



COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCI  
**HUMAN NUTRITION,  
FOODS, AND EXERCISE**  
VIRGINIA TECH

Department of Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise  
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## **Expectations for Graduate Education**

### **Department of Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise**

Welcome to the Department of Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise (HNFE)!

I hope that your experience in our graduate program will be transformative. The faculty, staff, and I are here to support your growth. We are united in the Virginia Tech motto *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve), and we strive to be a force of positive change.

We are also united in the HNFE mission to discover, translate, and disseminate health-related advances in human nutrition, foods, and exercise. To fulfill this mission, it is the joint responsibility of graduate students, faculty, the department, and Graduate School to build a community that encourages freedom of inquiry, integrity, diversity, equity, inclusion, and mutual respect.

We each have particular responsibilities and expectations that are described in the following pages. For example, as a graduate student, you are expected to gain expertise in a particular field of study and, especially in PhD programs, to expand the knowledge of that field through disciplinary and interdisciplinary research, instruction, and publication. Please review these expectations and discuss them with your advisor before returning the signed page at the end of this document by Friday, October 2, 2021.

As you pursue your degree, there will be challenges. But these challenges are an opportunity to develop skills and capacities that you can apply the rest of your life. One of my roles as interim assistant graduate program director is to help guide you through your experience in graduate school. I am one of your advocates. I welcome your questions, ideas, and feedback. I look forward to getting to know you.

Once again, welcome!

Sincerely,

Abby Steketee, PhD, MPH  
Interim Assistant Graduate Program Director  
Department of Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise

## **GRADUATE STUDENTS**

### **Progress Toward Degree**

- Devote an appropriate amount of time and energy toward earning degree or certificate.
- Know and follow policies and procedures
- Fulfill requirements in a timely manner
- Inform your advisor and department of any leaves of absence. International Students consult with [IGSS](#) for extensions and leaves

### **Research and Ethics**

- Communicate regularly with advisor and committee
- Request clear expectations from faculty
- Faculty guide research; students are responsible for conducting independent research
- Recognize time constraints on faculty and staff
- Exercise honest and ethical behavior
- Contribute to an ethical environment by reporting unethical actions
- Acknowledge contributions of others in publications and presentations
- Work with faculty on authorship positions
- Use research results appropriately
- Follow [IRB](#) and the [IACUC](#) guidelines and complete [ORC](#) training with projects with human or animal subjects
- Follow intellectual-property policies
- Avoid conflicts of interests

### **Teaching and Training**

- Participate in training for instructional roles

- Seek relevant teaching and training opportunities
- Commit to providing high quality education to their students

### **Professional Development**

- Pursue professional training programs
- Seek out mentors and advisors
- Contribute to scholarly discipline

### **Assistantships and Financial Support**

- Request clear guidelines for graduate assistantships
- Fulfill contractual obligations. Students on full-time assistantships are expected to work an average of 20 hours/week
- Act in a professional manner
- Decline tasks not related to or in excess of contractual obligations
- International students are limited to 20 hours of work per week by law
- Follow additional requirements of fellowships
- Report any employment beyond an assistantship or fellowship to Graduate School

### **Community**

- Abide by the student code of conduct
- Uphold an ethos of collegiality and collaboration
- Contribute to the University and department community
- Contribute to the mission of Virginia Tech

## **FACULTY**

### **Progress Toward Degree**

- Support the academic progress of students
- Establish a meeting schedule
- Ensure students complete research in a timely fashion
- Communicate expectations by providing clear requirements
- Respect students' work-personal life balance
- Conduct annual evaluations of each student
- Immigration forms sets specific limits for program; consult with [IGSS](#) for extensions

### **Research and Ethics**

- Provide intellectual guidance and promote rigor
- Provide students with knowledge of current opportunities in research
- Provide guidelines for completion of research projects
- Create a highly ethical environment and act as ethical role model
- Avoid creating conflict of interest situations for students
- Recognize student participation in supervised research and ensure that ethical standards are followed in collaborative settings
- Work with students to agree on authorship positions and acknowledgments
- Work with students to follow [Office of Research Compliance](#) guidelines
- Encourage students to read the [Graduate Honor Code](#) and to follow relevant professional standards

### **Teaching and Training**

- Encourage and assist students in developing teaching and presentation skills
- Help students develop interpretive, writing, oral, and quantitative skills, in accordance with discipline expectations

- Assist graduate students in developing grant-writing skills, where appropriate
- Provide training for any equipment, instruments, laboratory procedures, or field skills that are necessary for the student's research and teaching program

### **Professional Development**

- Encourage students to participate in professional opportunities
- Encourage students to pursue professional training programs, seminars, and courses that will enhance their professional and personal growth and development
- Prepare students to be competitive for employment

### **Assistantships and Financial Support**

- Avoid assigning tasks to graduate assistants that are not related to, or are in excess of their contractual obligations
- Recognize that graduate assistants should not be expected to work on assigned projects, on average over the course of a semester, in excess of the hours for which they are being paid (e.g. average of 20 hours/week for students on full time assistantship). See [Presidential Policy Memo 129](#)

### **Community**

- Demonstrate and encourage collegiality with students, faculty, and staff
- Act fairly, impartially, and professionally in all dealings with graduate students, in accordance with university policies governing non-discrimination and harassment, as outlined in [Policy 1025](#)
- Follow [FERPA](#) guidelines, which mandate a student's right to reasonable privacy and confidentiality

## Departments and Programs

### Progress toward degree

- Inform students of academic program requirements regarding progress toward degree.
- Provide information about academic requirements and evaluation, and guidance toward maintaining acceptable academic standing
- Provide relevant course offerings at the graduate level
- Provide supervision if the student's advisor departs the university after the student's work has begun
- Ensure that students receive regular evaluation and feedback
- Provide student with a fair opportunity to correct deficiencies in their academic performance before being dismissed
- Refer international students to [IGSS](#) for information about requirements to maintain adequate progress

### Research and Ethics

- Provide resources to allow students to complete their education and research in a timely manner
- Ensure that advisors and committees treat all students fairly and assess work in meaningful ways
- Ensure the highest standards of academic quality in all aspects of the graduate program.
- Follow federal [FERPA](#) guidelines
- Provide students with a safe working environment

### Teaching and Training

- Provide training appropriate to the student's teaching assignment
- Review teaching evaluations of GTAs and help them improve skills
- Encourage students interested in teaching to participate in teaching workshops

## Professional Development

- Provide information about professional meetings, public forums, and exhibitions relevant to their research area
- Provide information about training opportunities to enhance their professional development
- Provide information about career opportunities

## Assistantships and Financial Support

- Provide clear expectations to students on their responsibilities as GAs, GTAs, or GRAs
- Inform students of the requirements and qualifications necessary for academic employment, training, or financial support
- Provide students on assistantships with a written agreement
- Inform students that they must work an average of 20 hours/week for a full assistantship in addition to the hours for coursework and individual research
- Inform graduate assistants of policies affecting their role as employees
- Inform students of available funding sources
- Assist students in seeking assistantships and other funding sources outside of the home department or program
- Recognize international students are limited to 20 hours of employment per week by law
- Recognize international students may not have the same financial resources available to them as domestic students

## Community

- Create a collegial learning environment in which faculty and students work together in mutual respect and collaboration
- Provide specific mechanisms for appeal or complaint when standards of collegiality or fairness may have been violated

## **THE GRADUATE SCHOOL**

### **Progress toward degree**

- Review each student's submitted plan of study to ensure that it contains sufficient credits to obtain the degree
- Monitor and regularly inform students of their progress toward degrees
- Maintain data on student completion rates, time to degree, professional employment placement, and attrition

### **Research and Ethics**

- Develop training programs that serve the interests of both faculty and students
- Provide support to departments, programs, and units to develop high quality programs
- Facilitate development of interdisciplinary research and training programs
- Administer the [Graduate Honor Code](#)
- Provide guidance on ethics and scholarly integrity

### **Teaching and Training**

- Ensure individual programs offer curricula to equip students with knowledge and skills needed for their careers
- Ensure that all aspects of the program conform to the highest academic standards
- Ensure that processes and opportunities are in place to include international students

### **Professional Development**

- Help develop Graduate School support services, and promote other services that enhance students' professional, academic, and scholarly interests
- Provide courses and opportunities for students to prepare for academic and nonacademic careers
- Provide education and training for GTAs
- Assist with additional education programs and opportunities, such as interdisciplinary research and education, ethics and scholarly integrity, global perspectives, civic engagement

### **Assistantships and Financial Support**

- Provide guidance on financial mechanisms to support students in their pursuit of degrees
- Communicate financial, employment, awards and other opportunities for students

### **Community**

- Promote a collegial climate for graduate education through academic, social, and community programs
- Maintain a comprehensive description of the goals and expectations of each program
- Provide clear avenues of redress whenever faculty members' or students' experiences fall short of the Expectations for Graduate Education

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## **A Note about thesis/ dissertation research hours and graduate assistantships:**

### **Thesis/Dissertation Research Hours**

To fulfill research requirements for the research project (thesis/ dissertation), HNFE graduate students register for research and thesis/dissertation credit hours (HNFE 5994, 7994) in addition to formal graduate course credits. These hours are specifically for the student to work on their thesis/ dissertation and are independent from hours worked as part of a teaching/ research assistantship. The expected weekly time commitment focused on research can be translated to a minimum of 45 hours/ semester per research credit hour, or 3 or more hours per week (15-week semester). However, successful completion of a thesis or dissertation progress often requires significant effort above these minimum requirements.

Research credit hours may be spent engaged in, but are not limited to, the following types of research activities: reading the scientific literature; field or laboratory work; data collection and management; statistical analyses; thesis or dissertation writing; manuscript development and publication; and, development/delivery of scientific presentations. Graduate students should work with their chair to develop goals for completion of research expectations each semester.

Examples of weekly hours devoted to research credits are as follows:

- 1 credit= 3+ hours/week (e.g., for a 15-week semester= 45 hours)
- 2 credits= 6+ hours/week
- 3 credits= 9+ hours/week
- 4 credits= 12+ hours/week
- 5 credits= 15+ hours/week
- 6 credits= 18+ hours/week (e.g., for a 15-week semester = 270 hours)

### **Graduate Assistantships:**

If students are hired as a full time graduate, teaching, or research assistant, it is expected that they work an average of 20 hours per week on tasks associated with that assistantship. This work is independent from graduate coursework or thesis / dissertation credit hours (HNFE 5994, 7994).

After completion of the graduate program and/or assistantship, graduate students should submit all data, samples, laboratory notebooks, signed IRB forms, etc., to their advisor. Graduate students should submit these research materials after their defense or before leaving town if not defending prior to moving. This is in accordance with the "Ownership and Control of Research Results" policy of Virginia Tech. All data from research conducted at Virginia Tech belongs to the University; the faculty principal investigator is expected to manage and keep all data.

## Department of Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise Expectations for Graduate Education

By signing below, I am agreeing to uphold the above listed expectations and am confirming that I received an electronic copy of the HNFE Graduate Student Handbook.

Print Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Advisor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interim Grad.Program Director Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return this form to Program Coordinator Lisa Jones by Friday, October 1, 2021: The form may be emailed to [lijones5@vt.edu](mailto:lijones5@vt.edu), hand-delivered, mailed to 338 Wallace Hall, or faxed to 540-231-3916.**