

The Department of Electrical &
Systems Engineering

Doctoral Student Handbook

2019-2020

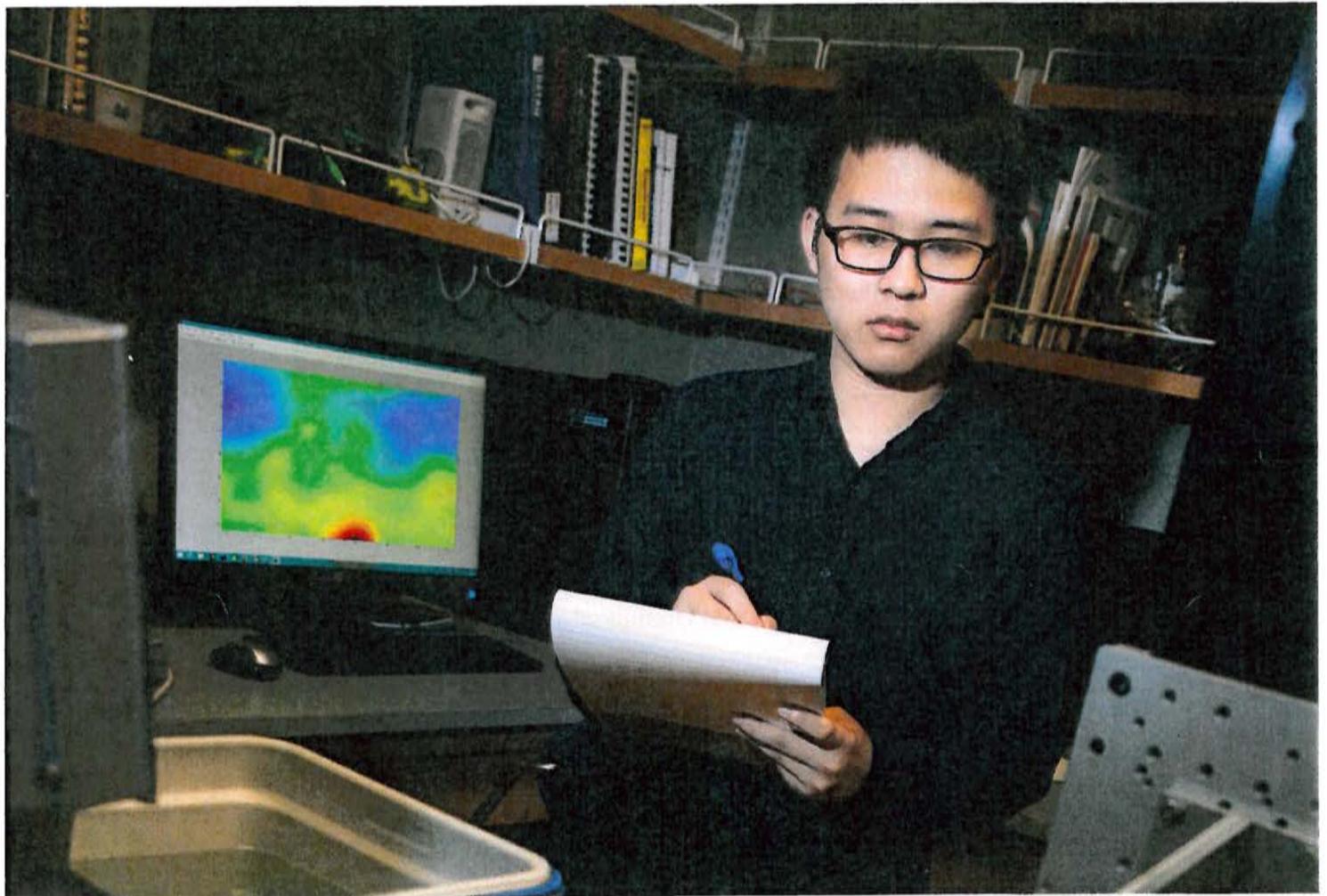


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Welcome to Electrical & Systems Engineering

Greetings! Our doctoral students are critical to our success as a department. We look forward to helping facilitate your progress through our program. You are welcome to contact us at any time if you have concerns or questions.

Sincerely,

Dr. Bruno Sinopoli, Dr. James Feher, Dr. Joseph O'Sullivan, and Francesca Allhoff

Graduate Student Services Welcomes You to Washington University

Graduate Student Services offers support to all Engineering graduate and professional students from admission through graduation. We connect students with resources at WashU to help them achieve their academic goals, address personal concerns, and ensure they get the most out of their experience. We also support faculty and staff with administrative processes and policies related to graduate admissions, financial aid and graduate programs. Please feel free to stop by Lopata, 203, or contact us at 314-935-5830 or eng-gradstudserv@wustl.edu if you need help, or have questions.

Doctoral Degrees

The Department of Electrical & Systems Engineering offers four doctoral degrees: Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and Doctor of Science (DSc) in Electrical Engineering; and PhD and DSc in Systems Science and Mathematics. The PhD degrees are administered through the McKelvey School of Engineering, but are formally granted by the Graduate School. The DSc degrees are administered and granted by the McKelvey School of Engineering.

1. Registration

All PhD students are matriculated into the [Washington University Graduate School \[A\]](#). All DSc students are matriculated into the McKelvey School of Engineering. Registration takes place each semester on dates announced by the University. Detailed instructions for registration plus necessary materials are mailed directly to all graduate students enrolled during the previous semester.

All graduate students pursuing a degree in the department must register each semester until all degree requirements are completed. Historically, most PhD programs have been completed within five or six years. Students register in courses and/or research units until they have earned the total number of credits required for their degree. PhD students typically register for nine credits of courses and/or research each semester until 72 credits are completed; students may choose to spread out research. After earning the required number of credits and fulfilling the course degree requirements, the student requests registration from their adviser or the Graduate Program Coordinator for one of the following: LGS GSAS 9000, LGS GSAS 9001

LGS GSAS 9000 Full-time Graduate Research/Study - Full-time Graduate Research/Study indicates the student's full-time engagement in research or academic writing until graduation. Students are administratively registered in LGS GSAS 9000 based on recommendations from their advisers stating that the students are making satisfactory progress toward their degrees.

LGS GSAS 9001 Full-time Graduate Study in Absentia - During a student's period of regular registration, they may have a need or opportunity to study away from Washington University. The Graduate School on a case-by-case basis in absentia will consider recommendations from departments for students' registration. If approved by the Graduate School, these students will be registered for LGS GSAS 9001 Full-time Graduate Study in Absentia. Students may be allowed to register for LGS GSAS 9001 for up to four consecutive or non-consecutive fall/spring semesters. Semesters in which a student is registered in absentia are counted as part of the student's program length.

Full-time PhD students registered within the program and making satisfactory academic progress are eligible to receive a stipend, tuition remission, and the health insurance and wellness fee subsidies. Tuition each semester will be calculated based on the number of registered course units.

1.1 Categories of Registration:

Active Status or Continuing Student Status: A graduate student is viewed as having an active full-time status if enrolled in nine (9) or more units or a PhD student enrolled in either LGS GSAS 9000 or 9001. A DSc student enrolled in ENGR 884 (Doctoral Continuing Student Status) is considered to be enrolled with Continuing Student Status. A student is enrolled under active part-time status if enrolled in at least one, but fewer than nine (9) units. Graduate students must be authorized by their adviser prior to registration.

Inactive: Students who have not completed their course requirements but who, because of personal reasons, must suspend their studies may request a leave of absence with the approval of their adviser, the Director of Graduate Studies and for PhD students the Graduate School. See the Graduate School website on leaves for further information. Doctor of Science students, who must suspend their studies, must register for ENGR 886 (Nonresident Doctoral Student Status). Students who fail to register in one of the previously mentioned categories will automatically have their graduate standing revoked. See the Graduate School Bulletin for further information.

Please note: Graduate students who do not register in one of the above categories will have to apply for reinstatement if they wish to re-enroll at a future time. For reinstatement information, master's and DSc students should contact [McKelvey Graduate Student Services \[B\]](#), and PhD students should contact the Graduate School. Students seeking reinstatement may be required to pay a reinstatement fee, take special reinstatement examinations, and repeat previous work if it fails to meet contemporary standards. Candidates for the DSc degree who apply for reinstatement may be required to repeat qualifying examinations.

2. Advising

2.1 Temporary Academic Adviser

Advising of incoming PhD students is handled by the Doctoral Admissions Committee, which assigns an adviser for the selection of courses for the first semester.

2.2 Research Adviser

Each PhD student is required to successfully advance to candidacy as discussed later in this document. At the successful conclusion of that process, a student has a research adviser who will serve as their academic adviser.

2.3 Changing Advisers

The advising relationship is established and continued only by the mutual consent of student and faculty member. If the advising relationship breaks down, then the department will work with the student and the adviser on a resolution.

3. Course Information

The normal load for full-time graduate students is nine (9) units per semester. The course selection and load must be worked out with and approved by the student's adviser. Graduate students with research and assistantship duties will typically enroll for course loads commensurate with the requirements of these duties. Students otherwise employed full- or part-time, on- or off-campus, will determine a satisfactory reduced course load with their advisers. International students on student visas are required to maintain full-time enrollment status.

Given that communication skills are important for all doctoral students, as well as required to complete the Mentored Teaching Experience, advisers may request that students complete courses aimed at improving written and oral communication in English.

3.1 Academic Requirements

Students need 72 credits to obtain a doctorate from the ESE department. Credits come from three kinds of work: regular courses, seminars, and research credit. These 72 units must consist of at least 36 units of technical coursework approved by the research adviser and at least 24 units of research, and may include work done to satisfy the requirements of a master's degree in a related discipline.

3.2 Transfer Credit

A maximum of 24 units of graduate credit earned at institutions other than Washington University may be applied toward the Doctor of Philosophy degree and a maximum of 30 units for the doctor of science degree. Transfer credit must be recommended by the adviser, forwarded for approval by the ESE Graduate Committee, who then forward it for approval by the College of Arts & Sciences. No graduate courses carrying grades lower than B can be accepted for transfer toward any graduate degree. No courses will be accepted toward degree requirements if the course exceeds the 10-year maximum period unless they have formal approval of the Engineering Graduate Board. To transfer PhD courses, please fill out the application for [PhD Transfer Credit Form \[1\]](#). It should be noted, that courses transferred in for inclusion in a Doctoral degree are not automatically approved. For inclusion in a master's degree, please consult the master's handbook for that procedure.

4. Qualifying and Matching Process

The process for matching students with prospective research mentors and the academic qualifying process are synergistic but follow separate paths. While synergistic, passing the qualifying exam is not contingent on a successful matching, and vice versa. Students must successfully complete both processes to be qualified for formal advancement to candidacy and the research phase of the PhD degree.

4.1 Goals of the Matching Process

- To ensure that each student has an opportunity to perform rotation activities (i.e., engage in research activities in a significant and meaningful way) with at least one faculty member with whom they share research interests.
- To ensure that each student is able to secure financial support from a faculty member with whom they share research interests by August 15th of the next academic year.

4.2 Goals of the Qualification Examination Process

- To evaluate the student in the following areas:
 - Communication skills, including English proficiency.
 - Ability to engage in academic discourse professionally.
 - Technical proficiency in pertinent ESE areas, at a level of depth appropriate for first-year doctoral student.

- To provide constructive feedback to the student on areas of proficiency and improvement. The feedback will include recommended remedies, such as supplementary coursework, immersive experiences for improving English proficiency, and improvement of oral presentation skills.
- To provide feedback to the potential faculty mentor on the above areas.
- To ensure a high and uniform quality of PhD students in our department.

4.3 Timeline for Parallel Rotation and Qualifying Process

(Rotation II and Qualifying Attempt II may not necessary as described below.)

	Matching	Qualifying
September		
October	Time period for Rotation	
November	I	
December		
January	Match Evaluation	
February		Qualifying Attempt I
March	Time period for Rotation	
April	II	
May		
June	Match Evaluation	
July		
August		Qualifying Attempt II

4.4 Rotation/Match Process

- There are two rotation periods: fall and spring. If the first two rotation matches are unsuccessful, the student may arrange a third rotation to be completed by August 15th of the academic year in which they begin the PhD program.
- The rotation mentor and research adviser must be a tenured or tenure-track faculty member in the department.
- The rotation mentor for the fall semester will be determined by the beginning of the fall semester, based on the admissions and matriculation processes, in consultation with the ESE Admissions Committee or its equivalent and the department chair.
- During the rotation, the student works closely with the mentor on tasks and research projects assigned by the mentor.
- The student is required to write a rotation report as described below for one of the rotations.
- If the student and faculty member from the first rotation agree to a match, then the second rotation is not required.
- In the event of a first semester match, the faculty may opt to assume financial responsibility as of January 1.

4.5 Advancing into Candidacy

- If a student has a successful match and passes the qualifying exam, then the faculty of the department vote on advancing the student to candidacy at a regularly scheduled meeting. Research mentors of students considered for candidacy will be invited to the faculty meeting.
- Students who fail to match or fail the qualifying exam will be discussed by the faculty at a meeting no later than the August following the first year of study; the faculty will vote whether to advance each student to candidacy. Research mentors of students considered for candidacy will be invited to the faculty meeting.

4.6 Research Rotation Reports

Within three weeks of the end of each rotation, the student will submit a document to the rotation mentor. The report should be written in the form of a standard research article and it must include the following: a) student's name; b) title of report; c) semester/year of the rotation; d) rotation mentor's name; and e) date of report. This document should be double-spaced. Most written reports are anticipated to be around 10 pages in length. The length may vary, but the quality should not. If the project has not been completed, preliminary or partial results are to be described. A typical report contains:

- Abstract
- Literature Review
- Objectives of Rotation
- Methods Used
- Results of Rotation
- Conclusions
- Recommended Next Steps

4.7 Expected Course Selection

- The PhD degree requires at least 36 units of courses, 24 units of research, and 72 units total.
- Most students will take two courses in the fall they enter graduate school, along with a three-unit rotation course (**ESE 601 – Research Rotation for ESE Doctoral Students**). This rotation course counts toward the course requirements for the degree.
- After a student has a successful match, then the courses in subsequent semesters are selected in consultation with the research adviser.
- If a student has a successful match, then a letter grade is awarded for the rotation. If a student does not have a successful match, then the student receives an incomplete as a grade for the rotation.
- If a student does not have a successful match in the first rotation, then typically this student would take two courses and a second three-unit rotation course in the second semester. This second rotation course would not count toward the course requirement for the PhD degree. These courses would be selected in consultation with the academic adviser.
- If a student has a successful match for the second rotation, then letter grades are awarded for both rotations. There will be no course or course credit associated with the optional third rotation.

5. Milestones

Each student's graduate career is marked by a series of milestones achieved on the way to a doctorate. At each milestone, students demonstrate certain skills and abilities critical to success in ESE research. The ESE faculty defined these milestones both as intermediate targets at which to aim and tools to assess your progress toward the doctorate.

Times are given in years relative to the beginning of the first semester as a graduate student at Washington University. While the guidelines are flexible, the time limits should be taken seriously. The following sections describe the procedures of each milestone in more detail.

5.1 Mentored Teaching Experience

After successfully completing the qualifying process, but before the dissertation defense, PhD students must fulfill a university-wide mentored teaching experience (MTE) in an ESE or otherwise approved course. Students are required to have a mentored teaching experience for at least one semester, documented by registering for **LGS GSAS 600 Mentored Teaching Experience**, and submitting [the ESE PhD Program Basic Teaching Requirement Fulfillment Form \[2\]](#) to the Graduate Coordinator.

PhD students must complete the MTE orientation in their second year of doctoral studies and attend two approved workshops conducted by the [Teaching Center \[C\]](#) by the end of their third year of doctoral studies. Documentation of attendance by the Teaching Center will be used to verify this requirement.

Students may fulfill this requirement in many ways including:

- Giving lectures in undergraduate classes
- Conducting recitation sessions in undergraduate classes conducting recitation sessions in undergraduate classes
- Giving lectures in laboratory courses that introduce or interpret the experiments
- Conducting help sessions in which the graduate student explains the background and methodology of engineering approaches (involving a lesson plan)
- Holding office hours
- Grading assignments or exams

PhD students are also required to deliver a minimum of four oral presentations at journal clubs, seminar series, scientific conferences, or retreats. Presentations given as part of the MTE, lab meetings, or dissertation committee meetings will not satisfy this requirement. The student should document the fulfillment of this requirement and submit it to the dissertation research mentor for approval. The approved document should then be submitted to the Graduate Program Coordinator.

5.2 Dissertation Committee Approval

Each PhD or DSc student has a dissertation committee approved by the Director of Graduate Studies that is chaired by the dissertation research mentor. The dissertation subject must be approved by the dissertation committee. This approval is obtained by successfully passing the

dissertation proposal. The committee monitors the dissertation via a successful dissertation defense. The dissertation committee must follow all guidelines of the Graduate School and McKelvey School of Engineering and consists of five members (the dissertation research mentor plus four other members) with the following requirements:

- Three (3) ESE primary faculty - or affiliated faculty (least one must be a primary ESE faculty member).
- One (1) faculty member (or scholar in private sector or government) outside the ESE program.
- Four (4) of the five (5) members must be tenured or tenured-track faculty at Washington University.

Upon completion of the qualifying examination, the student submits a [Dissertation Defense Committee Form](#) [3] to the Director of Graduate Studies for approval. Following approval, the form is submitted to the Graduate School (to McKelvey Engineering for DSc students). Any subsequent changes to the dissertation committee involve completing a new dissertation committee form and submitting it to the Director of Graduate Studies for approval.

5.3 Preliminary Oral Exam (Dissertation Proposal)

The dissertation proposal should be completed within two years of the qualifying exam. The student in consultation with the adviser chooses a dissertation committee that consists of five members, at least three of whom are from the department. The proposal and presentation will include a thorough survey of the field, a discussion of those areas in need of further research and a tentative but clear definition of the problem on which the student intends to focus the dissertation. Following the presentation, the committee examines the student on understanding of the foundation of the particular field of research and evaluates the scope and merit of the proposed research. The dissertation committee votes on the outcome of the exam and completes the exam form. The student should obtain a copy of the Preliminary Oral Exam Form from the Graduate Program Coordinator prior to the exam. After the dissertation proposal, the department recommends that the student meet with the dissertation committee to update them on their progress toward the doctoral degree.

5.4 Title, Scope, and Procedure

Once PhD students pass their proposal defense, students should submit a [Title, Scope, and Procedure Form](#) [4] to the Graduate School as soon as possible. This form briefly describes the planned work of the dissertation. The “Scope” portion of the dissertation indicates the specific area of study and the questions to be answered, while the “Procedure” briefly describes how the student carries out their work. The Title, Scope and Procedure Form must be registered with Graduate School at least six months before the dissertation examination, or by the end of the fourth year, whichever comes first.

5.5 Final Defense

Upon completion of the dissertation, the PhD or DSc candidate must work with the Graduate Program Coordinator to schedule the defense at least two weeks in advance. The candidate presents the dissertation in a public forum and successfully defends the dissertation before a

committee consisting of the approved dissertation committee plus additional faculty as required. The dissertation must be approved by the dissertation committee as part of the final examination. Students submit their signed [Final Examination Approval Form \[5\]](#) to the Graduate Program Coordinator after their defense.

5.6 Submission and Printing of Dissertations

Candidates must submit their dissertations electronically to [Washington University Open Scholarship \[D\]](#). Students are given the option of ordering bound copies of their dissertations through [Thesis-On-Demand \[E\]](#). Electrical & Systems Engineering will cover the cost for the student, adviser, and department. Students should reach out to the Graduate Program Coordinator for assistance.

6. Policies

6.1 Graduate School Policy on Probation and Dismissal

The Graduate School Policy on Probation and Dismissal for Academic Reasons was approved April 24, 2014 by the Graduate Council and is embodied in the following Electrical & Systems Engineering Department plan. All students in departmental doctoral programs are expected to satisfy the academic performance requirements of the Graduate School, as described in The Graduate School Bulletin's General Requirements section.

6.2 Electrical & Systems Engineering Department Requirements

All doctoral students in Electrical & Systems Engineering must maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher, and register for ESE590 for all semesters of full-time status.

6.3 Dissertation Committee

If a student's progress is deemed unsatisfactory by the dissertation committee, the committee may meet more frequently with the student and require continuing progress reports, to be shared with the Director of Graduate Studies. The committee will work with the student to develop and implement an improvement plan, which for example, may include recommended coursework and/or additional training in research techniques or strategies, as well as a timeline for improvements and consequences (including possible termination from the PhD program). In unusual cases where the committee repeatedly judges the progress unsatisfactory, the committee in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies may recommend probation or dismissal.

6.4 Department Procedures for Probation and Dismissal

To manage decisions regarding probation and dismissal, academic performance of all doctoral students is reviewed by the Doctoral Progress Assessment Committee (DPAC), which the department has designated to manage decisions regarding placement on probation, removal from probation, recommendations for dismissal after a probationary period, and recommendations for immediate dismissal due to extreme underperformance.

The DPAC is chaired by the Director of Graduate Studies. All decisions are made in accordance with the Graduate School Policy on Probation and Dismissal for Academic Reasons.

Normally, a probationary period would be no less than three months and, where probation criteria involve coursework, the probationary period will normally consist of one semester.

The student will be notified in writing of the decision, including an explanation of academic performance issues leading to probation or immediate dismissal and, if applicable, any requirements for what must be done within a specified period of time during the probationary period in order for the student to return to good standing. The written probation letter should generally be accompanied by the opportunity for the student to meet with the Director of Graduate Studies or designated departmental faculty representatives for clarifying discussion(s), and copied to the Dean of the Graduate School for PhD students.

All students on probationary status will be reviewed by the DPAC at the conclusion of the probationary period to determine whether the student should be (a) removed from probation and returned to good standing; (b) continued on probation; or (c) dismissed from the program. The student will be notified of the DPAC decision in writing.

If a student is dismissed from the program, the student will be notified in writing and will have the opportunity to appeal such dismissal in accordance with the [Graduate School Policy \[F\]](#) on Probation and Dismissal for PhD students.

6.5 Seminars

Each year the department sponsors or participates in a series of seminars by visiting lecturers and WashU faculty and students. All fulltime graduate students are required to enroll in **ESE 590 - Graduate Seminar**, which is a pass/fail course carrying zero (0) units.

6.6 Research Assistantships

Research assistantships generally provide a stipend and some tuition from government or industry grants and contracts. They are awarded to students who have advanced to candidacy and made a commitment to a particular research area and who, by virtue of their academic background and record, satisfy a particular project's needs.

Research assistantships may be supplemented by tuition scholarships that may be funded jointly by the McKelvey School of Engineering and the School of Medicine. Research assistants are responsible to the project director (principal investigator) of the project. (Generally, this same individual eventually assumes the additional role of dissertation or dissertation mentor.)

6.7 Master's Degrees

Doctoral students may find that they meet the requirements for a master's degree as they complete their studies. Those who wish to obtain a master's degree must first discuss this with their research adviser and obtain their approval to add the master's degree to their program of study. Once they have the approval of their research adviser, they should contact the Director for the master's program in which they plan to pursue the degree and ask for formal admission to the program. Doctoral students should note that transferring courses into a Master's program is done on a course-by-course basis, and should consult the master's handbook for that procedure.

6.8 Outside Employment

Holders of fellowships, traineeships and assistantships are required to devote their 100% effort to graduate studies. They are not permitted to engage in any outside employment without special permission of the Director of Doctoral Studies and the ESE Department Chair.

6.9 External Professional Activity for Full-Time PhD Students in McKelvey Engineering

Students and faculty must follow the guidelines developed by the university's [Conflict of Interest Review Committee \(CIRC\)](#) [G].

6.10 Time Off

Graduate students receiving awards are expected to commit themselves fully to their studies and research regardless of whether classes are in session. Intersession periods listed in the University Academic Calendar denote times when classes are not in session. Graduate students in residence should, however, utilize these periods to further their studies and research. Intersession periods are not time off for graduate students receiving a stipend and students are expected to work full time on research during these periods.

Students on full stipend are permitted to take a maximum of two weeks of vacation during the calendar year and are expected to communicate the timing of that vacation with their research adviser. In addition, students are permitted to take the university scheduled holidays. Additional time off can be arranged but must be approved ahead of time by the research mentor (once selected) or the Director of Doctoral Studies (before the selection of a research mentor). Absences of research assistants must be scheduled so as not to impede the progress of an ongoing research project and should be cleared with the research mentor.

6.11 Administrative Support

Department staff will help students with payroll, their purchases, keys and allocation of space issues. They do not generally provide clerical services to graduate students except in connection with scheduled courses and sponsored research projects.

6.12 Copying Service

Graduate students may not charge copying coursework to the department or a research project without prior authorization. Requests for copying service are normally channeled through the department staff, who are instructed to verify authorization with the department chair.

7. Faculty and Staff



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9. Appendix I. Forms

[1] Transfer Credit Form

<https://ese.wustl.edu/graduate/degreeprograms/Documents/PHD%20Transfer%20Credit%20form.pdf>

[2] ESE PhD Program Basic Teaching Requirement Fulfillment Form

<https://ese.wustl.edu/graduate/degreeprograms/Documents/PhD%20Program%20Basic%20Teaching%20Requirement%20Fulfillment%20Form.pdf>

[3] Dissertation Defense Committee Form

https://graduateschool.wustl.edu/sites/graduateschool.wustl.edu/files/Dissertation%20Defense%20Committee_0.pdf

[4] Title, Scope, and Procedure Form

https://graduateschool.wustl.edu/sites/graduateschool.wustl.edu/files/Title%20Scope%20Procedure%20PhD_0.pdf

[5] Final Examination Approval Form

https://graduateschool.wustl.edu/sites/graduateschool.wustl.edu/files/Examination%20Approval%20form_051619.pdf

10. Appendix II. Websites

[A] Washington University Graduate School

<https://graduateschool.wustl.edu/>

[B] McKelvey Graduate Student Services

<https://engineering.wustl.edu/current-students/graduate-student-services/Pages/default.aspx>

[C] Teaching Center

<http://teachingcenter.wustl.edu/>

[D] Washington University Open Scholarship

<https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/etd/guidelines.html>

[E] Thesis-On-Demand

<http://wustl.thesisondemand.com/ordersystem/index.php?uri=/orderform/orderform/&page=1>

[F] Graduate School Dismissal Policy

<https://graduateschool.wustl.edu/sites/graduateschool.wustl.edu/files/academic-probation-dismissal.pdf>

[G] Conflict of Interest Review Committee (CIRC)

<https://research.wustl.edu/offices/danforth-conflicts-interest-review-committee/>