University of Michigan Graduate Student Bill of Rights

1. Graduate students have the right to fair and equal treatment from university administrators, departmental staffs and faculty free of discrimination based on gender, race, age, sexual orientation, gender expression, disability, religious or political affiliations, country of origin, and citizenship.

2. Graduate students have the right to refuse to perform tasks unrelated to the requirements of their individual academic or professional development program.

3. Graduate students have the right to specific and concrete requirements for achieving an advanced degree, which should be communicated clearly upon entrance to the program and accessible in written form thereafter.

4. Graduate students have the right to change their faculty advisor(s) and the right to alternative supervision, external to the institution if necessary, in cases where the student's primary faculty advisor departs from the university after the student’s coursework and dissertation have begun. If a degree program is to be discontinued, provisions shall be made for students already in the program to complete their course of study.

5. Graduate students have the right to objective evaluation, regular feedback and guidance concerning their academic performance and progress towards an advanced degree. Evaluations should be factual, specific and should be shared with the student within a reasonable period of time. The following should be available to the student in writing: annual progress reports, split decisions on qualifying examinations, and unusual or additional program requirements.

6. Graduate students have the right to correct or remedy deficiencies in their academic performance prior to dismissal from a program. Any intent to dismiss a student from a graduate program for academic reasons must be preceded by specific, written performance information well in advance of actual dismissal.

7. Graduate students have the right to access professional training courses and seminars as needed. This should include but not be limited to information about professional associations and conferences, mock interviews, job opportunities and publishing articles in journals.

8. Graduate students have the right to be informed of financial support for the
duration of their study from their respective programs upon entering an academic course of study. Should this support change at any time during the course of study, graduate students have a right to be informed in writing of such changes in a timely manner.

9. Graduate students have the right to participate in all political processes of the academic community without fear of retribution. Graduate students should have representatives on all campus-wide administrative committees that affect graduate students, with voting privileges where appropriate. In addition, all departments and graduate programs should include graduate student representatives in committees that make decisions affecting graduate student policies and academic requirements.

10. Graduate students have the right to a non-biased arbitration process if and when seeking to resolve a violation of these rights. Official academic grievance procedures and informal complaint procedures should be clearly defined at the graduate division and at the department or graduate program level. These procedures should be presented to graduate students at the time of entry.

11. Graduate students have a right to be informed of these rights upon enrollment, and to be free of reprisals for exercising these rights.

Errata:

c. A graduate student’s performance or behavior should not be discussed by a professor with other students or staff without consent of the student.

d. Discussion of students among faculty should be of a professional nature, and limited to academic performance.

a. A student should not be exploited to the personal advantage of faculty members.

b. Students should not be coerced into performing tasks in grievous excess of other students because of characteristics that are vulnerable to discrimination.
a. Requirements should be communicated clearly upon entrance to the graduate program.
b. Graduate students have the right to accurate information in selecting a major professor and other members of their committees. Graduate students have the right to change their advisor if necessary. If a graduate student’s advisor departs from the institution once the student’s work is under way, the program shall strive to provide the student with alternative supervision, external to the institution if necessary.
c. No changes to degree requirements should affect students previously accepted into the graduate program or academic focus except at the option of the student.
d. Prospective and currently enrolled graduate students have a right to know the normative and average times to degree within a specific graduate program.
e. Prospective and currently enrolled graduate students have a right to know a program’s and/or emphasis’ attrition rate and predominant reasons for lack of program completion, unless providing the information would be in conflict with an individual’s privacy rights.

• All graduate programs and/or emphases should implement a structured training program for their teaching assistants and teaching associates.
• All graduate programs and/or emphases should outline the expectations of a graduate student teacher, and the ways in which those expectations can be achieved, for their teaching assistants and teaching associates.

• The reasons for unsatisfactory performance on programmatic examinations should be stated clearly to the student in a written evaluation.

• Any intent to discontinue an advisor/chair/mentor relationship with a graduate student must be preceded by a warning within a reasonable period of time.

a. Departments should provide an accurate description of availability and the likelihood of ongoing financial and resource support within their programs.
b. Prospective and currently enrolled graduate students should be provided a thorough description of the requirements and qualifications necessary for academic employment, training, and financial support within their departments and at the university.
c. All policies concerning support of graduate students should be implemented in a
consistent and understandable way.
d. Graduate students who also hold positions as employees of the university
deserve to be protected by the same rights as other university employees.
e. Consideration should be given to provide students with adequate space to
cconduct their scholarly work.
f. Graduate students have a right to the access to adequate material resources for
their work (e.g. printers, telephones, computers etc.)

a. The graduate student population reserves the right to form and maintain a
governing body that is free from coercion.
b.

if their rights are infringed.
a. Students with grievances should be given the opportunity for arbitration before
actions are taken against them.
b. Arbitration should occur before a body, at least half of which should consist of
their graduate student peers.
c. Students deserve to defend themselves at the hearings if reasonably possible.
When a formal hearing is required, a graduate student has a right to the following
minimum procedural standards to assure a fair hearing:
   i. The opportunity for a prompt and fair hearing, upon the request of the
student at which the University shall bear the burden of proof, and at which the student
shall have the opportunity to present documents and witnesses and to confront and
cross-examine witnesses presented by the University. No inference, however, shall be
drawn from the silence of the accused.
   ii. A record of the hearing; an expeditious written decision based upon the
preponderance of evidence, which shall be accompanied by a written summary of the
findings of fact.
   iii. An appeal.
d.

Things not currently covered in other Rackham or Umich documents:
- items 2-5, 7, 8
- academic dispute policy does not quite cover the student/advisor relationship (as described in
item 2)