

At the beginning of each fall quarter, TGS hosts “DGS 101,” offering useful resources to faculty new to their role. During this orientation, TGS staff brief new DGSes on their duties and responsibilities, the admissions process, TGS policies, and other pertinent information.

The Graduate School offers workshops where faculty learn new tools to guide Master’s and PhD students successfully through their degree programs. Experienced and novice faculty mentors will become more aware of their approach to mentoring, become equipped to approach mentoring adaptively yet systematically, and learn strategies to try in those challenging situations that confound us all at one time or another. For information about upcoming workshops contact TGS Academic Affairs.

Once per quarter, DGSes convene to discuss new opportunities, tools, and policy proposals effecting Master’s and Doctoral programs.

## Helpful Links

List of NU Policies:  
[policies.northwestern.edu](https://policies.northwestern.edu)

TGS Policies:  
[tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/index.html](https://tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/index.html)

TGS Placement Database:  
[placement.tgs.northwestern.edu](https://placement.tgs.northwestern.edu)

TGS Site for Directors of Graduate Study:  
[tgs.northwestern.edu/resources-for/faculty/directors-of-graduate-study/](https://tgs.northwestern.edu/resources-for/faculty/directors-of-graduate-study/)

TGS Excellence in Mentoring Initiative:  
[tgs.northwestern.edu/resources-for/faculty/excellence-in-mentoring/index.html](https://tgs.northwestern.edu/resources-for/faculty/excellence-in-mentoring/index.html)

# Transitioning between DIRECTORS OF GRADUATE STUDY

*Best Practices to Ensure  
a Smooth Changeover*



THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

*Your term as DGS may be multi-year, but eventually you will cycle off. Before you move on to new responsibilities—with the benefit of knowing whole cohorts of graduate students, having a holistic understanding of your program, and a wider network of colleagues across Northwestern—these steps will consolidate your term and smoothly set up your replacement for success.*

## Prepare for the Transition

- Keep a running list of potential replacements: colleagues who are active in the program, have served on the graduate and/or admissions committee, are effective mentors to students, and have an aptitude for administration and communication.
- Work with your chair to identify a replacement as early as possible. Especially if your replacement is quite new to Northwestern, or less experienced with the program, invite them to “shadow” you through key procedures. Some overlap is valuable.
- Keep records up to date, including GSTS, email communications with students, faculty and administration. Have them ready to transfer.
- Inform TGS of your successor’s name by emailing TGS Academic Affairs so they can be added to communication and access lists.
- Create (or update) a month-by-month timeline of your activities, including what you do and what you oversee: e.g. orientation, quarterly advising, recruitment, admission, annual review, town hall meetings, etc.

## Helpful Documentation

- Guide your successor to the DGS job description on TGS’s website and to TGS’s full list of policies that pertain to degrees. University policies are listed at [policies.northwestern.edu](http://policies.northwestern.edu).
- TGS requires a student Handbook for every program. This should be in pdf format and “date stamped” for each entering cohort year. This is the version of requirements to which that cohort will be held. A template for graduate handbooks may be found on the DGS SharePoint site.
- TGS’s Progress Review archive includes reports, meeting agendas, recap memos, and supplementary documents. Each report includes a program’s history of applications and admissions demographics, probation, admitted student surveys, graduation data, exit surveys, and placement data (for PhDs).
- Documentation for Program Review (conducted through the President’s office).
- List of program faculty (including faculty from other departments) eligible to supervise dissertations.
- Budget records, including graduate student funding history.
- Last year’s orientation schedule.
- Schedule of the graduate recruitment visit .
- A list of the most recent eligible core and elective courses.
- Teaching Assistants’ CTECs.
- Student files (transcripts, qualifying exams, awards and publications, individual development plans, etc.). These may be paper-based but transitioning to the on-line Graduate Student Tracking System (GSTS).
- Your program may keep an alumni database. TGS also keeps a placement database for PhDs.
- List of important contacts within TGS, IT, and your school ’s offices. Also, your student listserve.

## Program Operations

- Have a sit-down meeting with your successor and staff program assistant to go over procedures, disclose documents’ whereabouts, and deal with any questions.
- Talk with your successor about the DGS’s responsibilities in your program and department. How widely do you consult, and on what subjects? What issues have been identified but not yet addressed? Are there other graduate programs with which you regularly liaise? Do your students typically participate in TGS’s clusters and certificate programs (if so, which ones)?
- Talk with your successor about how advising happens in your program. Who do you advise, and how frequently? What is your role in annual review? What kinds of communications do you have with students (in person, by email, officially, and more casually)?
- Explicitly discuss how and from which sources your students are funded from matriculation through graduation. Also, what are the atypical cases and who do you consult with on them?
- Give your successor a tutorial on the Graduate Student Tracking System (GSTS) and arrange for administrative access to GSTS by emailing Kate Veraldi.
- Update your PhD placement database at [placement.tgs.northwestern.edu](http://placement.tgs.northwestern.edu).

## Contact Us

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