

Psychology

Graduate Student Advising Policy

The Psychology Department's graduate program is designed to facilitate close collaboration among faculty and students with shared areas of interest. Student advising occurs on three levels: primary faculty advisor (mentor), faculty advisory committee, and the entire faculty in the student's specific program of study. Each student will choose (or be assigned) a primary advisor/mentor, upon entering the program. The student, in consultation with the mentor, will form an advisory committee. Prior to the Master's thesis, the advisory committee will consist of the mentor and two additional faculty members. After the thesis is completed, the advisory committee will consist of the mentor and three additional faculty members, one of whom must have a primary appointment outside of Psychology. The advisory committee will play a critical role in advising throughout a student's graduate career. The advisory committee is primarily composed of faculty within the area, but other departmental faculty, faculty from other units at the university, and in some cases from other institutions, can also serve. As noted above, there are two different advisory committees that supervise the student during the various stages of their training: (1) Master's advisory committee and (2) dissertation advisory committee. There is usually considerable overlap in the composition of these committees, but students do have the flexibility to reconstitute their committee if their interests change or they desire to change the committee for other reasons. There are four points during a student's career that constitute logical points at which the composition of the advisory committee are considered: (1) during the first semester of matriculation, the student must form an initial advisory committee; (2) at the point where a Master's thesis project is defined, the committee might undergo a change; (3) upon completion of the thesis, the dissertation advisory committee must be formed; (4) upon completion of the qualifying exam, a student might elect to make changes in the dissertation advisory committee for supervision of the dissertation.

All advisors have different mentoring styles. However, it is reasonable to expect that each advisor will advise and mentor in the following ways:

- teaching research skills: discussing ideas, helping students conceptualize and design projects, analyze data, write manuscripts, etc.
- provide timely feedback on work (generally within two weeks) within a mutually agreed timetable and deadline.
- discussing career goals: talking with students about how to prepare for the career path they chose, different types of career paths available, etc.
- helping with professional development: helping students prepare submissions for conferences and journals, prepare presentations, revise a manuscript, apply for a fellowship or grant, etc.
- giving general advice: about the program, the profession, etc, within the limits of the advisor's knowledge and expertise.
- being personable and supportive: advisors generally have their students' best interests at heart and will make every effort to be helpful.

Advisors also have expectations of their advisees. In general, each advisor will expect that students:

- maintain regular contact: students should communicate with their advisors at least every 2 weeks (usually weekly), and should make an appointment if they have gotten out of touch, students should ask for help when it's needed and should always inform their advisor if they will be out of town, etc;
- students should devote considerable effort to their studies: see graduate school as AT LEAST a full time job, read articles in their area even if they haven't been assigned, give their best effort even on first drafts, master APA style without extensive feedback, avoid spelling and grammatical errors, avoid giving the appearance of looking for the "easy way out," etc.
- be independent and take responsibility: try to figure things out, know deadlines, know what paperwork is required for their stage in the program and get it done, use feedback constructively, etc.
- collaborate with other students working with the same advisor: older students may help teach statistical analyses, how to run subjects, etc, and every student may be expected to teach younger students.

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 relationship functions. 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 students expect their advisor to respond to written submissions turned in on time? What happens if they miss a deadline? How quickly can they expect their advisor to respond to requests to schedule meetings or conversations? How regularly does their advisor like to meet? How often would their advisor like a written report of their 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 proposal drafts, reading lists, and related work relevant to students' degrees.

Changing Advisors

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. We recognize that students' interests may change and that not all students will remain with their original advisor. Changing advisors creates no ill will. In such cases, the following departmental procedures apply. If an advisor is no longer able to work with a student, the acting coordinator of the student's specific program (e.g., clinical, cognitive neuroscience) 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 their program coordinator, may seek a new advisor during their time in the program. Students are advised that doing so can disrupt/delay their progress towards their degree. 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 program coordinator or Chair. In such cases, the coordinator 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 is also subject to the rules of the Graduate School.