

The Role of the Graduate Coordinator

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research



What is a Graduate Coordinator?

The University of Alberta uses the term “graduate coordinator” to refer to the academic faculty member in charge of a graduate program (e.g. the Associate Chair, Graduate). The term “graduate administrator” refers to an APO or support staff position.

The term graduate coordinator also refers to an Associate Chair, Associate Dean, Director, or any other individual officially designated by the head of the unit as being responsible for the unit’s graduate programs.

Graduate Coordinators and FGSR Council

A graduate coordinator is an executive officer of their department. Graduate coordinators speak for their departments. They are the unit representatives for their departments (or Faculties if non-departmentalized) at FGSR Council.

It has long been recognized in FGSR policy that graduate coordinators “attend Council meetings and act as unit spokespersons in all matters relating to graduate programs. They are also responsible for informing faculty and graduate students in their units of decisions, recommendations, and information emanating from the FGSR Council meetings.”

Policy-making role for FGSR Council

Academics make academic decisions. Often these decisions are guided by policies. The policy-making body for FGSR is the FGSR Council.

Pursuant to provincial law (namely the *Post-secondary Learning Act*), faculty councils (including the FGSR Council) may:

1. determine the programs of study for which the faculty is established;
2. appoint the examiners for examinations in the faculty, conduct the examinations and determine the results of them,
3. provide for the admission of students to the faculty,
4. determine the conditions under which a student must withdraw from or may continue the student's program of studies in the faculty,
5. authorize the granting of degrees,

subject to any conditions or restrictions that are imposed by the General Faculties Council.

Delegation

Universities cannot operate without delegation.

Deans delegate powers, Faculty Councils delegate powers; and all can also sub-delegate powers as considered appropriate.

Section 21(4) of the *Post-secondary Learning Act* makes clear that "a dean may delegate any of the dean's powers, duties and functions as the dean considers appropriate ..."

Section 29(3) of the *Post-secondary Learning Act* states that a faculty council respectively "may delegate any of its powers, duties and functions under this Act ..."

Other Duties

We all recognize that graduate coordinators have other duties.

According to regulations adopted by FGSR Council: “Graduate coordinators have a duty to ensure that departmental and Faculty rules are administered in a fair and equitable manner. This often involves going beyond a mere application of the rules, and may entail using moral persuasion on colleagues and students.”

Source: Calendar section 200.2.4

<http://www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar/GradStudies-and-Research/Faculty/200.2.html#200.2>

Graduate coordinators are also responsible for:

- ensuring that the regulations and requirements of the FGSR and the University are met
- admitting applicants to graduate programs
- acting as an advisor concerning the appointment of supervisors, supervisory committees, and external examiners
- monitoring the academic progress of graduate students and then acting as an advisor concerning any changes to a student's status or program
- coordinating financial support for graduate students, including fellowships and assistantships
- providing advice to graduate students on the rules and procedures of the FGSR and the department
- initiating and coordinating graduate student recruitment activities.

Source: Calendar section 200.2.4

<http://www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar/GradStudies-and-Research/Faculty/200.2.html#200.2>

Dispute resolution

Graduate coordinators are also the first “port-of-call” in any dispute. It is standard practice for FGSR staff and FGSR Associate Deans to refer students back to their departments (or Faculty where non-departmentalized) if a student states that they have not discussed the matter with the graduate coordinator.

But graduate coordinators are not alone ...

FGSR decanal team responsibilities

Informal

- The **FGSR Associate Deans** provide advice and support to graduate coordinators.
- We also meet with students who have been unable to resolve an issue within their departments. We can arrange for a meeting of involved parties and facilitate resolution.

FGSR decanal team responsibilities...

Formal

- With respect to formal matters, the FGSR Associate Deans handle all **recommendations for termination** (aka “**required to withdraw**” **requests**) as well as recommendations for **changes of category**, including recommendations flowing from a failed candidacy exam, where a student is not consenting.
- The FGSR Associate Deans also investigate complaints lodged with the Dean of FGSR under the **Code of Student Behaviour** concerning allegations of “inappropriate academic behaviour” (such as plagiarism in a thesis, cheating, faking research results etc.)

In both cases, we arrange for a formal meeting of all concerned and proceed with investigation

Contacting an Associate Dean

The FGSR Associate Deans come from a variety of subject areas and fields within the academy. They have been assigned to handle cases from specific departments. You should have received a welcome email from the Associate Dean assigned to your program.

Graduate Coordinators are free to call, meet or email the Associate Dean assigned to their program. The staff at Triffo Hall have access to the calendars for each of the four Associate Deans and can also book appointments.

The Associate Deans work in Triffo Hall on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Need help?

Alphabetically, we are:

Dr. Deborah Bursthyn, (Medicine and Dentistry)

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Phone: 780 492-1805

Dr. Bryan Hogeveen, (Arts)

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Phone: 780 492-0681

Dr. Suzanne Kresta, (Engineering)

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Dr. Paul Melançon, (Medicine and Dentistry)

pmelancon.fgsr@ualberta.ca

Phone: 780 492-5920

Contact information for FGSR staff

If your problem relates to the implementation or processing of a decision, the FGSR website has a “Contact Us” page, containing a listing of which staff can help with which program. Graduate administrators are often in touch with FGSR staff.

Generally speaking, FGSR staff work in the areas of “admissions”, “program services”, “scholarships” and “professional development”.

“Program Services” refers to matters such as registration, degree requirements, supervisor updates, records, notification of exams and convocation. Please contact the Graduate Services Advisor who is responsible for your program. Contact details are found [here](#) under Graduate Program Services.