Degree Plan is made after it has been submitted.

The time limit for students to complete a degree program is published in the Graduate Catalog.

On rare occasions, there may be a warranted reason that a student’s program of study differs from that specified in the Graduate Catalog. Any variation of this type must be approved through the waiver process. GARs must review any proposed request for a waiver and are responsible for ensuring that any waiver requests sent forward are appropriate, supported by the program, and reflect the concept that circumstances beyond the control of the student warrants the waiver. Waivers are reviewed by the Department Chair, the Dean of the academic college in which the program is delivered, and the Dean of the Graduate School.

**Tracking Program Graduates**

GARs, with the program’s leaders, should develop a process for the program to collect information on the placement of candidates who complete the program in order to determine if the program is meeting its mission. Typical processes include exit interviews, correspondence, or web submission information where candidates can report their placements and can complete any program evaluations. This information should be shared with the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies in the college where the program is administered. Placement information on graduates from doctoral students will be included in Doctoral Progress Reports completed each year.

**Program Assessment**

The GAR, in collaboration with appropriate program representatives, provides leadership for developing the appropriate graduate faculty committee or related organizational
structure to create a rigorous program assessment plan that validates the program’s strengths and guides program changes. Assessment activities include:

1. Ensuring that assessment reports are files with the appropriate offices according to appropriate procedures and timelines, and that any feedback received from those offices is used to improve and advance the program’s assessment plan.

2. Establishing comprehensive learning objectives for the program that reflect the learning goals established for graduate programs by the Council on Graduate Studies. These are: a) a depth of content knowledge; b) critical thinking and problem solving; c) effective oral and written communication; and d) evidence of advanced scholarship through research and/or creative activity.

3. Identifying multiple direct and indirect assessment measures documenting the achievement of the learning objectives that allow performance to be gauged over time.


5. Using the results of the assessment to improve student learning, so that data and program expectations guide program change leading to high quality advanced programs of study.

Program Advocacy
The GAR should also participate in regular meetings with the Department Chair to review the program’s mission, planning, and related resource needs, apply for competitive programs that may provide additional resources for the program, and seek grants or external resource support for the program as appropriate to the program’s mission.

Curriculum Leadership
The GAR should lead or be an active participant in procedures with the program faculty to develop and review curriculum currency and future discipline expectations to ensure that curriculum reflect discipline expectations for currency, certification, licensure, or related accreditation appropriate to the program. Programs must establish a curriculum review process that is consistent with university guidelines.

The GAR should lead or be an active participant in the program review process, and the use of the results of the review to help the program better develop its mission, goals, and related planning to improve program quality.

Capstone Leadership
The GAR is responsible for ensuring that capstone experiences (internship/practicum, comprehensive examinations, thesis, research, recitals, exhibits, study abroad, etc.) are managed effectively and that appropriate procedures for updating or advancing the accuracy and currency or capstone experiences are provided.

- Internships/practicum: GARs should develop procedures to ensure appropriate placement, supervision, and evaluation of graduate interns. Best
practices include provisions for orientations, handbooks, and advisement for resolving problems or reviewing concerns.

- **Comprehensive Examinations:** GARs should develop procedures to ensure that candidates taking comprehensive examinations are fully informed of the program’s expectations, administrative structure, pass-fail criteria, and policies governing the exams.

- **Thesis/Research Requirements:** GARs should develop procedures to ensure that candidates understand and follow the program’s expectations for committee selection, committee participation, and project presentation or defense.

- **Study Abroad:** GARs of programs that offer international study options should collaborate with the Office of International Programs to provide rigorous study abroad opportunities for candidates who have the option of including study abroad as part of their graduate study plan.

Resources:

Council of Graduate Schools (2004). “Organization and administration of graduate Education”.