Appendix A Graduate Program Director Guidelines and Procedures

The responsibilities of graduate program directors include admissions, planning and marketing, administration, course development and over site, advising, graduation clearance, and program evaluation as described below.

Admissions

Graduate program directors shall use the PeopleSoft Director’s Screen to keep track of applicants and shall make admission decisions in a timely manner. Graduate program directors may admit a student who has submitted all university required documents but not all of the additional program specific requirements. Program directors who wish to admit a student who does not meet the full admission requirements may admit a student conditionally, in accordance with published University program guidelines and procedures. They are to notify the student in writing of the terms of the conditional admission and monitor the student’s progress towards fulfillment of those terms. Students must fulfill the terms of the conditional admission to be fully admitted into the program. The director shall be responsible for overseeing program procedures for establishing and maintaining files for students’ admissions and matriculations. Materials received by the University Admissions shall be sent via Image Now to the program director for inclusion in the admissions decision. The responsibility for monitoring student progress shall be maintained by the program director.

Unofficial/Official Notification

The director shall send an unofficial letter of welcome to newly admitted students with information such as contacts, name of advisor, and program resources. The unofficial letter shall include that the official offer of admission shall be sent from the University Admissions.

Special Action Admissions

Admissions of international students, specially organized cohort groups, students transferring from other graduate programs within the University or from elsewhere, or others may require special action. Staff of the Division of Academic Affairs, including those in International Admissions and the Towson Learning Network shall assist in these admissions, in consultation with the program director and in accordance with established University, department and college policies and procedures. Applications of international students are screened in the International Admissions for degree equivalency and English language proficiency scores. Those candidates cleared shall be sent to the director for admission consideration.

Advising

The program director is responsible for the academic advising of all graduate students and may delegate this responsibility dependent upon program size. The program director
or other faculty shall conduct formal advising of students, using PeopleSoft to keep track of courses taken as the student moves toward completing the requirements of the degree. Advising may occur face to face, electronically, or by phone, depending upon the request of the student. It is the responsibility of the program director to notify students at least yearly of advising opportunities; it is the responsibility of the student to schedule advising appointments. The student and the advisor shall keep a copy of any special arrangements. Program directors, advisors, and students can access electronic versions of the student’s unofficial transcript and class schedules through PeopleSoft to aid in advising.

The program director shall handle special individual problems, such as course failures, interruption of studies, requests for time extensions, issues of international students, complaints, violations of academic integrity. Policies pertaining to these issues are described in the Graduate Catalog. Students are allowed up to seven years to complete a certificate or master’s degrees and ten years to complete terminal or doctoral degrees; a one-year extension may be granted by the Office of the Registrar with the director’s approval, in accordance with University policies and procedures. A second year extension may be granted based on extenuating circumstances and requires the approval of the Registrar, program director and dean of Graduate Studies.

The program director shall be familiar with the Graduate Catalog, the Office of Graduate Studies’ webpage (http://www.towson.edu/academics/graduate/office/index.html) and Graduate Studies policies, the program description, relevant course descriptions, and appendices. The director shall notify and monitor that faculty and students are aware of policies of grade and course requirements, deadlines, registration, graduation requirements, and other program policies and procedures.

**Orientation**

Graduate program directors welcome new students with a letter (as described above) and organize an orientation meeting to help students become familiar with the program. The Office of Graduate Studies and Graduate Students Association also hold a general orientation sessions at the beginning of the Fall and Spring terms for all graduate students, to help them become familiar with university resources. Program directors shall prepare and routinely update a student information handbook for the program, in print or on-line. The Graduate Student Handbook shall outline program specific policies and procedures that are in addition to those described in the Towson University Graduate Catalog. As applicable these include: program admission, progression, completion, and graduation requirements; alternate plans of study; course transfer, approval, substitution, and repetition requests; use of program resources; thesis or dissertation requirements; health and insurance requirements, and background checks; continuous enrollment, re-enrollment, grievance, and grade appeal policies and procedures; ethical and professional standards, and policies and procedures related to internships.

**Transfer Credits**
To secure transfer credit, program directors should advise the student to follow the procedures and complete the form as defined on the Office of Registrar web site. 

As part of the process, the student shall submit to the program director an official course description (or course outline) and a transcript showing the course as posted and not counting toward another degree. The program director shall evaluate the course and decides its transferability. After approving the course the program director shall submit a transfer form and the transcript and course description to the Registrar’s Office for final approval. Fifty percent of program credits may be transferred into the Towson degree program, with approval by the program director and the Registrar’s Office. To be transferred, the student needs to have earned a grade of B or better in the course. The transferred course shall have been completed within the allowed time-period of the Towson degree, and shall not have been used to satisfy the requirements of another earned degree.

**Thesis and Dissertation Information**

For programs that include a thesis, the graduate program director shall notify both students and faculty thesis advisors about procedures and policies pertaining to theses and dissertations. Towson University Thesis Guidelines and Checklist are available at: 

The program director may add program specific policies and procedures. These are to be published and made available to the students.

**Application for Degree Award**

Students shall apply for graduation to the Graduation Office near the beginning of the semester in which they expect to graduate. They shall reapply the following semester if they do not graduate as expected. Program directors shall inform and remind students of the application deadlines.

The graduate application shall trigger the process for the approval of the student’s certification for the degree award. Certification by the program director confirms that degree requirements have been satisfied. The commencement ceremony may include honors for graduate students, student speakers or banner carriers. The program directors shall nominate students for these honors, if so required. Program directors may serve as commencement marshals or other roles, or sit with other faculty in the ceremony.

**Appeals Procedures**

Appendix D of the Graduate Catalog outlines the procedures students should follow regarding appeals related to student conduct. Appendix E of the Graduate Catalog outlines the procedures students should follow regarding appeals related to academic issues. These include:

- Grade Appeals
- Academic dishonesty appeals
Third attempts of a course
Catalog extension
Program dismissal due to not meeting departmental requirements
Approval to include an elective course that is outside the program
Admission to program with below usual GPA requirement
Appeal of decision to not grant a degree

Curriculum and Course Oversight

Graduate program directors shall submit a four-year cycle schedule of course offerings for their graduate program, and update it annually to accommodate for changes in the need for courses. Program directors shall submit these schedules to the department chairperson for approval and inform the students of the schedule so they can make appropriate plans for program completion.

The Department office is responsible for putting courses on the following semester’s timetable, but the program director shall work with the Departmental and/or Dean’s Office administrators to make certain that the courses needed for the graduate program are scheduled appropriately. Responsibilities for scheduling include completing the course term file, selecting the instructor, monitoring book order submissions, etc. These usually are done by the Department with the advice of the program director.

The director may have a larger role if there are special courses such as internships, cohort or closed courses, off-campus courses, or on-line courses. Such work shall begin a semester or more before the course is offered. The program director shall collaborate with the department chair to oversee the teaching of the courses of the graduate program, and provide assistance to the instructor as appropriate.

The program director is responsible for monitoring all graduate syllabi so that they reflect acquisition of advanced level knowledge and competences contain the following information:

- Course number and title
- Course description
- Course instructor, contact and office hours
- Course time and location
- Course objectives that reflect advanced level learning and competencies
- Current and relevant required and supplemental reading assignment
- Learning assignments, with details of student expectations, and relation to course objectives
- Grading policies and distribution with points/percentage of total grade allocated for each learning assignment
- Course policies related to attendance, submission of assignments, incompletes, special needs, academic integrity
- Schedule of weekly course topic, reading and learning assignments

Curriculum Development
The Graduate Program directors shall be the contact for the Office of Graduate Studies in curricular matters related to the graduate program. Approval procedures for new and changes to existing courses and programs are available on the Academic Affairs web site at https://www.towson.edu/provost/academicresources/proposals/index.html

When developing, modifying, or terminating programs, the policies and procedures stipulated by the University and the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) and Towson University curriculum and assessment committees are to be followed. Proposals to develop new programs or substantially modify existing programs include a statement of justification, specific details of its structure, information on faculty and facilities needed, assessment plans and budget charts. Such proposals must be approved by departments, college curriculum committees, the Dean of the College, the Graduate Studies Committee, the Senate, and in many cases MHEC.

Program directors may work cooperatively with department chairs, program committees, and other faculty to develop new courses or changes in existing courses. These require the use of the standard curriculum change forms which must be approved by the department and the college curriculum committees, college deans and then come to the Graduate Studies Committee.

**Program Assessment and/or Accreditation**

Program directors shall develop and implement assessment plans for the graduate programs, in accordance with university policies and procedures. Responsibilities include developing and measuring student learning outcomes and program goals, benchmarking other programs, managing data collection, conducting program analysis, and preparing reports of assessment. Policies and procedures for program assessment are available at https://www.towson.edu/provost/assessment/

For programs that are accredited by professional organizations, the program director, working with the department chair and assisted by other faculty, shall coordinate the preparation of reports, portfolios, and other necessary materials, as necessary for accreditation.

**Student Governance Participation**

Program directors shall nominate students for appointments to committees, awards, honors, scholarship competitions, and announce competitions to students, as requested.

**Advisory Groups**

Program directors may serve as members of program and department advisory groups. With approval of the dean and department chair person, program directors may develop program specific advisory groups.
Alumni

After students graduate, the program director shall collaborate with the Alumni Association to maintain contact with the graduates for follow-up and to track their successes. The Alumni Association assists with maintaining accurate addresses of alumni. Program directors are encouraged to provide stories of successful students requested for purposes of recruiting, marketing, and general public relations. Directors may maintain contacts with past students to assist current students in job-seeking and other networking venues.

University Offices Supporting Graduate Programs

The Towson University Admissions Office coordinates general recruitment initiatives and the administrative processes for graduate admissions. Towson University Registrar’s Office is responsible for registration, grades, records and transcripts, reenrollment, inter-institutional registration and national exchange programs, veteran's benefits, and graduation. Consistent with its mission, University Marketing and Communications supports graduate programs through marketing initiatives to strengthen their visibility and presence. This includes designing marketing materials and processes for prospective students, web page communications, and media relations.