

## University of Kentucky, Department of Geography

### Guidelines on Graduate Student Advising<sup>1</sup>

#### Section I.C. Student Advising

The Department's graduate program is designed to facilitate close collaboration among faculty and students with shared areas of interest. Consistent with this philosophy, each student will select a professor who will consent to act as their major advisor. The advisor's role is to:

- Maintain regular communication with students to ensure that they are receiving necessary input about the program, are aware of key steps and deadlines and monitor progress via GPA and other measures of student's performance.
- Serve as an intellectual mentor during the student's tenure in the Department.
- Advise on matters such as course selection, proposal design, grant writing, conducting research.
- Advise students about the larger professional community (conferences, workshops, etc.) and mentor students about opportunities, professional expectations and norms as they enter the profession.
- Provide timely feedback on work (generally within two weeks) within a mutually agreed timetable and deadlines.
- Assist the graduate student with any problems that may arise in their academic program.

Students are expected to consult regularly with their advisor about courses and research plans and keep them updated on their progress at least once a semester (although in practice this occurs more frequently). Students are also expected to work with advisors on setting timelines and due dates to meet degree deadlines and maintain timely progress towards their degree.

It is important to recognize that people have different relationship styles and faculty have different styles and approaches to advising. As a result, there is a diversity of models for how the student-advisory professional relation functions. In order to help ensure a successful relationship, it is useful for students to discuss the following points with their potential advisor before entering into an advising relationship. How quickly can you expect your advisor to respond to written submissions turned in on time? What happens if you miss a deadline? How quickly can you expect your advisor to respond to requests to schedule meetings or conversations? How regularly does your advisor like to meet? How often would your advisor like a written report of your progress along degree milestones? What format should this report take? It is the department's expectation that advisors (and committee members) will provide timely feedback (generally within two weeks) to students on proposal drafts, reading lists and related work relevant to students' degrees. It is also important to recognize the competing obligations and pressures facing advisors. For example, a student missing an agreed upon deadline can result in a slower response as a faculty member may no longer has the same availability due to other commitments.

The DGS typically acts as temporary advisor for first-year students until each selects an advisor. M.A. students should select an advisor during their first semester and Ph.D. students should select an advisor by their second semester in residence (although earlier is better). In all

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<sup>1</sup> Note: this text is extracted from University of Kentucky Department of Geography Graduate Handbook (version from 9/30/2020) which is available at <https://geography.as.uky.edu/geography-graduate-handbook>

cases, advisor assignment is contingent upon agreement by both parties. Any member of the graduate faculty may advise MA students. As a rule, Ph.D. advising is a privilege of full graduate faculty membership (generally limited to associate and full professors).

Switching advisors can be very disruptive to a student's academic progress and is generally not advised. However, changes in an advisor's ability to oversee a project as well as a student's redefinition of their area of interest and direction in the graduate program may lead to switching advisors. In such cases, the following departmental procedures apply. If an advisor is no longer able to work with a student, the DGS will act as a temporary advisor until the student is able to identify a new faculty member who consents to act as their major advisor. Likewise, students, **in consultation with the DGS**, may seek a new advisor during their time in the program. Students are advised that doing so can seriously disrupt/delay their progress towards their degree and may result in no degree earned before departmental funding is used up. Students without an advisor are responsible for identifying a faculty member who consents to act as their advisor. If no faculty member is found, the permanent advising role defaults to the DGS or Chair. In such cases, the DGS or Chair may advise changes in a student's research project so that it better corresponds to their expertise in terms of theory, topic and/or method. At all times, switching advisors are also subject to the rules of Graduate School.