

Graduate Advising Best Practices

Preamble

The relationship between a graduate student and advisor greatly influences the academic achievements and life of a graduate student. This relationship has the potential to enhance the academic pursuits of the graduate student, proving to be one of the most influential interactions of the scholar's life. Conversely, a poor relationship in which mutual expectations are not understood has the ability to diminish a graduate student's potential. Ultimately, graduate advising must be viewed as a relationship with two vested parties who both enter with the expectations that the other party will fulfill certain, often unwritten, best practices.

Purpose

This document, created by the Council of Graduate Students [*pending approval*] and supported by the Graduate School [*pending approval*], is meant to jumpstart discussion at the departmental level to develop or reevaluate specific graduate advising standards that departments set forth. Therefore, the purpose of this document is to bridge disciplines and outline minimal best practices of graduate advising at The Ohio State University.

Best Practices

Graduate Student

- Conduct academic pursuits in an ethical manner while developing professionalism by:
 - upholding the Student Code of Conduct (<http://sja.osu.edu/page.asp?id=1>), including, but not limited to, sections explicitly related to academic pursuits
 - pursuing opportunities that would advance career as a graduate student and beyond
- Take ownership of academic progress by:
 - devoting significant and productive time toward degree
 - staying abreast of requirements toward degree completion by actively and often discussing these issues with the advisor
 - clearly communicating career goals and concerns related to academic progress
 - taking an active role in initiating communication with the advisor
 - It is recommended that as much communication as possible occur in person or over the phone. Such communication enhances clarity, reduces ambiguity and misunderstanding, and often is singularly sufficient to resolve conflict. Written communication, e.g. via mail and e-mail, is appropriate, including to document potentially contentious issues. However, e-mail is prone to misunderstandings.
 - Recognize that social media can blur the line between professional and personal lives and therefore should be only used if deemed appropriate by both parties.
 - Clearly and immediately address any problems that arise so that both parties can work to remedy issues in an expedient manner.
- Respect the time and responsibilities of the advisor by:
 - maintaining open communication through phone, e-mail, conference call, web chat, etc. when face-to-face communication is not possible
 - allowing significant time for the advisor to provide feedback in advance of pending deadlines
 - maintaining professionalism by keeping up with graduate student responsibilities even when advisor is not present

Graduate Advisor

- Conduct advising in an ethical manner by:
 - ensuring that new advisees are recruited with clear intentions and expectations
 - By being upfront about the following issues:
 - the time advisor is expecting to stay in the current position
 - the amount of funding available for support of the given student
 - time to completion
 - publication expectations
 - interacting with graduate students in a way that is not considered discriminatory, as defined by law or applicable University policy
 - maintaining communication with graduate students in a professional and civil manner
This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Clearly stating expectations and requirements for students. This may most effectively be done in written form, even if just a written summary of an in-person meeting.
 - Providing periodic (e.g. quarterly or annually), clear expectations of progress toward degree as well as evaluation of progress.
 - Providing written feedback on student professional writing in a timely manner to promote student progress.
 - Recognizing that social media can blur the line between professional and personal lives and therefore should be used only if deemed appropriate by both parties.
 - Clearly and immediately addressing any problems that arise so that both parties can work to remedy issues in an expedient manner.
 - giving students appropriate credit for work done, e.g. as reflected in author strings in journal articles or books
- Aid in preparing students to be the best professional they can be by:
 - actively initiating communication with advisee not only about academic progress, but career goals
 - supporting traditional and non-traditional career goals
 - helping graduate students develop professional skills that will make them competitive for employment in their given field
 - encouraging students to take part in activities that will enrich their academic development, e.g. by participating in professional conferences and other networking activities
 - staying abreast of requirements toward degree completion and discussing completion of these requirements often with advisee
- Respect that students may have non-academic responsibilities by:
 - providing prompt and honest feedback on student's work
 - allowing reasonable time for students to prepare requested materials
 - not requiring that a student continue to provide a service (e.g. teaching, laboratory management, mentoring of other students, etc.) beyond departmental norms that can hinder a student's degree completion

Department

- Establish Graduate Advising Best Practices that pertain specifically to individual departments and unique situations that may arise therein
 - Consider adopting an annual report that requires advisors and students to discuss their program and progress each year
- Create/maintain an easily accessible online list of information for graduate students that contains links to the Graduate School Handbook, and other pertinent University resources
- Maintain a departmental graduate handbook including at least:
 - outlines of the processes students must go through to complete degree
 - clear grievance procedures for both graduate students and advisors
- Provide yearly written review of performance for graduate students and advisors
- Maintain clear communication with students and advisors
- Hold a yearly orientation to familiarize new students and faculty with the department and the University

Recommended Reading

We recommend that, in addition to these Graduate Advising Best Practices, advisors and advisees make themselves aware of other documents that affect their relationship, such as the “Graduate School Guidelines: Advising and Mentoring Graduate Students” and documents specific to their department.

Conclusions

Great academic strides can be made when two or more minds come together, which makes the graduate advising relationship one of great importance for the advancement of one’s field. Support of “Graduate Advising Best Practices” by parties with a vested interest in graduate advising sends a message of support for graduate students’ academic and professional pursuits, which ultimately is of great importance to The Ohio State University.

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