

GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE STUDENT ADVISING AND MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

Graduate education, research, and creative activities take place within a community of scholars where constructive relationships between graduate students and their advisors and mentors are essential for the promotion of excellence in graduate education and for adherence to the highest standards of scholarship, ethics, and professional integrity. The effective advising and mentoring of graduate students is the joint responsibility of the graduate degree-granting and program units (henceforth referred to as academic units), the faculty advisors, and the students. The following guidelines are intended to foster faculty-graduate student relationships that are characterized by honesty, courtesy, and professionalism and that provide students with intellectual support and guidance. These guidelines recognize that good advising and mentoring of graduate students entail a considerable commitment of time and effort on the part of the faculty and the academic unit. The academic unit forms the community of scholars responsible for cultivating a stimulating intellectual environment and, through the joint efforts of all faculty members of the unit, for mentoring of graduate students.

The responsibilities of the academic unit include:

- Preparing and maintaining a graduate handbook that includes the information outlined in the Graduate Handbook Template¹, as well as academic unit and college requirements for degree completion
- Providing opportunities for graduate students to interact with a wide array of colleagues from within and outside the University through such activities as speaker series, colloquia, and other formal and informal events

- Creating opportunities for graduate students to become familiar with the various forms of scholarship in the field
- Sharing responsibility with guidance committees and faculty advisors in fostering the professional and career development of graduate students, for example, by providing venues for honing professional writing and presentation skills and organizing seminars on such issues as ethics, professional integrity and grantsmanship

The responsibilities of the chair or director of the academic unit and/or director of graduate studies include:

- Knowing University and academic unit rules, procedures and policies applicable to graduate study, research, and creative activities (including those in *Academic Programs*², *Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities*³ or *Medical Student Rights and Responsibilities*⁴, and *Academic Freedom for Students at Michigan State University*⁵) and ensuring that they are followed in the academic unit
- Distributing to incoming graduate students the academic unit's Graduate Handbook
- Organizing orientation sessions for incoming graduate students
- Ensuring that required courses and examinations are scheduled on a regular basis, thereby enabling graduate students to make timely progress in their degree programs

¹ The Graduate School, "Graduate Handbook Template" (<http://grad.msu.edu/staff/handbook.pdf>)

² Michigan State University "Academic Programs" (<http://www.reg.msu.edu/ucc/AcademicProgramsUpdated.asp>)

³ Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide, Part II Rights and Responsibilities, "Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities" (<http://www.vps.msu.edu/SpLife/default.pdf>)

⁴ Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide, Part II Rights and Responsibilities, "Medical Student Rights and Responsibilities" (<http://www.vps.msu.edu/SpLife/default.pdf>)

⁵ Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide, Part II Rights and Responsibilities, "Academic Freedom for Students at Michigan State University" (<http://www.vps.msu.edu/SpLife/default.pdf>)

- Providing advice on matters such as course selection until a permanent faculty advisor and guidance committee are selected, or appointing a committee or temporary advisor to assume that role
- Facilitating selection of a faculty advisor and guidance committee and facilitating changes of faculty advisor and/or guidance committee should this become necessary
- Monitoring at least annually the progress of students in the graduate program and the quality of their research or creative activity, as well as the standards and fairness of examinations
- Monitoring the performance of faculty advisors and guidance committees to ensure that graduate students are receiving appropriate mentoring
- Working toward fair resolution of conflicts between graduate students and faculty

The responsibilities of the faculty advisor include:

- Ensuring that graduate students receive information about requirements and policies of the graduate program
- Advising graduate students on developing a program plan, including appropriate course work, research or creative activity, and on available resources
- Advising graduate students on the selection of a thesis or dissertation topic with realistic prospects for successful completion within an appropriate time frame and on the formation of a guidance committee
- Providing training and oversight in creative activities, research rigor, theoretical and technical aspects of the thesis or dissertation research, and in professional integrity
- Encouraging graduate students to stay abreast of the literature and cutting-edge ideas in the field
- Helping graduate students to develop professional skills in writing reports, papers, and grant

proposals, making professional presentations, establishing professional networks, interviewing, and evaluating manuscripts and papers

- Providing regular feedback on the progress of graduate students toward degree completion, including feedback on research or creative activities, course work, and teaching, and constructive criticism if the progress does not meet expectations
- Helping graduate students develop into successful professionals and colleagues, including encouraging students to participate and disseminate results of research or creative activities in the appropriate scholarly or public forums
- Facilitating career development, including advising graduate students on appropriate job and career options, as well as on the preparation of application materials for appropriate fellowship, scholarship, and other relevant opportunities
- Writing letters of reference for appropriate fellowship, scholarship, award, and job opportunities
- Providing for supervision and advising of graduate students when the faculty advisor is on leave or extended absence

The responsibilities of the guidance committee include:

- Advising graduate students on course work, research, or creative activities
- Providing at least annually feedback and guidance concerning progress toward the degree
- Administering exams in a fair and professional manner
- Reviewing the thesis or dissertation in a timely, constructive and critical manner

The responsibilities of the graduate student include:

- Learning and adhering to University and academic unit rules, procedures, and policies applicable to graduate study and research or creative activities, including those outlined in *Academic Programs*², *Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities*³ or *Medical Student Rights and Responsibilities*⁴, and *Academic Freedom for Students at MSU*⁵
- Meeting University and academic unit requirements for degree completion
- Forming a guidance committee that meets University requirements^{2,3}, as well as requirements that are outlined in the Graduate Handbook of the academic unit
- Following disciplinary and scholarly codes of ethics in course work, thesis or dissertation research, and in creative activities
- Practicing uncompromising honesty and integrity according to University and federal guidelines in collecting and maintaining data
- Seeking regulatory approval for research in the early stages of thesis or dissertation work where applicable
- Keeping the faculty advisor and guidance committee apprised on a regular basis of the progress toward completion of the thesis or dissertation

RESOURCES

- “Adviser, Teacher, Role Model, Friend: On Being a Mentor to Students in Science and Engineering”, National Academy Press, Washington, D.C., 1997, 84 pp (<http://bob.nap.edu/html/mentor/>)
- “Integrity in Scientific Research: Creating an Environment that Promotes Responsible Conduct”, National Academies Press, Washington, D.C., 2002, 216 pp (<http://www.nap.edu/books/0309084792/html/>)
- “On Becoming a Scientist: Responsible Conduct in Research”, Second Edition, National Academy Press, Washington, D.C., 1995, 27 pp (<http://bob.nap.edu/html/obas/>)
- “On the Right Track: A Manual for Research Mentors”, M.F. King; D.D. Denecke (Ed.), Council of Graduate Schools, Washington, D.C., 2003, 26 pp (<http://www.cgsnet.org/pdf/RightTrackExSum.pdf>)