
Job Title:	PhD Coordinator/Advisor
Department:	Electrical and Computer Engineering
Reports To:	Manager, Graduate Studies
Jobs Reporting:	None
Salary Grade:	USG 6
Effective Date:	September 2017

Primary Purpose

The PhD Coordinator/Advisor (Coordinator) is a specialist position responsible for the administration of all Electrical and Computer Engineering research-based programs, including collaborative programs in nanotechnology and quantum information. The Coordinator has a high level of responsibility for a wide range of activities supporting all aspects of the graduate program to meet the heavy demands related to the department's academic, teaching and research programs. The incumbent must assist graduate students throughout their graduate program from admission through to degree completion and ensure compliance with all academic regulations. S/he also provides recommendations to faculty advisors regarding resolution of problems.

The Coordinator is a key component of the quality of student experience in ECE. The Coordinator must have an appreciation for the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the department's student body.

Key Accountabilities

Academic Advising and Student Support

- Provides guidance and support to graduate students and faculty supervisors on academic regulations, policies, requirements, procedures, and individual program requirements
- Serves as the main point of communication between graduate students/faculty supervisors and the university including significant news, procedural changes, important dates, and other relevant information
- Responds to enquiries pertaining to the department's PhD graduate programs
- Investigates inquiries of a complex and unique nature and advocate on behalf of students who require accommodations or non-standard arrangements
- Interprets and applies university regulations, and Faculty/department policies and procedures to help resolve student issues
- Prepares documentation regarding cases of academic dishonesty, student appeals, etc.
- Acts as a liaison between students and faculty members regarding change of supervisor
- Provides advice or direction and work with stakeholders on academic issues to help students cope with stressful circumstances or negative academic decisions
- Provides assistance on academic and non-academic matters as needed, redirecting students to appropriate resources on campus
- Exercises judgment with respect to confidentiality and sensitivity of student issues/concerns
- Assists new students, mostly international, with their transition to Waterloo

Graduate Program Administration

- Monitors student academic progress from admission to convocation
- Liaises with Graduate Studies and Post-Doctoral Affairs (GSPA) to ensure that admission conditions are met and resolves any outstanding academic issues
- Reviews course registration and other academic requirements, including extension requests, to ensure milestones are completed
- Co-ordinates PhD comprehensive exams, PhD research seminars, and PhD oral defences
- Updates and maintains student records and graduate student database (FileMaker)
- Identifies academic progression issues and provides guidance for resolution of problems
- Confirms proper procedures are followed to ensure a student's eligibility for the conferment of a doctoral degree
- Applies Faculty and department academic policies, programs and procedures and identifies potential solutions to issues
- Consults with the Manager and Graduate Research Program Coordinator/Associate Chair to resolve more complex cases
- Maintains appropriate records to demonstrate compliance with safety information
- Provides background information, research, advice, and administrative support in the academic decision-making process
- Generates reports as required for program revisions, departmental appraisals, etc.
- Maintains appropriate records to demonstrate compliance with safety information
- Organizes orientation activities, departmental information sessions, and special events

Scholarship Administration

- Notifies students and faculty of funding opportunities and scholarship competitions
- Advises students and faculty regarding the application process, eligibility requirements, agency competition rules and regulations, and appropriate institutional deadlines
- Reviews applications for graduate level scholarship competitions
- Processes scholarship applications and evaluates student eligibility
- Prepares summaries to support the ranking process
- Coordinates ECE Ranking Committee meetings
- Documents ranking decisions and official comments associated with each candidate's ranking
- Distributes results and scholarship packages to Graduate Studies and Post Doctoral Affairs
- Provides statistical data for the department
- Keeps abreast of scholarships guidelines and criteria, and updates internal due dates and procedures
- Ensures external scholarship guidelines are adhered to

Other

- Attends meetings of appropriate committees and/or workgroups
- Assists with student recruitment, workshops, and new graduate student orientation
- Provides backup assistance for other graduate team members as needed
- Recommends enhancements of department data management software (FileMaker) and graduate program website
- Maintains procedures and documentation pertaining to the responsibilities of the position

- Provides support to periodic internal and external graduate program reviews
- Provides back up coverage for the other administrative staff during absences
- Other duties or projects as assigned by the Manager or Administrative Officer.

Required Qualifications

Education

- Bachelor's Degree or equivalent education and experience in a related field

Experience

- Three plus years related experience in an academic environment. Student advising experience and/or scholarship management is preferred

Knowledge/Skills/Abilities

- Comprehensive understanding of university policies and procedures as they relate to graduate studies is strongly preferred
- Intermediate to advanced skills with Microsoft Office, databases and other web based applications required – Excel, Word, Outlook, SharePoint, FileMaker, WCMS, PeopleSoft, and student information systems such as Quest and OnBase
- Ability to learn and adapt to specialized software and systems at the University
- Unwavering commitment to client-centered service and a positive, dynamic, outgoing approach in interactions with students, clients, and colleagues
- Ability to maintain confidentiality and appropriately handle confidential data and information
- Ability to think and act quickly and effectively under pressure, exercising tact, diplomacy, discretion and good judgement
- Ability to identify and assess problems, and to develop and implement creative ideas for solving non-routine situations
- Effective information gathering and analytical skills
- Proven ability to manage multiple priorities with a high level of initiative, flexibility, thoroughness, accuracy, and attention to detail, with minimum supervision is essential
- Ability to set priorities and remain organized in a deadline driven environment required
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills including the ability to articulate and interpret issues, guidelines or policies to others clearly and without error.
- Multi-cultural competency with the ability to work with diverse student body in a cross-cultural environment
- Demonstrated advising skills with the ability to support students through difficult situations
- Proven ability to create and maintain effective working relationships with faculty, staff, and students
- Experience in event planning and group presentation skills an asset

Nature and Scope

- **Contacts:** The Coordinator interacts directly with graduate students, staff, Associate Chair-Graduate Studies, Graduate Research Program Coordinator, faculty supervisors, Engineering Graduate Office, GSPA, AccessAbility, and Student Accounts. Externally, this position will have significant contact with external examiners, external funding agencies, and prospective students. Interactions with others requires understanding and supporting people by applying knowledge. S/he influences others, causing understanding, actions or acceptance. Persuasiveness or assertiveness, as well as sensitivity to others' points of view are often needed to deal with situations. The Coordinator must possess sensitivity to cultural

differences and an appreciation for the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the department's student body.

- **Level of Responsibility:** The Coordinator is expected to manage and monitor all research-based graduate students. S/he must make decisions related to adjusting priorities, advising others, and responding to immediate concerns while adhering to policies and procedures. S/he makes independent decisions regarding student advice and refers for resolution of intricate student issues. The Coordinator exercises professional judgement to refer to other campus services as appropriate as well as think strategically to arrive at solutions to unanticipated issues. S/he is responsible for advising/counselling the Graduate Research Program Coordinator and the Associate Chair on award selection criteria and possible recipients. Incorrect actions may have adverse financial consequences and may cause undue hardship to students and faculty members.
- **Decision-Making Authority:** S/he is expected to use judgment to make decisions based on existing policies and procedures. Extraordinary issues are referred to the Graduate Research Program Coordinator/Associate Chair or Manager with recommendations for solution or action. Errors in decision or information could impede the academic progress of a student and cause adverse relations with students, faculty and staff.
- **Physical and Sensory Demands:** Long periods of sustained attention and concentration to verify accuracy and completeness of various academic data and compiling information from various sources. Exposure to a fast-paced service oriented environment with constant interruptions, deadlines, changing priorities, large volumes, and large number of interactions and student queues. Must possess mental fortitude and patience in cross-cultural and interpersonal relations with a large international clientele.
- **Working Environment:** Busy and noisy office environment. This role involves psychological risk resulting from unavoidable exposure to disagreeable situations and deals with people who are upset, frustrated or angry, in crisis, or with people who have mental health concerns. Works with confidential academic information, which may involve personal or health issues requiring sensitivity and tact. Responds to high volume of competing demands and people with varying needs. Provides information or explanations that may not be well received by the recipient. There may be ambiguity of situations and shortcomings in data, and some internal clients may be demanding, may request breaking policy, and some situations may require escalation. This role responds to situations where there is a lot of pressure to find a solution quickly