

Guidelines for Advisor – Graduate Student Interactions

Effective advising, open communication, and ethical professional conduct are essential for a high quality graduate education and research environment. Effective research advising must be based on a commitment to provide every student access to supportive guidance on a range of professional, ethical and collegial issues. A productive research mentorship requires that students are treated respectfully and fairly, and that the research advisor serves as a role model—upholding the highest ethical and professional standards. These guidelines embody many of the best practices used by the majority of our faculty here and elsewhere. They are intended to provide a heightened awareness of the need to consciously establish an effective and productive advisor-student relationship that starts with trust, courtesy, two-way communications, and shared expectations.

Faculty Research Advisors should:

- promote an environment that is intellectually stimulating, and free of harassment;
- be supportive, equitable, accessible, encouraging, and respectful;
- recognize and respect the cultural backgrounds of students;
- be sensitive to the power imbalance in the student–advisor relationship;
- avoid assigning duties or activities that are outside students’ academic/professional responsibilities
- respect students’ needs to allocate their time among competing demands, while maintaining timely progress towards their degree;
- advise graduate students on the selection of appropriate course work, an appropriate thesis topic and assist them in selecting a thesis committee;
- set clear expectations and goals for students regarding their academic performance and research progress;
- discuss policies and expectations for work hours, vacation time and health contingencies;
- meet regularly and often with students to provide feedback on research activities and progress;
- provide students with training and oversight in all relevant aspects of research, including the design of research projects, the development of necessary skills, and the use of rigorous research techniques;
- avoid placing pressure on students to produce results that support particular hypotheses;
- devise effective ways of providing students with guidance and supervision during their prolonged absence;
- provide and discuss clear criteria for authorship at the beginning of all collaborative projects;
- encourage participation in professional meetings and try to secure funding for such activities;
- provide career advice, offer help with interview and application preparation, and write letters of recommendation in a timely manner;
- ensure students receive training in the skills needed for a successful career in their discipline, including oral and written communication and grant preparation as appropriate;
- acknowledge that some students will pursue careers outside of academia and/or outside their research discipline, and assist them in achieving their chosen career goals;
- schedule meetings to discuss topics other than research, such as professional development, career objectives and opportunities, climate, laboratory personnel relations, etc;
- be a role model by acting in an ethical, professional, and courteous manner toward other students, staff, and faculty.

Graduate Students should:

- recognize that they bear the primary responsibility for the successful completion of their degree;
- exercise the highest ethical standards in all aspects of their research (including but not limited to collection, storage, analysis, and communication of research data);
- complete all tasks assigned by the department, including teaching, grading and other assistantship responsibilities;
- know the policies governing graduate studies in the department and the graduate school and take responsibility for meeting departmental and graduate school deadlines;
- be proactive about communicating with your advisor and thesis committee, understanding that communication is a two-way endeavor;
- be considerate of other time constraints imposed on faculty and staff, including competing demands;
- take an active role in identifying and pursuing professional development opportunities;
- clearly communicate with their advisor(s) regarding their career preferences;
- be proactive about improving their research skills, including written and oral presentation skills;
- inform faculty advisors of potential and/or existing conflicts and work toward their resolution;
- seek mentoring and support resources beyond their faculty advisor(s), including other faculty members, peers, and organizations;
- obtain outside help from ombudsmen, graduate chairs, or other faculty if conflicts arise with their advisor;
- be aware that if they feel compelled to change advisors or research direction, they have options and should consult with their advisor, other mentors, or department officers;
- always act in an ethical, professional, and courteous manner toward other students, staff, and faculty.

Departments and Programs will:

- provide students with up-to-date information that includes policies, practices, degree requirements, and resources;
- assist students with selection of their advisor as needed, and provide students with contacts and resources for potential conflict resolution (e.g. ombudsperson, director of graduate studies, department head);
- provide pedagogical training and regular assessment of their teaching and other assistantship activities;
- monitor graduate student progress towards their degrees and professional development, including mentoring meetings, committee meetings, exam completions and other benchmarks appropriate to their discipline;
- provide and monitor training in the ethical conduct of research;
- provide appropriate infrastructure to allow students to complete their education and research in a timely and productive manner;
- provide opportunities for professional development that will be relevant to students seeking careers outside academia and/or their research discipline;
- establish and communicate policies for emergencies and unplanned situations that may disrupt the work of students and/or faculty;
- incorporate these guidelines and recommendations in their departmental policies or handbooks and actively promote their observance.

We have met and discussed these guidelines.

(Faculty Research Advisor)

(Graduate Student)

(Date)