MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF NATURAL AND APPLIED SCIENCES
(GSNAS)

GUIDELINES FOR GOOD PRACTICE AND CONDUCT*

This document has been prepared by the Graduate School of Natural and Applied Sciences (GSNAS) Ethics Committee. It supplements the regulations of Master's and Doctorate studies at the Middle East Technical University (METU). The guidelines presented here are intended to be advisory rather than prescriptive, and may evolve over time. We hope that they will be disseminated widely, endorsed by all responsible individuals and refined by their users. Some facts and values that are considered in the selection of the guideline are:

➢ Science is a quest for knowledge and truth.
➢ Search for knowledge and truth requires freedom and autonomy.
➢ Freedom entails responsibilities and duties.
➢ The differences between disciplines and academic units and their research cultures should be respected in view of the universal ethical values and principles.

The ethical values that are considered in developing the guidelines are:

➢ Equality,
➢ Impartiality,
➢ Transparency of rules and procedures, protection of personal data,
➢ Integrity,
➢ Respect for human dignity, integrity of the person, respect for life and environment.

The study is conducted under the following four stages of a graduate study:

➢ Entrance and acceptance
➢ Process
➢ Assessment
➢ Publication and other similar outputs

Considering the responsibilities of:

➢ GSNAS Administration
➢ Graduate Program Administrators
➢ Supervisors and Supervision Committees
➢ Graduate Students
➢ Examining Committees

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Responsibilities of the GSNAS Administration

GSNAS Administration takes actions in all the stages below considering "preventive ethics".

In the Evaluation and Acceptance Stages, GSNAS Administration

➢ supplies all the necessary/required data to program administrators for the acceptance to the graduate programs;
➢ transfers the application documents to departments in a timely fashion;
➢ organizes orientation meetings to inform the new graduate students about the rules, procedures, and regulations of the graduate programs.

In the Education Process, GSNAS Administration

➢ announces all important deadlines in web pages;
➢ establishes and maintains clear, fair, open, and independent working principles) for all the graduate programs and their students.

In the Evaluation Stage, GSNAS Administration

➢ behaves fairly, openly and independently to all graduate programs considering the specialty of their departmental cultures in forming the Examining and Supervision Committees;
➢ asks for the supervisor approval during thesis submission to GSNAS.

For the Publications as Outcomes of the Thesis Studies, GSNAS Administration

➢ announces recommendations, advices, studies and experiences on the "Publication Ethics" in GSNAS Web page,
➢ organizes seminars to acquaint the students **and supervisors with the ethical issues in thesis related publications**.

Responsibilities of Graduate Program Administrators[1-15]

General Conduct of Programs

Graduate program administrators are expected to

> ➤ have a sound knowledge of the rules, regulations, procedures, and deadlines of the program, the graduate school, and the university; communicate them with the faculty members and graduate students of the program, and facilitate their firm use;
> ➤ have a standing graduate committee (or at least one faculty member in case of small scale programs) devoted to the internal organization and at least one staff member devoted to the internal conduct of the program;
> ➤ establish and maintain a strong, open, honest, clear and succinct communication process among graduate students, faculty, staff, and graduate committee of the program;
> ➤ develop ethics procedures specific to the discipline of the program and take a proactive role in preventive ethics;
> ➤ respond promptly to the major academic disagreements, personal or professional conflicts, potential conflict of interest situations, reasoned complaints, widely expressed needs for change, or any other internal matters, in order to resolve them fairly and in a timely manner after consulting with those affected by the decisions;
> ➤ make proposals for the initiation, modification, or termination of graduate courses of instruction based on changing needs of graduate programs;
> ➤ ensure that a proper range of courses are offered at the graduate level for students in all disciplinary subspecialties of the program;
> ➤ propose new degrees or degree programs, and substantial alterations of existing ones based on changing needs of constituencies;
> ➤ establish program's own documented procedures for recruitment, selection, retention, and dismissal of teaching/research assistants in accordance with general and university specific rules and regulations;
> ➤ Provide a pedagogical training appropriate to teaching assistant assignments given to graduate students as teaching/research assistants.

Entrance to Programs

Graduate program administrations are expected to

> ➤ determine the graduate student acceptance requirements of the program, report them to the graduate school in a timely manner, make them public by posting at the announcement boards and in web pages, and share them with candidates who may apply in person or by mail;
> ➤ examine and evaluate all graduate student applications fairly and report the results to GSNAS in a timely fashion.

Conduct of Courses and Research

Graduate program administrations are expected to

> ➤ develop and maintain a graduate student handbook outlining program requirements, standards, policies and procedures hence covering all expectations from the graduate

students of the program; make it available to all graduate students and faculty members in the program in print and in electronic form in program web page;

➢ develop and implement an orientation program (both academic and social) for new graduate students covering expectations from them as well as the *specialization* area(s) of each faculty member and research opportunities of the program;

➢ develop and implement an efficient system for new graduate students to engage with a thesis supervisor and a thesis topic in a timely manner;

➢ develop and implement an efficient system to regulate the conditions under which the graduate students can switch to a new thesis topic and/or to a new thesis supervisor (under some special circumstances); .

➢ ensure that graduate students receive the necessary training, guidance and mentoring in the **responsible conduct of research** as appropriate for the program;

➢ oversee administering thesis/dissertation defense seminars in master's/doctoral programs, and qualifying examinations and thesis supervision committee meetings in doctoral programs;

➢ make graduate students – through courses, formal/informal seminars, and individual mentoring – to learn about ethical issues from a disciplinary perspective, and in addition oversee and apply the ethics procedures for thesis research involving and/or affecting human/animal subjects, in particular;

➢ Provide a safe working environment for graduate students, train them as well as program staff on safety issues, and develop and enforce safety policies.

Thesis Defense and Publications

Graduate program administrations are expected to

➢ oversee forming and functioning thesis examining committees using suggestions of thesis supervisors but also taking into account all possible issues like fair treatment of students, assessment of thesis work and its presentation in thoughtful way, expertise of committee members, conflicts of interest, meaningful load distribution among the faculty, etc;

➢ develop a set of publication ethics rules of the program that are discipline specific and oversee them together with any other more general rules set forth by the graduate school and the university.

Responsibilities of Thesis Supervisors[10,12,16-2,24]

Start of the Supervisory Relation

A thesis supervisor (of METU) is expected to

- ➢ make a commitment to devote the required time and energy for successful supervision;
- ➢ ensure he/she has adequate theoretical and practical expertise to guide the student in the particular research area he/she wants to undertake research;
- ➢ be acquainted with the student's academic background and ensure that s/he takes the courses required for the successful conduct of the research
- ➢ ensure that the student is aware of the program requirements, procedures, deadlines, sources of funding.

Structuring the Supervision Process and Planning the Research

A thesis supervisor is expected to

- ➢ assist student with the selection and planning of suitable and manageable research topic, ensure that the planned research can be completed with resources available and within the prescribed period of study;
- ➢ discuss with the student *about* all stages of the research together with their estimated completion times and objectives;
- ➢ make arrangements for regular meetings;
- ➢ obtain approval from the appropriate boards for any project work involving and/or affecting human/animal subjects.

Thesis Work

A thesis supervisor is expected to

- ➢ meet with the student regularly as scheduled, with a clear agenda to discuss and exchange ideas and be accessible to the student at other appropriate times he/she may need advice;
- ➢ examine any written work and any other material submitted thoroughly in advance of meetings, and provide regular feedback on the candidates work, criticizing in a constructive and supportive fashion;
- ➢ give a timely advice on any problem that may affect the satisfactory progress, in any stage of the study;
- ➢ ensure that the student is aware of the deadlines and procedures of the submission and the examination of the thesis;
- ➢ inform the student and the program chair of any expected absences in a timely fashion, and discuss alternative arrangements to be made for supervision during absences;
- ➢ provide guidance on the content and length of the thesis before the student starts writing it;
- ➢ ensure that the written thesis has the required content and length before it is submitted for examination;
- ➢ brief the students before the thesis defense as to the purpose and the nature of the exam (and who they will be presenting to.)
- ➢ ensure that the changes/alterations are done in accordance with the suggestions of examining committee.

Intellectual Property

A thesis supervisor is expected to

➢ provide advice on the publication of research work, discuss arrangements regarding intellectual property including patents and authorship (of any publications arising from student's work).

Relations with the **Student**

A thesis supervisor is expected to

➢ consider the personal needs of the student, be responsive when the progress is obstructed by personal crises, direct the candidate to support services within the university, and advise the candidate on the procedures on the application for suspensions or extensions of candidature and scholarships when appropriate;
➢ ensure proper credit for the student's work;
➢ inform the program chair in case of academic or personal conflicts with the student, potential conflict of interest situations or major disagreements that may break down the supervisory relation.

Responsibilities of Thesis Supervision Committees[17,20,21]

Thesis supervision committees are expected to

➢ meet in regular intervals with the student (under the supervision) to ensure that the student's research progress is satisfactory; provide additional expertise, (guidance) and advice on student's thesis work, give guidance towards a solution once an unsatisfactory progress is recognized
➢ examine the progress report critically and thoroughly in advance of meetings, and provide feedback when necessary,
➢ report whether the student's work is satisfactory or not in each review period;
➢ be accessible to the student and the supervisor when called upon for possible discussion;
➢ advise the graduate coordinator where a conflict between the student and the supervisor is observed.

Responsibilities of Graduate Students[12,13,17,20,21]

Rules, Regulations and Procedures

Graduate students are expected to

➢ become familiar with, and adhere to the rules, regulations and procedures of the program, the graduate school, and the university;

➢ meet all deadlines associated with the registration, withdrawal, thesis submission and other graduation requirements as specified by the program administration, the graduate school, and the university;

➢ meet the terms and conditions of any financial, contractual agreements like assistantship, scholarship;

➢ comply with the ethics procedures when conducting research, in particular, involving and/or affecting human/animal subjects.

Course and Thesis Work

Graduate students are expected to

➢ strive for the highest levels of academic achievement by devoting the required time and energy, at all stages of the graduate work;

➢ attend all supervisory and defense meetings well prepared and with a clear agenda for the meeting;

➢ discuss with the thesis supervisor and the thesis supervision committee the type and scope of guidance required;

➢ provide reasonable evidence of satisfactory research progress as requested by and following the advice of the thesis supervisor and the thesis supervision committee;

➢ be available to the supervisor and maintain regular communication at mutually acceptable times;

➢ interact with the thesis supervision committee as appropriate.

Intellectual Property, Resources and Publications

Graduate students are expected to

➢ contribute fully to the intellectual life of the university;

➢ participate in the research culture of the program, the graduate school and the university like being aware of, attending and contributing to the appropriate research activities such as seminars, academic meetings, conferences;

➢ be aware and make efficient and thoughtful use, of the resources provided by the supervisor, the program, the graduate school and the university like library, (and) computer facilities and electronic resources;

➢ discuss with the thesis supervisor any expectations concerning authorship on thesis related publications and their anticipated submission dates;

➢ ensure that all work done by others, used in the thesis and related publications, is properly acknowledged.

Conflict Resolution

Graduate students are expected to

> ➤ discuss with their supervisor regarding any difficulty that may affect the progress of the study like a possible change in the direction of the thesis work, any prolonged absences, anticipated delays in meeting the agreed deadlines;
> ➤ inform the program chair, in a timely fashion, of any serious difficulties which may arise in supervision like major academic disagreements, personal or professional conflicts, potential conflict of interest situations.

Responsibilities of Examining Committee Members

The following rules of good practice have been adopted from Rachel Sara and Rosie Parnell's (2004) guide for **a fair, inclusive, open, and democratic review process**.[22]

The members of the examining committee are expected to
> ➤ encourage an open, democratic discourse by bearing in mind the asymmetrical relationships of power between participants and take action to diminish these;
> ➤ promote listening as much as speaking;
> ➤ allow time to study the work and prepare (written)] questions;
> ➤ make students feel safe to contribute and valued in their contribution;
> ➤ provide time for students to reflect on the questions;
> ➤ find a balance between challenge and support:
> ➤ allow a free discussion, but remind the group if they are stuck on one theme, or have missed important issues;
> ➤ compromise between equality and flexibility in timing.

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