

**Administrative Council
Midwestern State University
Approval via Electronic Vote**

July 11, 2024

Meeting No. 24-05

The Administrative Council approved the policies below via email during the voting period June 13 – July 11. Notification of approval was received from the following members: Ms. Debbie Barrow, Dr. Marcy Brown Marsden, Dr. Matthew Capps, Mr. Paul Chappell, Ms. Dawn Fisher, Ms. Kristen Garrison, Ms. Julie Gaynor, Ms. Ashley Hurst, Dr. Keith Lamb, Ms. Rhonda McClung, Mr. Kyle Owen, and Mr. Kyle Williams.

- I. MSU OP 42.01 Graduate Faculty Requirements and Procedures

- II. MSU OP 42.02 Graduate Assistants



Stacia Haynie, Chair



Betsy Tucker, Secretary



MIDWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY

Operating Policies & Procedures Manual

University Operating Policy/Procedure (OP)

OP 42.01: Graduate Faculty Requirements and Procedures

Approval Authority:	President
Policy Type:	University Operating Policy and Procedure
Policy Owner:	Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Responsible Office:	Dean of Billie Doris McAda Graduate School
Next Scheduled Review:	09/01/2027. This OP will be reviewed in September of every third year, or as needed, by the Dean of the Billie Doris McAda Graduate School with substantive revisions forwarded to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and on to the President.

I. Policy Statement

At Midwestern State University (“MSU” or “University”), a component institution of the Texas Tech University (“TTU”) System, guidelines for graduate faculty membership are set by the Graduate Council, although departments and colleges may develop their own specific criteria for membership within the more general Graduate School guidelines. Both Graduate School and departmental (or collegiate) guidelines may be changed at any time, subject to the approval of the Graduate Council. The Graduate School policy regarding graduate faculty membership will be reviewed by the Dean of the Graduate School in October of even-numbered years with substantive revisions forwarded to the Provost and Senior Vice President.

II. Reason for Policy

This Operating Policy/Procedure (OP) outlines the roles and responsibilities of Graduate Faculty along with the criteria for membership in the Graduate Faculty.

III. Application of Policy

This OP applies to all University graduate faculty.

IV. Definitions

Graduate Faculty – Consists of faculty at the University who qualify for membership on the Graduate Faculty as set forth in this OP.

V. Policy/Procedure

A. Roles and Responsibilities of Graduate Faculty Members

1. Graduate Faculty membership is a means of recognizing members of the faculty for scholarly activities, creativity, direction of graduate research and study, and other contributions to the graduate programs. Therefore, such membership is neither pro forma nor automatic.
2. Graduate Faculty are involved in:
 - a. developing policies and procedures related to graduate education;
 - b. reviewing and making recommendations on applications for admission to graduate certificate and degree programs;
 - c. teaching graduate courses;
 - d. serving as graduate program directors;
 - e. advising students on curricular matters;
 - f. participating in qualifying, comprehensive, and other examinations;
 - g. directing graduate students in their research and creative activities;
 - h. serving as chair on master's and doctoral committees;
 - i. serving as member or co-chair on master's and doctoral committees; and
 - j. serving as the Graduate Dean's representatives at doctoral dissertation defenses.
3. No member of the Graduate Faculty shall chair the advisory committee directing a student to a degree higher than the level of the highest degree earned by the member of the faculty.

B. Criteria for Membership

1. The criteria for membership on the Graduate Faculty include both University-wide and departmental (or collegiate in the case of some colleges) standards. The University-wide criteria for membership are as follows:
 - a. Possession of the terminal academic degree in the field or recognition for substantive and distinctive contributions to the discipline involved. For individuals in the process of obtaining a terminal degree, certification by their graduate school that all requirements for the degree have been met will be treated as equivalent to possession of the degree.
 - b. Evidence of current interest and involvement in scholarly research and/or creative activity.
 - c. Successful experience in the teaching, counseling, and/or direction of students at the graduate level. This requirement does not apply to individuals who have recently completed their terminal degrees.
2. Similarly, departments (or colleges) may have specific guidelines for Graduate Faculty membership within the general University-wide criteria listed above.

C. Graduate Faculty Membership

1. All members of the full-time tenure/tenure track faculty of graduate degree-conferring units of MSU become members of the Graduate Faculty upon appointment to the University unless the Graduate School receives notification from the college of the faculty member that he or she should not be included—e.g., because they do not satisfy the Criteria for Membership (see Section B).
2. Faculty with other types of appointments at MSU (e.g., adjunct or visiting faculty, faculty with administrative assignments and/or ex officio appointments, international exchange faculty) may be conferred Graduate Faculty membership upon nomination by their academic department, unit, or college. If approved by the Graduate Council, the individual will be designated as adjunct graduate faculty. Depending on the extent they meet the criteria in section B (above), individuals will be permitted to:
 - a. participate in qualifying, comprehensive, and other examinations;
 - b. direct graduate students in their research and creative activities;
 - c. serve as co-chair on master's and doctoral committees;
 - d. serve as a member of master's and doctoral committees;
 - e. teach graduate courses related to their discipline; and
 - f. serve as the Dean's representative on doctoral dissertation defenses.

Nominations are reviewed by the Graduate Council and approved by majority vote by the Graduate Council. Approval is for a maximum of five years aligning with the department/unit's graduate program review cycle, but individuals may be nominated for continued appointments subject to approval by the Graduate Council.

Any additional restrictions upon duties performed by such faculty beyond those stated in this policy should be stated by the department or unit chair on the application form. Conversely, for those duties that are not restricted, the application form should present strong reasons why graduate faculty status should be conferred. Professors of practice who teach, for example, should be individuals whose extensive professional experience makes them valuable for teaching select profession-oriented courses.

3. Faculty who have retired from MSU appointments may apply for continuation as Graduate Faculty members subject to recommendation by the department and approval by the academic dean and Graduate Council. Upon retirement, the individual can no longer serve as sole chair of a master's or doctoral committee nor teach graduate courses. Any additional restrictions upon duties performed by such faculty should be stated by the department or unit chair on the application form.

D. Exceptions for Specific Duties

1. Those faculty members who are not appointed to the Graduate Faculty of MSU may not serve as instructors of record for graduate-level courses, including tandem courses, nor participate in comprehensive/qualifying exams/advisory committees for either master's or doctoral students. This includes individuals who had Graduate Faculty status but left MSU for other employment. Exceptions for the requirement to be a member of the Graduate Faculty may be granted for the following circumstances:
 - a. Teaching Waiver

Exceptions may be made to teach graduate courses under unusual circumstances and then only upon recommendation of the administrator of the instructional unit and with subsequent approval of the Dean of the Graduate School or designee. Requests should be made for specific courses only, be based on unusual programmatic need, and indicate the qualifications for the individual for whom a request is made. Approvals are granted for a two-year period but can be renewed.
 - b. Advisory Committee Membership

Exceptions may be granted by the Dean of the Graduate School for individuals serving on advisory committees (but not as chair) when their expertise clearly is required for enhancement of this student's scholarship. Such exemption may be extended to individuals internal or external to MSU. There may be no more than one non-graduate faculty member on a given advisory committee. Requests are made by the chair of the student's master's/doctoral committee to the Dean of the Graduate School. Approvals are student-specific.
 - c. Direction of Non-thesis Students in a Terminal Master's Degree Program

Faculty with a master's degree only can supervise non-thesis students to degree completion in a terminal master's degree program in which the faculty member is certified to teach upon recommendation of the administrator of the instructional unit and with subsequent approval of the Dean of the Graduate School or designee. Approvals are granted for a three-year period but can be renewed.

E. Review of Graduate Faculty Status

1. Graduate Faculty members should be reviewed periodically by their departments and/or colleges, regardless of contractual or tenured status (SACSCOC 3.72). Such a review would include the faculty member's research, creative activity, and involvement in graduate education. In most cases, this review would be done as part of the regular graduate program review cycle.
2. A request for suspension of a Graduate Faculty member who receives a negative review must first be voted on by the Graduate Faculty of the individual's academic unit.
 - a. Any recommendation for suspension of a member from the Graduate Faculty must be presented with evidence of just cause, with the burden of proof on the

unit chair or college dean.

- b. The faculty member recommended for suspension must be informed of the vote and allowed to provide a rebuttal (in writing or in person) before any decision is made final.
3. Should a faculty member receive a negative vote for Graduate Faculty status in his or her department, unit, or college and wish to appeal that decision, he or she would send such an appeal to the Graduate Council, which would then forward their recommendation to the full body for a vote. The same procedure will apply in cases where a request is made by a department and/or college to remove an individual from the Graduate Faculty.
4. Upon a Graduate Council vote to reinstate or grant Graduate Faculty membership to the individual, the individual's Graduate Faculty membership role will be reinstated immediately.

IV. Related Statutes, Rules, Regulations, Policies, and Resources

Related MSU Operating Policies/Procedures:

[OP 42.01: Graduate Faculty Requirements and Procedures](#)

[OP 44.10: Information Technology \(IT\) Operations](#)

[OP 52.25: Criminal Background Checks](#)

[OP 52.43: Employment of Foreign National](#)

Related Resources:

[Graduate Faculty Application Form](#)

[GA Duties Form: GA Exceptions Form](#)

[GRA and GTA Evaluation Form](#)

[GPTI Evaluation Form](#)

V. Responsible Office

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VI. Revision History

11/08/2002: MSU Policy/Procedure 3.147 - Graduate Faculty Requirements adopted and approved by the MSU Board of Regents.

08/05/2004: Following the appointment of a Dean of Graduate Studies, policies relating to graduate studies were thoroughly reviewed and Policy/Procedure 3.147 is completely revised to better addresses the requirements of the Southern

Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and allows for three types of faculty: graduate faculty, associate graduate faculty, and adjunct graduate faculty; and faculty must be evaluated every 5 years. All faculty currently holding graduate faculty status would maintain that status for a minimum of five years.

- 11/06/2009: Completely revised the guidelines regarding the appointment of graduate faculty and added new sections on procedures for advancement within the graduate faculty; renewal of graduate faculty status; and remediation of graduate faculty.
- 02/15/2015: Revised to reflect current procedures and renamed Policy/Procedure 3.147 - Graduate Faculty Requirements and Procedures.
- 08/05/2021: Comprehensive revision and renumbering of *MSU Policies and Procedures Manual* which is renamed *Operating Policies and Procedures Manual of Midwestern State University*. Former Policy/Procedure 3.147 renumbered by the MSU Board of Regents as Operating Policy/Procedure (OP) 42.01: Graduate Faculty Requirements and Procedures.
- 09/11/2024: Completely revised to align with SACSCOC and the TTU System, utilize standardized terminology and definitions, and streamline procedures and do away with unnecessary paperwork. Adopted and approved by MSU President Stacia Haynie.



MIDWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY

Operating Policies & Procedures Manual

University Operating Policy/Procedure (OP)

OP 42.02: Graduate Assistants

Approval Authority:	President
Policy Type:	University Operating Policy and Procedure
Policy Owner:	Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Responsible Office:	Dean of Billie Doris McAda Graduate School
Next Scheduled Review:	09/01/2027. This OP will be reviewed in September of every third year, or as needed, by the Dean of the Billie Doris McAda Graduate School with substantive revisions forwarded to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and on to the President.

I. Policy Statement/Purpose

The purpose of this Operating Policy/Procedure (OP) is to establish and define the responsibilities and procedural guidelines for graduate students employed at Midwestern State University (“MSU” or “University”), a component institution of the Texas Tech University (“TTU”) System. The Graduate Research Assistant, the Graduate Teaching Assistant, or the Graduate Part-Time Instructor (collectively defined as *Graduate Assistants*) are both student and employee. They are continually involved, as students, in the scholarship of their discipline. As students, they have a natural understanding of the needs and perspectives of other students, which enhances their role as employee. As employees, Graduate Assistants make an important contribution to the teaching mission of the University.

II. Application of Policy

This policy is applicable to Graduate Assistants who are enrolled at MSU and who are also employed by the University.

III. Definitions

Graduate Assistant (“GA”) includes Graduate Research Assistants, Graduate Teaching Assistants, and Graduate Part-Time Instructors:

- A. *Graduate Research Assistant* (“GRA”) – The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (“SACSCOC”) regulations require a Graduate Assistant who is currently enrolled in the Graduate School and who is also employed by the University to perform research activities or other such activities to assist the

department's research efforts in support of the University's research mission.

- B. *Graduate Teaching Assistant* (“GTA”) – A Graduate Assistant who is currently enrolled in the Graduate School and who is also employed by the University in support of its teaching mission.
- C. *Graduate Part-Time Instructor* (“GPTI”) – A Graduate Assistant who is currently enrolled in the Graduate School and who is also employed by the University in support of its teaching mission. GPTIs must have at least eighteen (18) graduate hours in the field of teaching; therefore, in accordance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (“SACSCOC”), GPTIs may have sole responsibility for the course(s) they teach.

IV. Policy/Procedure

A. Qualifications

1. Every Graduate Assistant must hold a bachelor's degree or the equivalent and be admitted as a student in the Graduate School. SACSCOC regulations require the student to have at least eighteen (18) hours of graduate work in the field of teaching responsibilities to be given full responsibility for a class (GPTIs).
2. Post-baccalaureate students may not be appointed as Graduate Assistants.
3. Any exceptions to the above policy must be for demonstrably valid reasons and be approved in advance by the Graduate Dean and the Office of the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs. Each departmental unit will review the qualifications of all appointees at the time of appointment to ensure teaching proficiency and compliance with existing policies. All justifications for exceptions will be kept on record (Attachment: [GA Exceptions Form](#))

B. Other Requirements

1. Administrative responsibility for GRAs, GTAs, and GPTIs rests within the college in which the Graduate Assistant is employed.
2. Upon offer of student employment, the hiring department should direct each new Graduate Assistant to the Human Resources Department to complete required employment paperwork. Student employees must provide Human Resources acceptable documents to verify eligibility to work in the United States within three business days of their first day of employment. Student employees must furnish Human Resources with an original Social Security card. All student employees undergo a background check. Refer to [OP 52.25: Criminal Background Checks](#) and [OP 52.42: Student Employment](#)
3. The hiring department must submit an Electronic Personnel Action Form (EPAF) for all student employees. The EPAF may not be originated for new student employees until mandatory paperwork has been completed in Human Resources. For the hiring of Graduate Part-Time Instructors, an Employment Recommendation (ER) must be submitted and a contract generated.

4. Before accepting employment, foreign national student employees must also process through the Global Education Office (“GEO”) to verify their status and eligibility to work. Refer to [OP 52.43: Employment of Foreign Nationals](#).

C. Duties

1. Service assignments for each Graduate Assistant should be outlined at the time of appointment and should be as specific as possible (Attachment A: [GA Duties Form](#))
2. Duties may include a range of assignments. The exact duties will depend on the needs of the department, the background and qualifications of the Graduate Assistant, and the professional goals of the student. Work assignments should consider both the needs of the department and the Graduate Assistant’s obligation to make satisfactory progress in their academic program.
3. While it is not always possible to be precise in the determination of weekly hours of service, GRAs, GTAs, and GPTIs work no more than nineteen (19) hours per week during the employment period.
4. In general, Graduate Assistants are required to keep at least five (5) office hours in residence per week. A schedule of these hours must be posted.
5. Any exceptions to the above policy must be for demonstrably valid reasons and be approved in advance by the Graduate Dean and the Office of the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs. Each departmental unit will review the duties of all appointees at the time of appointment and at the conclusion of appointment to ensure teaching proficiency and compliance with existing policies. All justifications for exceptions will be kept on record (Attachment: [GA Exceptions Form](#))

D. Appointment

Graduate Assistants are normally appointed for one-quarter to one-half-time service. Appointments exceeding half time should be made only under compelling circumstances and with the approval of the relevant academic dean, the Dean of the Graduate School, and the Office of the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs. Appointments are ordinarily for nine months but, in some instances, may be for only one semester or for one or more summer sessions. Students must be in good academic standing at the time of appointment. Continuation of the assistantship or graduate part-time instructorship is conditioned on satisfactory performance throughout the term of appointment as an assistant and as a student.

E. Salaries

The maximum salary of Graduate Assistants will be set by the administration prior to each budget year. The salary may be increased periodically as recommended by the Graduate Council, the Academic Council, and approved by the President.

F. Rights and Responsibilities

1. The first priority of all Graduate Assistants should be satisfactory progress in their academic programs. At the same time, the acceptance of an assistantship or part-time instructorship involves responsibilities for satisfactory performance of the duties related to that appointment. The appointment and its acceptance involve the understanding that duties of both graduate student and GRA, GTA, and GPTI can be balanced with mutual benefit to both roles. Graduate Assistants and their advisors need to work together to ensure that both roles are carried out successfully.
 2. The Graduate Assistant is responsible for becoming familiar with general academic procedures, published or online, in such documents as the [University Catalog](#), [MSU Student Handbook](#) and the [Graduate Student Handbook](#). Each Graduate Assistant is also responsible for complying with applicable SACSCOC regulations, and applicable federal and state law, TTU System *Regents' Rules* and Regulations, and MSU's Operating Policy and Procedures ("OP") Manual, including, for example, the annual IT security training required by MSU [OP 44.10: Information Technology Operations](#). The University's Operating Policy and Procedure Manual may be accessed at: [MSU Operating Policies and Procedures Manual](#).
 3. In situations where Graduate Assistants think that they have a legitimate grievance regarding any aspect of their service duties, they have a right to exhaust all proper channels in resolving the complaint. In order, these channels are the immediate supervisor and/or graduate coordinator, the department chair, the dean of the academic college, and the Dean of the Graduate School.
- A. Orientation and Training
1. All new Graduate Assistants will undergo a period of orientation before beginning work. This orientation should include an overview of procedures, facilities, duties, and University policies and is provided by the department employing the Graduate Assistant.
 2. In addition, each department employing Graduate Assistants will provide systematic, ongoing training. Such training may take a variety of forms dependent on the assistantship or part-time instructorship. In some cases, it will also involve mentoring assignments related to the topic of the assistantship or part-time instructorship.
 3. The nature of orientation and training activities will vary between departments, but each unit will be responsible for a plan that ensures each GRA, GTA, and GPTI receives sufficient support.
- B. Evaluation and Supervision
1. Departments will annually evaluate each Graduate Assistant. The results of the evaluation will be made available to the student and placed in that student's file (Attachments: [GRA and GTA Evaluation Form](#); and [GPTI Evaluation Form](#)). Appropriate follow-up should occur to ensure that the Graduate Assistant benefits fully from the evaluation. The evaluation and supervision of Graduate Assistants should be conducted with two criteria in mind:

- a. The quality of work connected with the specific assignment and departmental tasks; and
 - b. The training value of the graduate assistant's performance for future employment and professional development.
2. Graduate coordinators and/or faculty supervisors are responsible for evaluating GRAs and GTAs; departmental chairs are responsible for evaluating GPTIs. The evaluation process will confirm if the Graduate Assistant has met criteria necessary for continuation in an assistantship.
3. Academic Standards

Each Graduate Assistant is expected to be making steady progress toward the completion of an advanced degree and be in good academic standing. Certain levels of enrollment are, therefore, mandatory. Graduate Assistants must be enrolled full time to be eligible to hold assistantships and part-time instructorships. Graduate Assistants are expected to maintain an overall 3.0 cumulative graduate grade point average (GPA).

 - a. It is the responsibility of the Graduate Assistant's major department and of the graduate coordinator to see that the terms of the enrollment policy are carried out. If a student is employed as Graduate Assistant in a department other than the student's major area, the major department should be kept informed and, in general, approve the work duties required by the employing department.
 - b. It is the responsibility of the Graduate Assistant's major department and of the graduate coordinator to see that the terms of the enrollment policy are carried out. If a student is employed as Graduate Assistant in a department other than the student's major area, the major department should be kept informed and, in general, approve the work duties required by the employing department.
4. Performance
 - a. In order to be renewed in a graduate assistantship, a student must meet or exceed the academic standards outlined above and must successfully complete their assigned responsibilities. Failure in either case will result in an unsatisfactory evaluation and may result in a termination of the position.
 - b. In cases where a supervisor's evaluation results in needs improvement or an unsatisfactory evaluation, the Graduate Assistant should be informed in writing of the recommended changes to resolve the problem.
 - c. Situations leading to a recommendation of dismissal for cause must be provided in writing to the Graduate Assistant with a copy to the department chair and program coordinator (if applicable) no later than one week after the end of the semester when the unsatisfactory evaluation occurred.
5. The identity of the supervisor and the chain of command within the unit should be made known to the Graduate Assistant. There should be a clear understanding of the sources of advice and assistance. The person who is to receive any complaints should be identified to the Graduate Assistant.

IV. Related Statutes, Rules, Regulations, Policies, and Resources

Related MSU Operating Policies/Procedures:

[OP 42.01: Graduate Faculty Requirements and Procedures](#)

[OP 44.10: Information Technology Operations](#)

[OP 52.25: Criminal Background Checks](#)

[OP 52.43: Employment of Foreign Nationals](#)

Related Resources:

[Graduate Faculty Application Form](#)

[GA Duties Form](#) ; [GA Exceptions Form](#)

[GRA and GTA Evaluation Form](#)

[GPTI Evaluation Form](#)

V. Responsible Office

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VI. Revision History

11/10/1989: MSU Policy 3.131 - Graduate Assistants and Graduate Teaching Assistants adopted and approved by the MSU Board of Regents.

02/11/2000: Revisions made only in wording according to the transition from divisions to colleges (division director changed to dean or chair, division changed to college or program, coordinator to chair, etc.).

08/10/2012: Revised to eliminate redundancies, simplify text, and specify duties of varying types of graduate assistantships.

08/05/2021: Comprehensive revision and renumbering of *MSU Policies and Procedures Manual* which is renamed *Operating Policies and Procedures Manual of Midwestern State University*. Former Policy/Procedure 3.131 renumbered by the MSU Board of Regents as Operating Policy/Procedure (OP) 42.02: Graduate Assistants and Graduate Teaching Assistants.

09/11/2024: Completely revised to reflect current procedures and align with SACSCOC and the TTU System, utilize standardized terminology and clear definitions, provide accountability and flexibility, and renamed OP 42.02: Graduate Assistants. Adopted and approved by MSU President Stacia Haynie.