

Northwestern | THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

Guidance for Positive Graduate Student and Faculty Adviser Relationships

This document presents guiding principles intended to support positive mentoring relationships between graduate students and their faculty advisers.

Graduate education entails both formal learning in a specific discipline and research experience in which the graduate student trains under the supervision of one or more faculty advisers. A positive mentoring relationship between the graduate student and the primary faculty/research adviser is a vital component of the student's academic and professional progression.

Tenets of Graduate Education

Institutional and Program Commitment

Institutions that educate and train graduate students are committed to establishing and maintaining rigorous graduate programs with the highest research and ethical standards. Institutions should work to ensure that students who complete their programs possess the foundational knowledge, skills, and values that will allow them to mature into professionals with expertise and integrity. Institutions should foster environments that are diverse and inclusive for all members of the community and that allow graduate students to navigate a range of career choices.

Faculty Expectations

All faculty should act to enhance the academic and professional development of graduate students and should be respectful of faculty colleagues, students, and other members of the university community. Faculty members who advise students – with the support of the graduate program and institution – are expected to provide mentorship in subject-specific research practices, the ethics of research, pedagogy, and preparation for professional life.

Student Expectations

Graduate students should be responsible members of the academic community. They should be respectful of the faculty, other students, and other members of the university community. Graduate students must assume primary responsibility for their own progress through their degree programs. This means seeking knowledge about requirements, policies, and procedures. Students should be dedicated to their scholarship, striving for academic excellence in completing their studies.

Details of the commitments of students and advisers appear on the following page. Copies of this document should be kept by the parties, and the individual degree program may also require a copy.

We acknowledge reading this document and discussing the community standards that it describes.

Student Name: _____

Program: _____

Date Read: _____

Faculty Adviser Name: _____

Department: _____

Date Read: _____

These guidelines are based on examples from several sources, including: "Advising Agreement between Graduate Students and Faculty" published by Brown University; the "Mentoring Compact" published by the Graduate Research, Education and Training (GREAT) group of the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC); the IDP (Individual Development Plan) developed by the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB); material developed by the National Postdoctoral Association; the "Guide to Mentoring Graduate Students" published by the Rackham Graduate School at the University of Michigan; and the Northwestern University Graduate Expectations [Document](#) developed by The Graduate School's Graduate Leadership and Advocacy Council.

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Graduate Student Commitment

- I acknowledge that I have the primary responsibility for the successful completion of my degree.
- I will be committed to my graduate education and will demonstrate this by my efforts in the classroom and in my research.
- I will maintain a high level of professionalism, self-motivation, engagement, and ethics. I will act responsibly toward the faculty, other students, and other members of the university community.
- I will adhere to an agreed-upon schedule for meetings with my faculty adviser and provide updates on the progress and results of my studies and research.
- If applicable, I will work with my faculty adviser to develop a thesis/dissertation project and will establish and maintain a timeline for each phase of my work.
- If applicable, I will work with my faculty/research adviser to assemble a thesis/dissertation committee, and I will consult with committee members regularly and be responsive to their advice and constructive criticism.
- I will comply with all policies and requirements of my graduate program, The Graduate School, and Northwestern. I will commit to meeting these requirements in an appropriate time frame.
- If appropriate, I will discuss expectations on work hours, sick leave, and vacation with my graduate program and my faculty/research adviser before entering an advising relationship.* I will consult with my faculty/research adviser in advance of any extended absences and apprise my adviser as soon as possible of any issues that would affect my academic progress.

Faculty Adviser Commitment

- I acknowledge my responsibilities in advising and mentoring each advisee.
- I will model a high level of professionalism for the graduate student and will act responsibly toward all students, faculty colleagues, and other members of the university community.
- I will discuss the requirements and deadlines of the graduate program and the University with the student.
- I will offer the graduate student help to develop professional skills, plan research projects, set reasonable and attainable goals, meet program milestones, and establish timelines for degree completion.
- I will respond to the student's work in a timely manner.
- I will meet with the student on a regular basis and provide guidance and resources, as appropriate for my field and according to The Graduate School's and program's guidelines, in order for the graduate student to conduct thesis/dissertation research.
- I will discuss any individual expectations I might have on the advising relationship with the student before entering into an advising relationship. These might include work hours, sick leave, and vacation.*
- I will not require the graduate student to perform tasks unrelated to the student's course work, thesis/dissertation research, training program, and/or professional development.
- I will create an environment in which the student can discuss and explore professional development opportunities and investigate a variety of career paths in which the student's academic expertise can be utilized.

Optional additional commitments specific to the Program and/or Adviser/Advisee:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

*Note adviser expectations should not supersede University and TGS policies related to leaves of absence, including medical, family, and/or general leaves, as well as parental accommodation.