



# GUIDELINES FOR ADVISING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN FACULTY ADVISORS AND GRADUATE STUDENTS

Stanford University



STANFORD UNIVERSITY  
VICE PROVOST FOR GRADUATE EDUCATION

High quality graduate education depends upon the professional and ethical conduct of the participants. Although the University is composed of many distinct disciplinary "cultures," its faculty and students together form a community of scholars. As such, they have complementary responsibilities for upholding academic standards and sustaining a creative and collegial environment.

Focused on the professional academic relationship between faculty and graduate students, the following guidelines are based on the collective experience and wisdom of a number of major research universities. Their purpose is twofold: to serve as a starting point for clear and regular communication about expectations; and to encourage a heightened awareness of and conscious commitment to practices that the great majority of faculty and students here and elsewhere routinely follow as a matter of common sense, courtesy, and basic honesty. Although a few of these guidelines have more direct relevance to some fields than to others, most are applicable across the entire disciplinary spectrum.

## FACULTY ADVISORS:

### ✧ **Serve as intellectual and professional mentors to their graduate students, by:**

- ~ helping students develop artistic, interpretive, writing, oral, quantitative, or other relevant professional skills required by the discipline;
- ~ helping more advanced students design research programs that take advantage of their individual interests and strengths and that can be completed in a timely manner;
- ~ encouraging, by example and precept, a dedication to high quality teaching;
- ~ encouraging faculty-graduate student collaborations which entail the sharing of authorship or rights to intellectual property developed in research or other creative or artistic activity;
- ~ encouraging students to be open about any problems in their working relationships (including the relationship with the advisor), and being open to making accommodations to deal with such problems;
- ~ providing students with evaluation of their progress and performance in regular and informative ways. Although the frequency may vary according to circumstances and academic cultures, a suggested minimum is two meetings each quarter. It is especially important for faculty to provide students with timely and candid advice when their performance is deficient or their lack of progress might prevent them from attaining the desired degree.

### ✧ **Understand the academic and nonacademic policies that pertain to graduate students, including:**

- ~ helping students understand the requirements and timetable that each must meet, including coursework, languages, research tools, specific research responsibilities, examinations, and thesis or dissertation;

- ~ discussing laboratory, studio, or departmental authorship policy with graduate students in advance of entering into collaborative projects;
- ~ drawing student's attention to University policies on Intellectual Property, Environmental Health and Safety, Scientific Misconduct, the Honor Code, and requiring that they be followed.

### ✧ **Prepare students to be competitive for employment, by:**

- ~ promoting free inquiry and the free exchange of information, subject to the University's policies regarding secrecy and confidentiality of research;
- ~ acknowledging student contributions to research presented at conferences, in professional publications, or in applications for copyrights and patents;
- ~ encouraging graduate students to participate in professional meetings, perform or display their work in public settings, and publish the results of their research;
- ~ providing a realistic view of the field and the current job market and making use of professional contacts for the benefit of their students.

### ✧ **Maintain a high level of professionalism, including:**

- ~ excusing themselves from participating in committee decisions regarding any student with whom they have a relationship that could result in a conflict of interest;
- ~ never impeding a graduate student's progress toward the degree or toward employment in order to benefit from the student's proficiency as a teaching or research assistant;
- ~ abiding by the university's conflict of interest/commitment policies and ensuring graduate students are not put in a conflicted position;
- ~ interacting with students, staff, and faculty colleagues in a professional and civil manner.

## FOR THEIR PART, GRADUATE STUDENTS:

### ✧ **Understand faculty advisors' central role, as well as their constraints. This includes:**

- ~ recognizing that the faculty advisor provides the intellectual and instructional environment in which the student conducts research, and, through access to teaching and research funds, may also provide the student with financial support;
- ~ recognizing that the faculty advisor is responsible for monitoring the accuracy, validity, and integrity of the student's research, and for ensuring that the contributions of all participants in the research are properly acknowledged in any publications. For these reasons and because the quality of that research reflects on the student, the faculty advisor, and the University, students should always consult with their advisors before attempting to publish the results of work carried out under the advisor's direction and/or in the advisor's studio or laboratory;
- ~ being aware of time constraints and other demands imposed on faculty members and program staff;
- ~ taking the initiative to arrange meetings with the faculty advisor as often as necessary and to keep the advisor informed of any factors that might affect the progress of their research or time to degree. Although the frequency of meetings may vary according to individual circumstances and the norms of diverse academic cultures, a suggested minimum is twice quarterly;
- ~ recognizing the importance of seeking an early and informal resolution of any problems in their working relationships with their advisor or others by first consulting with the advisor.

### ✧ **Take primary responsibility for informing themselves of the regulations, policies, and practices governing their financial aid, degree and course requirements, research activities, and conflict resolution. This may involve:**

- ~ consulting departmental notes or guidelines for graduate students, the Graduate Academic Policies and Procedures Handbook ([gap.stanford.edu](http://gap.stanford.edu)), the Research Policy Handbook ([rph.stanford.edu](http://rph.stanford.edu)), and the Stanford Bulletin ([bulletin.stanford.edu](http://bulletin.stanford.edu));
- ~ seeking clarification from the faculty advisor when they are uncertain about the precise meaning or application of a regulation or policy statement.

### ✧ **Exercise high professional standards in all aspects of their work. This includes:**

- ~ observing the University's policy on scientific misconduct. This policy applies to researchers in all disciplines and to students as well as faculty and staff;
- ~ maintaining absolute integrity in taking examinations and in collecting, analyzing, and presenting research data;
- ~ taking special care to preserve the data collected during experiments or noted during research (with precise identification of sources) in order to avoid future confusion or disputes about access or ownership;
- ~ acknowledging the contributions of the faculty advisor and other members of the research team to the student's work in all publications and conference presentations. It is also appropriate to acknowledge the sources of financial support. Students should familiarize themselves with the statement on Academic Authorship published in full in the Research Policy Handbook;
- ~ maintaining the confidentiality of the faculty advisor's professional activities and research prior to presentation or publication, in accordance with existing practices and policies of the discipline;
- ~ informing faculty of conflicts and working towards a clear resolution;
- ~ interacting with faculty, staff and other students in a mature, professional, and civil manner in accordance with University policies.

## DEPARTMENTS AND PROGRAMS:

- ✧ **Introduce new graduate students to the policies, practices, and resources of the department by means of an orientation session;**
- ✧ **Provide students with written documentation of departmental policies;**
- ✧ **Designate one or more members of the faculty as resources for graduate students and faculty to call on to help resolve conflicts. This role may be filled by the department chair, the director of graduate studies, or a specially designated departmental ombudsperson. Problems are usually resolved most quickly and effectively at the department level, but in exceptional circumstances a student may wish to consult the University Ombuds Office.**