Graduate Program Goals Statement

1. Goals for Graduate Learning in the School of Kinesiology

1.1. Research-related skills
A central goal of the School’s graduate program is to expose to and train its graduate students in a broad range of established and cutting edge research skills to generate new knowledge. The ultimate goal of this training is to prepare our students to be future leaders in kinesiology and related fields. The School of Kinesiology provides opportunities for acquiring these skills through our required graduate courses and elective seminars, and by developing individualized program plans that promote the exchange with faculty in associated disciplines (e.g. medicine, nursing, psychology, public health, business). Another avenue to acquire and hone research skills comes in the context of faculty-mentored research conducted in concert with students within and across laboratories and centers. Graduate students are expected to develop high levels of aptitude in three key areas: (1) study design, knowledge of methods and techniques, data analysis and interpretation, (2) requisite professional skills (e.g., grant writing, consulting), (3) dissemination of knowledge through scholarly writing and presentations (e.g., peer-reviewed journal articles and conference presentations).

1.2. Scholarly knowledge and academic skills
The School’s graduate programs are designed to provide students with numerous opportunities to develop their skills as future scholars and researchers and to acquire an understanding of the discipline’s history, its current issues and future directions. Scholarly knowledge includes a comprehensive understanding of the physical, physiological, psychological and social foundations of kinesiology, a critical analysis of theoretical approaches and empirical research of the field. Academic skills include the abilities to present scientific data verbally and in writing, to critically review available knowledge, and to write grants and scholarly reports. As part of their education, students have the opportunity to participate and to present in a wide variety of lectures and colloquia (e.g. Tucker Center series Distinguished Lecture, Center for Clinical Movement Science colloquium).

1.3. Training for teaching
Doctoral students at the School are prepared to teach in Kinesiology at the University or College level. The vast majority of Ph.D. students serve as Graduate Teaching Assistants at some point of their graduate career (in 2013/2014: 87 % of doctoral students taught in an undergraduate course, 55% of doctoral students taught as primary instructor; source: 2014 Graduate Metrics Report). Typically, they teach in the large undergraduate programs in kinesiology or sport management. They also serve as tutors in teaching laboratories (e.g. anatomy, exercise physiology, biomechanics). In the context of research labs, they are often provided with opportunities to help mentor undergraduate students in conducting research projects.

1.4. Education for service
The faculty of the School routinely serve in key roles in professional organizations, regularly provide testimony and advice to deliberative bodies and community organizations, and serve on grant and scholarly publication review panels and editorial boards. The School values service to the university, our discipline, and to our broader community, providing outreach by leveraging our collective knowledge of...
The School’s faculty strive to instill these values into their graduate students to offer a model for graduate students to emulate. Examples of student involvement in professional service include active participation in planning and executing scholarly meetings, or with respect to community service, giving lectures at local schools or hosting and guiding tours for K-12 students in the School’s laboratories. In short, we expect our students to be the future leaders in our field and educate them accordingly.

1.5. Application and translation of knowledge
The School has a very strong commitment to improve the quality of life through movement and physical activity. For example, the School has prominent research programs with foci on fall prevention in older adult populations, on improving the health of mothers or obese children through exercise, or on rehabilitation in neurological disease. Researchers at the School seek to apply and to translate the results of basic scientific research into applicable interventions for improving health throughout the life-span that ultimately can be used by healthcare providers, school communities and parents. Graduate students gain experience in this translational science process by actively participating in the respective projects.

1.6. Interdisciplinary character
The discipline of kinesiology is interdisciplinary in nature and many of its faculty actively collaborate with researchers in diverse fields such as biomedical and mechanical engineering, business management, human factors, neurology, public health, pediatrics, psychology, psychiatry, otolaryngology, and sociology. Many of the “large” questions on the human condition and society will have to be solved by interdisciplinary research teams. The School has recognized this challenge and it actively promotes interdisciplinary graduate student research. This is operationalized by connecting to faculty mentors in other disciplines across campus, by collaborating on projects with graduate students from other disciplines, by working in other research labs on and off campus, in national and international centers (e.g. Nanyang Technical University in Singapore, EuroMov, or the University’s Tucker Center network of Affiliated Scholars), by promoting interdisciplinary graduate minor programs and active participation in interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary groups such as the School’s Physical Activity and Sport Science Lab, the Minnesota Obesity Center, or the Center for Clinical Movement Science.

2. Assessing Graduate Learning

2.1. Annual student progress report
The School places a high value on successfully completing their graduate students in a timely manner\(^1\). Each graduate student holds an annual progress meeting with the adviser, in which progress and accomplishments of the past year are discussed and goals for the following year are formulated. In preparation for this review, each graduate student fills out an Annual Student Progress Report that is reviewed and signed by the adviser and is filed by the School’s Graduate Education Office. The report concerns all aspect of a student’s graduate career. It summarizes a student’s research accomplishments centering on written papers, conference presentations, and work in progress. It lists the student’s coursework of the past year and checks for the timely completion of graduate education milestones. Finally, it includes information on the student’s work performance as a graduate assistant (if applicable) and contains an assessment of the student’s supervisor. All these materials are reviewed by the DGS and the Program Level

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\(^1\) Time-to-degree completion for Ph.D. students between 2009-2013 ranged from 3.5 – 4.6 years, source: 2014 Graduate Metrics Report
Coordinator. Any identified problems with respect to academic progress and/or work performance will be addressed in close consultation with the student and adviser. A plan containing action items to overcome these problems and a respective timeline to deliver on the action items is developed and the results of implementing the plan are reviewed at the end of the timeline.

2.2. Formal assessment of academic progress
The student’s progress through course work is tracked by the School’s Graduate Education Office through transcripts and the annual student progress report. In addition, graduate education milestones are monitored (e.g., filing of a degree plan, completion of written and oral preliminary examination, etc.). The preliminary written examination is typically scheduled at the end of the second year and serves to test the students' knowledge of the field. Many advisers require the students to prepare their Ph.D. dissertation proposal prior to the exam. The oral preliminary examination usually occurs within 4-6 weeks after successful completion of the written exam. If successful, the student presents the dissertation research plan (often in the same meeting). Students have various options in writing a dissertation (i.e., book-length treatise, a series of independent research reports, or series of published papers). Students selecting the last option typically complete their degree with 3-5 scientific publications where at least one publication is first-authored.

2.3. Formal assessment of research skills
The Graduate Education Office tracks each student’s completion of major research-related requirements, such as thesis proposal, final thesis submission, publications and conference presentations. At minimum, progress in the student’s research is reviewed during the required student-adviser meeting to discuss the Annual Student Progress Report. The progress report outlines accomplishments and addresses any areas of concern related to academic progress and/or professional duties. If an area of concern has been identified, the student and the adviser develop a plan with a definitive timeline to address any concern. The plan is filed with the Graduate Education Office and will be subject of review by the DGS. Besides the formal process of review initiated and tracked by the School’s Graduate Education Office, many students receive ongoing feedback about their research skills through their participation in faculty-led research, or through their direct involvement in the School’s laboratories and centers.

2.4. Formal assessment of teaching skills
All students with teaching assignments will undergo mandatory student evaluation at the end of the semester. Advisors regularly sit in on classes to examine in class teaching by graduate students to offer suggestions and advise on how to improve teaching. Past teaching performance will also be formally discussed during the annual progress meeting with the adviser(s) and the appropriate supervisor. If an area of concern related to a student’s teaching performance has been identified, the student and the adviser in conjunction with the School administration develop a plan with a definitive timeline to address such concern. The plan is filed with the Graduate Education Office, will be subject of review by the DGS and will impact future teaching assignments, if timelines are not met or improvements are not documented.