

GUIDELINES FOR THE GRADUATE STUDENT ADVISING RELATIONSHIP

University of Delaware College of Engineering

Excellence in graduate education and research requires respectful, productive, professional relationships between faculty advisors and graduate students. Recognizing that advising norms vary across disciplines, this document presents guidelines that are meant to be generally applicable. It describes effective practices in graduate student advising as well as expectations for the roles of faculty advisors, graduate students, and departments/programs.

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Mutual expectations

- Clear, well-documented, explicit, mutually agreed upon expectations should be established at the outset of the relationship and revisited periodically.
- University/College-level expectations should be established to include, for example, overarching values, and general roles of advisors and advisees.
- Department-level expectations should be established to include, for example, how to choose an advisor, graduate requirements, suggested timeline, guidelines for appropriate workload and vacation time, and procedures for mediating conflicts and switching advisors.
- Expectations for each specific advisor-advisee relationship should be established, explicitly discussed, and signed. These may address issues, such as, funding, culture and work process (e.g., hours and results expected frequency and nature of in-person and other communication advisor feedback expected lab responsibilities career guidance).

Communication

- Clear, on-going, open, respectful, two-way communication is critical.
- The advisee's progress and plans should be documented, communicated, and evaluated regularly at multiple time scales:
 - For the degree program as a whole through an individualized development plan
 - For each year or semester through yearly or semester-long progress and planning forms
 - On a more regular, weekly or bi-weekly basis. Meetings should be regularly scheduled with prepared agenda and conclude with explicit action items.
- Communication should occur both one-on-one and for the research or lab group as a whole.
- Communication should include constructive positive and negative feedback and acknowledgement of improvement.
- If performance problems develop that may lead to dismissal, the advisor must communicate these clearly and the student must be given a chance to improve.
- Response to communications and feedback should be provided in a timely manner.
- The working relationship should be reviewed periodically to ensure it is working productively for both advisor and advisee.
- Active efforts should be made to overcome any barriers to communication due to the advisor-advisee power differential and possible cultural differences.

Conflict resolution

- Transparent, fair procedures and resources available in case of problems or conflict should be readily available
- There should be no tolerance for misconduct and support for reporting it

Accountability

- Procedures to ensure accountability for both advisee and advisor should be clearly established.
- Procedures should encourage regular documentation of performance and offer clear consequences for failure to meet expectations.

FACULTY ADVISOR ROLE

Serve as intellectual advisors and professional mentors to their graduate students, by

- helping students develop academic and professional skills expected by the discipline
- guiding students to design academic or research experiences that build on their interests and strengths and that can be completed in a timely manner
- encouraging and modeling dedication to high quality teaching and mentoring
- encouraging collaboration that, where appropriate, entails the sharing of authorship or rights to intellectual property developed in research or other creative activity
- encouraging students to be open about any problems in their work relationships, including with an advisor, and actively helping to resolve those problems
- being aware of and directing students to University resources to support them through challenges
- providing students with timely, regular, and constructive feedback on their progress, especially if students' lack of progress may prevent them from obtaining the desired degree

Understand the academic and non-academic policies that pertain to graduate students, including

- helping students understand the degree program's requirements and timely progress to degree, such as coursework, research, examinations, and thesis or dissertation
- discussing laboratory or departmental authorship policy in advance of entering into collaborative projects
- informing students of their responsibility to comply with all University policies including for example, Academic Code of Conduct, Responsible Conduct of Research, Environmental Health and Safety, Human Subjects Protection, and Sexual Misconduct

Prepare students to be competitive for future employment, by

- promoting free inquiry and free exchange of ideas, while abiding by policies on confidentiality of research
- acknowledging student contributions to research presented at conferences, in professional publications, or in applications for copyrights and patents
- encouraging graduate students to participate in professional meetings, perform or display their work in public settings, and publish the results of their research
- advising students on how to advance in their career of choice
- encouraging students to acquire the professional skills necessary for their future career, and when appropriate to participate in relevant extra-academic endeavors such as internships

Maintain a high level of professionalism, including

- abiding by University policies that set parameters on the nature of faculty-student relationships as well as policies on professional conflict of commitment and interest
- excusing themselves from participating in committee or other decisions regarding any student with whom they have a relationship that could represent a conflict of interest
- never impeding graduate students' progress toward the degree or toward employment in order to benefit from students' proficiency as a teaching or research assistants
- committing the time, effort, and resources required to support advisees
- interacting with students, staff, and faculty colleagues in a respectful and professional manner, recognizing differences in culture, ethnicity, gender, and other dimensions of diversity

GRADUATE STUDENT ROLE

Understand faculty advisors' central role, as well as constraints on their time. This includes

- recognizing that faculty advisors provide the intellectual environment in which students learn and conduct research, and, through access to teaching and research resources, may provide students with financial support
- recognizing that faculty advisors are responsible for monitoring the accuracy, validity, and integrity of the students' academic work, and, in the case of research, ensuring that the contributions of all participants are properly acknowledged in publications
- consulting with their advisors before attempting to publish results of work done under the advisors' direction and/or in the advisors' laboratory, as the quality reflects on students, faculty advisors, and the University
- being aware of time constraints and other demands imposed on faculty members and staff
- taking the initiative to arrange meetings or communicate via other mechanisms with faculty advisors as often as necessary to keep the advisors informed of any factors that might affect their academic progress, including research or time to degree
- consulting with the advisors to resolve any problems in their working relationships with their advisors or others, and seeking guidance from other faculty or staff as needed

Take primary responsibility for informing themselves about policies, requirements, and practices governing their financial support, degree and course requirements, research activities, and conflict resolution. This may involve

- consulting departmental guidelines for graduate students, the graduate and professional education website (<https://grad.udel.edu/>), and other resources
- fulfilling the expectations of policies and requirements seeking clarification from faculty advisors and staff if they are uncertain about the meaning or application of a particular policy

Exercise high professional standards in all aspects of their work. This includes

- observing the University's policies on academic integrity and the responsible conduct of research, which apply to students, faculty, and staff in all disciplines
- maintaining absolute integrity in taking examinations, creating original works and, for those doing research, in collecting, analyzing, presenting, and disseminating research data
- taking special care to preserve the data collected during experiments or noted during research (with precise identification of sources) to avoid future confusion or disputes about ownership
- acknowledging the contributions of faculty advisors and other members of the research team to students' work in all publications and conference presentations, and acknowledging sources of financial support
- maintaining the confidentiality of the faculty advisors' professional activities, including research and creation of original works, in accordance with existing practices and policies of the discipline
- informing faculty advisors of conflicts and working towards a clear resolution
- interacting with students, staff, and faculty colleagues in a professional manner to create a respectful workplace

DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM ROLE

- Create an intellectual community where students, faculty, and staff can thrive in pursuit of academic excellence
- Introduce new graduate students to the policies, practices, and resources of the department and the University through an orientation or advising session and follow up as needed to ensure students' understanding
- Provide students with written documentation of departmental policies, degree requirements, and timelines
- Designate one or more members of the faculty as resources to help graduate students and faculty resolve conflicts: the department chair, the director of graduate studies, or a designated departmental resource person
- Resolve problems locally and quickly if possible; consult with the Dean's office or Graduate and Professional Education office as needed.