

Best Practices for Mentoring Graduate Students

The Graduate Faculty

The Department/Program

The Graduate Student



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Mentoring plays a vital role in the graduate experience and requires a communicative partnership between the student and the mentor, with the support of the program and graduate school.

Graduate Faculty

While mentoring is necessarily an individual matter, the following are good practices that are often associated with a productive relationship between the faculty member and the graduate student. For example, it is the role of the faculty member to

- Foster the intellectual development of students during their educational programs and while conducting their research.
- Provide perspective to students on the scope and emerging trends in their field of study.
- Inspire students to think independently, critically, and creatively.
- Acquaint students with strategies for accessing literature and related materials that are fundamental to the field of study.
- Know the programmatic requirements and deadlines (including selection of appropriate coursework) specified in the departmental handbook and catalog for graduate students and help students to meet them.
- Offer advice concerning the selection of a dissertation/thesis committee that affords relevant expertise as well as providing access to faculty members who can play a supportive mentoring role.
- Assist students in the selection/design of a timely and significant dissertation/thesis topic that has an appropriate scope.
- Evaluate and strive to resolve problems that students encounter during their graduate studies, and direct them to appropriate resources, as needed.
- Be cognizant of and responsive to the unique needs of international students.
- Facilitate exchange of information among students so that experienced students can act as mentors for new students.
- Encourage students to access information from all available sources including peers, faculty members, and other experts in the field.

- Inform students of funding opportunities, train them in proposal preparation, and encourage them to seek financial support.
- Assure that students understand the standards of ethical/moral behavior within the discipline, including research activities and urge them to act in accord with those standards.
- Establish and communicate clear expectations to students with regard to conducting research.
- Provide timely feedback, both written and oral, to students on their progress through constructive criticism and positive reinforcement.
- Encourage students to attend and present research in regional and national professional meetings, facilitate networking opportunities at the meetings, and teach the basics of oral presentation skills.
- Help students to understand the process of manuscript preparation, submission, and review, and provide appropriate authorship on manuscripts.
- Guide students in the preparation of a dissertation/thesis in its final form with regard to content, style, etc., before it is submitted to the committee for the final defense.
- Support students and graduates in matters related to career development.
- Issue periodic written progress reports to students and their advisors identifying recently completed program milestones and highlighting upcoming deadlines.
- Mediate disputes and help resolve conflicts experienced by graduate students.
- Provide access to faculty members with appropriate experience as mentors in different aspects of the graduate program, e.g. teaching, research, internships, and other discipline specific activities.

Graduate Student

Graduate students bear responsibility for ensuring a positive mentoring relationship with their advisor, and for meeting the requirements of the degree program. It is the role of the student to:

- Know and follow the programmatic requirements and deadlines (including selection of appropriate coursework) specified in the departmental handbook and catalog for graduate students.
- Understand the mentorship process and seek out appropriate mentors.
- Carefully consider the advice and counsel obtained from the mentor.
- Recognize the constraints and other demands on faculty and staff.
- Understand the standards of ethical/moral behavior within the discipline, including research activities and act in accord with those standards.

Graduate Departments/Programs

Graduate departments/ programs are responsible for providing an environment in which students can receive a positive mentoring experience. The role of the program/department is to

- Have clearly defined programmatic requirements available to all graduate students in the form of a departmental handbook, available as “hard-copy” and on-line. The departmental handbook should be issued to each graduate student as part of the department’s orientation.
- Designate a specific individual to coordinate and oversee the administration of the program.
- Schedule regular advisory committee meetings with doctoral students to provide feedback and advice on completed and proposed research, and other areas as appropriate.
- Schedule meetings each semester with students to provide feedback and advice on program progress.

Each student should thoroughly review their departmental handbook and Graduate Catalog and become familiar with the policies and regulations of the university. Failure to do this may result in a delay in graduation.

It is the graduate student’s responsibility to keep current on information which may affect their matriculation in graduate school. Whenever a problem occurs, the student should contact their major advisor.

References:

- “Best Practices for Mentoring Graduate Students”
 The Graduate School at the University of Toledo.
<http://gradschool.utoledo.edu>
 The Council of Graduate Schools
<http://cgsnet.org>