

Graduate Student Advising Policy: Setting Expectations and Responsibilities of Advisors, Students, and College Leadership

Faculty advising and mentoring is a core practice of graduate education—and we build from the commitments of the UW graduate school in our efforts. We take this work to be ongoing, to be collective, and to be focused on the professional goals and personal lives of our graduate students. Relatedly, we understand that advising and mentoring are vital parts of supporting students in developing their gifts, purposes, and sets of relations to carry out their work in education. With these commitments in mind, we list our practices and responsibilities of: faculty advisors, graduate students, and College leadership and student support staff. The general purpose of this document is to be used as a College-wide guide for advising and mentoring. As such, we recommend that advisors and students review this document together in one of their early advising meetings and consult the document regularly across a student's graduate program. While this document is meant as a College-wide guide, we also recognize that Areas and Programs within the broader College of Education have field and program specific needs, goals, and outcomes. We expect Areas and Programs to follow the guidelines in this document while also following processes and practices that are consistent with their specific needs, goals, and outcomes.

Responsibilities of the Faculty Advisor

Within the context of their role as advisors, a faculty member's primary task is to guide and support their students in reaching their scholarly goals and potential. The advisor should actively promote conditions conducive to a student's research and intellectual growth and provide appropriate guidance on the direction and progress of the research, the standards expected, and how it relates to the longer-term goals of the student. Along the way, each advisor should work to ensure that each student is availing themselves of the resources and following the procedures described in the College's Handbook for Graduate Education.

Advising students on their development as educators is an essential part of faculty mentoring. In addition to guiding research and academic progress, advisors should also support students' in any teaching roles, whether as course instructors, teaching assistants (TAs), teaching apprentices, or readers/graders. This support should include providing feedback on teaching practices, discussing instructional strategies, and fostering opportunities for professional development in teaching.

Please note: Faculty advising loads vary significantly in the College. In some cases, individual faculty advise more students than can be accommodated in the following policy descriptions. In these cases, regular group advising sessions and longer-rotations of individual meetings make sense. In all other cases, the following represents our shared set of expectations related to advising graduate students effectively. We also note that many faculty are on 9-month contracts, so this work happens primarily during the academic year.

Effective mentoring practice includes the following:

- Meeting regularly with students to support their research, teaching and learning, course selection, program milestone progress, and enculturation into the College and broader academic community.

Meeting expectations vary based on program approaches as follows:

- **M.Ed. Students (non cohort models):** Program/area faculty are expected to have meetings involving each M.Ed. student a minimum of two times per quarter, subject to mutual negotiation and based on student need. Some—but not all—of these may take place in group meeting/seminar contexts where student work can be discussed with area faculty (e.g., in research group meetings, group advising / program sessions and seminars).
- **Ph.D. & Ed.D. Students:** Advisors are expected to have *individual* meetings with each student regularly during the academic year, subject to mutual negotiation and based on student need. Monthly individual meetings are recommended as a general practice. In addition, faculty may also meet with the students in group meeting contexts outside of coursework

where student work can be discussed (e.g., in research group meetings, group advising / program sessions).

- **Professional/Cohort programs (e.g., Danforth, L4L, Ed.S, TEP):** These programs have specific structures and expectations that determine frequency and organization of advising meetings.
- Guiding the student in the selection and planning of a culminating experience (e.g., dissertation, master's project, professional portfolio) that can be successfully completed within the expected time frame for the degree program.
- Establishing with the student a realistic timetable for completion of various phases of the program (subject to revision based on life circumstances).
- Being accessible to give advice and provide feedback through group consultation, one-on-one, or editorial feedback, while also establishing with the student a realistic timeline for receiving feedback. Feedback should be professional, caring, and constructive and provide concrete guidance for improvement and professional success.
- Ensuring that students have an understanding of the relevant theories and the methodological, technical, applied, and partnership skills necessary for the culminating experience (e.g., dissertation, master's project, professional portfolio), including provision of information about Human Subjects Review where applicable.
- Ensuring that students adhere to responsible and ethical conduct in research and practice.
- Advisors work with student to establish appropriate committee(s) for degree milestones and/or culminating work
 - **For EdD and MEd students (not in Professional/Cohort Programs):** Advisor works with student to form appropriate committees and/or faculty members to guide their culminating work.
 - **For PhD students:** Advisor works with student to establish a dissertation committee early-on in the dissertation stage (e.g.,

after the Research & Inquiry milestone) and ensures that the committee meets with the student at least once a year.

- Making arrangements as relevant to program structures and expectations to ensure continuity of advising during leaves, unpaid summer months, or an extended period of absence (e.g., during sabbatical or other leaves).
- Encouraging participation in university or college seminars and colloquia, and other scholarly and other career-appropriate activities (e.g., abstract or manuscript reviewer).
- Encouraging and assisting students to attend and present work at local, national, or international conferences and to publish their work in appropriate journals and other outlets, depending on the goals of the student.
- Advising on matters of career options, job market, preparation of the CV and application materials, and strategies for launching a career in research, policy, or practice; referring students to relevant career and professional development resources on campus.
- Contributing to the student's professional development by providing general advice and letters of reference.
- Advising the student on seeking additional funding as needed.
- Ensuring that the research and education environment is safe, equitable, and free from harassment and discrimination.
- Avoiding personal or business relationships that may constitute a conflict of interest.
- Building with the strengths of students and communities to be supportive of student progress and well-being with particular consideration of the historical, political, cultural, and social inequalities that students continue to navigate in their work and lives.
- Communicating in a timely manner if the student's academic performance is not meeting expectations, providing specific steps for what actions need to be taken in order to return to academic good standing, and a timeline for doing so. While dealing with inadequate academic performance can be difficult, it is vital that advisors

communicate this to students and provide guidance on the best path forward.

- Serving as an advocate for the student. This advocacy role can be particularly important around milestones and degree completion and can include student-centered negotiations with committee members, navigating funding mechanisms, curated student-centered academic plans.
- Faculty are strongly encouraged to set and publicly share with all active students times that each faculty member is available for office hours and how to set such meetings.

Students sometimes experience personal difficulties. These can include family difficulties, problems in personal relationships, cultural adjustments, financial pressures, medical issues, and problems associated with employment. The importance of these various problems should not be under-emphasized. Advisors should not act in a counseling capacity with their students, nor should they intrude into the personal lives of their students with unwanted advice. However, advisors should try to ensure that their relationships with students are such that students will be comfortable telling advisors that they are having significant personal difficulties. Advisors should be aware of [appropriate campus resources](#) and [make referrals](#) as needed, and consider accommodations such as adjusting deadlines where appropriate.

Responsibilities of the Student

Effective mentoring practice is relational and entails responsibilities for both the advisor and student. When a student enters a graduate program, that student commits the time and energy necessary for research and/or applied work leading to a culminating project (e.g., thesis, project, portfolio, or dissertation) that makes a substantial contribution to knowledge and communities. Students and faculty should make an effort to stay in regular contact with each other throughout the student's program to ensure an effective and caring advising relationship. The student's responsibilities in the advising and mentoring relationship include the following:

- Becoming familiar with, and adhering to, the policies, and procedures in place in the Graduate School, the College of Education, and the University as outlined in available resources such as graduate group student handbook, web sites, codes of conduct, etc. This includes adhering to all deadlines and policies regarding registration, leaves of absence, limitations on time and recertification, dissertation submission and graduation (as listed in the Graduation Requirements page), and other University policies. This also includes, as appropriate, learning and adhering to responsible conduct of research standards for their field, as well as the UW Responsible Conduct of Research practices.
- Selecting and planning a culminating project that can be successfully completed within the expected time frame for the degree program; this will often be done in consultation with the graduate faculty advisor and with other faculty serving on their graduate committee.
- Preparing a research and/or professional practice plan and timetable in consultation with the advisor as a basis for the program of study, including any proposed fieldwork and/or implementation.
- Meeting with the advisor as mutually agreed upon and reporting regularly on progress and results, including informing the advisor of any significant changes that may affect the progress of the graduate work.
- Contributing to and improving their development as educators by seeking feedback and support from their advisor when involved in teaching roles. This can include soliciting feedback on course materials and instructional strategies.
- Student works with advisor to establish appropriate committee(s) for degree milestones and/or culminating work.
 - **For MEd Students (not in Professional/Cohort programs):** Working with your advisor to identify faculty committee member(s), as relevant to individual program guidelines.
 - **For PhD & EdD Students:** Establishing a dissertation or portfolio committee, with the assistance of the advisor, early in the dissertation stage—often in coordination with general examination milestone.
- Keeping advisors informed on how the student can be contacted.

- When appropriate and needed, planning to seek additional funding well in advance.
- Providing faculty with adequate time to provide requested support (e.g., three weeks when requesting feedback on a written product or a letter of recommendation).
- Thinking critically about career trajectory and mindfully pursuing opportunities to support career goals, for example, through teaching, publishing, presenting, externships, coaching etc.
- For more information about the nuances of graduate degree programs, see the College's [Graduate Student Handbook](#).

Responsibilities of the College Leadership & Student Support Staff

Graduate students also need the active support of College leadership and Student Support Staff. The College leadership, working with the office of Office of Student Support (OSS), must endeavor to create an environment within which scholarly work by graduate students can flourish, and problems can be resolved in an effective manner. Graduate students should take the time to get to know College leadership (area chairs, program directors, associate and assistant deans, the dean) as well as OSS. In this way, students can stay connected to people and events that can support their graduate experience and invite their contributions to the College community.

Responsibilities of the College leadership, in collaboration with OSS, includes the following:

- Producing a [handbook](#) and/or web site that outlines program requirements, regulations and procedures, financial support and information on faculty members and their area of research/expertise. If requirements change, past versions of the information should be maintained for students admitted under the previous requirements.
- Ensuring that program requirements align with [University Graduate Policies](#) and all other University requirements.

- Having procedures and staff support in place to facilitate the search for an advisor and to allow a change in advisor in the event that this becomes necessary, per this [process for advisor change requests](#).
- Establishing an effective communication system with graduate students (i.e., mailboxes and/or e-mail lists) and providing workspace, where possible.
- Providing orientation sessions for both new and continuing students. Information conveyed in these sessions should include: overview of program policies and requirements, areas of faculty expertise for research supervision, expected performance and timelines for completion of degree requirements, intellectual property policies, publication and authorship issues, scholarship/funding information, information on policies regarding the proper conduct of research, sexual harassment, safety and workplace regulations, college and university resources to support health and wellbeing, and procedures for complaints and appeals.
- Providing responsible conduct of research training as appropriate for the field.
- Ensuring that the student's dissertation committee meets Graduate School guidelines and that the membership is documented in the student's official University record.
- Providing a mechanism and staff support for resolving problems, which may arise between graduate students, advisors and/or members of the dissertation committee.
- Establishing a graduate group appeals process to review formal complaints from students.
 - [Pathways to Faculty Feedback](#)
- Ensuring a safe, equitable, and fair working environment for students and informing them of all relevant safety and work regulations.
- Being sensitive to supporting academic needs and concerns that may arise for international students, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander students, undocumented students, first generation college students, students with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ students, students with

family responsibilities and/or other students historically marginalized in predominantly White college and university settings.

- Disbursing financial support in a fair and equitable manner that is consistent with university funding policy.

Being knowledgeable about University resources in place to support students, and making referrals when appropriate.