

# UK Department of Philosophy

## Graduate Advising Policy, 2022-2023

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### Section 1: Advising Summary

#### Section 1.1: Your Academic Advisor

Who is your “advisor”?

Until you form a dissertation committee and choose a dissertation advisor—something that typically happens in the second or third year of the PhD program—the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) serves as your academic advisor.

Once you’ve put together a dissertation committee, the chair of your advisory committee—in other words, your dissertation advisor—officially becomes your academic advisor.

In practice, this means that for the first two or three years, students work mainly with the DGS. The DGS helps ensure that you are satisfying coursework requirements, and helps you navigate the transition from coursework to candidacy.

As you form relationships with faculty members who are likely to serve on your dissertation committee, there is a natural transition that takes place, with more guidance coming from those faculty members with whom you’ll ultimately write your dissertation.

However, the DGS always remains available as a resource for PhD students at any stage of the program. If the DGS is unable to answer the question or resolve the issue, you can contact the current Department Chair. If the Chair is unable to answer the question or resolve the issue, you can contact the [College of A&S Associate Dean of Graduate Studies](#).

Most faculty appointments, as all as administrative appointments like DGS, are nine-month appointments. This means that over the summer most faculty are technically off the clock, and may be checking email less frequently. Despite this, faculty members, including the DGS, are usually able and willing to stay in contact by email over the summer, even if it may sometimes take longer to hear back. If your advisor is going to be fully out of contact for an extended period—even over the summer—it is reasonable to expect that they let you know ahead of time.

## Section 1.2: The Rules

The requirements for the PhD, and procedures for satisfying those requirements, are outlined in two documents: the Department of Philosophy's *Graduate Regulations*—the “Grad Regs”— and the Graduate School's *Graduate Bulletin*—the “Bulletin”.

You should take time to read over both of these documents.

The *Grad Regs* describe the requirements of the Philosophy Department's PhD program specifically—including coursework requirements, the definition of “adequate progress,” and other program requirements such as the Qualifying Exam, Dissertation Proposal, and Final Defense.

The *Bulletin* describes Graduate School-wide requirements, including those that overlap with topics covered in the Grad Regs, but also extending to policies such as “add/drop” requirements for courses, residency requirements, moonlighting regulations, time-to-degree limits, and so on.

## Section 2: Advising Expectations During Coursework

### Section 2.1: What the DGS Can Expect from the Student

Graduate students in the *coursework* phase of the PhD program should:

- Maintain familiarity with both the [Grad Regs](#) and the [Bulletin](#).
- Research answers to administrative questions in the Grad Regs and Bulletin first, before reaching out to the DGS for clarification.
- Think strategically about their choice of classes, so as to satisfy the course requirements efficiently.
- Take a range of classes from a wide range of faculty, so as to maximize options and flexibility when putting together a dissertation committee.
- Meet with the DGS on a regular basis (ideally, at least once per semester) to discuss course selections and program requirements.
- Reach out to the DGS as they approach the end of coursework, to discuss the transition to candidacy.
- Be familiar with the Graduate School “[Student Forms](#)” page.

### Section 2.2: What the Student Can Expect from the DGS

The DGS, in their capacity as academic advisor to early-year PhD students, should:

- Meet with all incoming first-year graduate students before the start of the Fall term to go over program requirements for the PhD program.
- Ensure that all incoming graduate students have copies of both the [Grad Regs](#) the [Bulletin](#).

- Be available to meet with graduate students during the school year to discuss coursework or other program requirements.
- Help students fill out and review their progress worksheets, ensuring that they are making adequate progress.
- Reach out to students as they near the end of coursework, to ensure that the transition to candidacy goes smoothly.
- Respond in a clear and timely way to requests for clarification about regulations or requirements. As a baseline, one week is a reasonable expectation for a reply to an email.
- Provide up-to-date and accurate information to the faculty during the annual graduate student review meeting, assist with the composition of progress letters in light of that meeting, and be available to meet with students to discuss the outcome of the review meeting. (See Section I.C.6 of the Grad Regs.)

## Section 3: Advising Expectations During Candidacy

### Section 3.1: What the Dissertation Advisor Can Expect from the Student

Graduate students in the *dissertation* and *candidacy* stages of the program should:

- Discuss advising styles and expectations with their dissertation advisor when they first begin working together.
- Maintain regular contact with their advisor, **whether things are going well or poorly.**
- Keep the advisor apprised of personal or professional developments that may affect the project or time to degree.
- Follow up on emails to which the advisor has not responded. Emails can easily fall through the cracks. The advisee should take the initiative and send a follow up email if they have not received a reply within a week or so.
- Follow up on written work that the advisee has submitted but not received feedback on. The advisee should check in with the advisor if they have not received feedback on written work within three to four weeks. (Or less, if there is a deadline looming.) *Sending a polite reminder in these situations is not pushy, rude, or disrespectful.* It's completely normal.
- Request a meeting with the advisor to discuss any issues or concerns with the advising relationship.
- Maintain regular contact with other members of the committee and the DGS, keeping them up to date on the status of the project. At a minimum, updates should be provided to other committee members once per semester, even if the advisee is not working closely with those members.

### Section 3.2: What the Student Can Expect from the Dissertation Advisor

The dissertation advisor should:

- Discuss advising styles and expectations with advisee when they first begin working together.

- Work with the advisee to set clear expectations regarding the nature and scope of the dissertation topic.
- Be prepared to meet on a regular basis, even when there is not new writing to review.
- Set clear and reasonable expectations regarding the pace of research and writing: e.g. how much will be written, how often new writing will be submitted for feedback, and the overall project timeline.
- Respond to emails in a timely manner. As a baseline, one week is a reasonable expectation for a reply to an email.
- Provide feedback on written work within a reasonable timeframe. As a baseline—and when there is not a specific deadline looming—three to four weeks is a reasonable expectation for feedback on written work.
- Encourage the advisee to stay in regular contact with their other committee members.
- Have at least a basic understanding of the program requirements described in the Graduate Regulations, so that deadlines and decisions do not sneak up on either advisee or advisor.
- Keep the advisee apprised of personal or professional developments that may affect the advisor’s ability to provide guidance on the project.
- Reach out to the student in a timely manner with concerns about the project.
- Provide mentorship on academic and professional topics—conference and journal submissions, networking, the academic job market, etc. If the advisor is not inclined to provide professionalization mentorship, they should work with the student to find another faculty member who is.
- Be prepared to address issues in the advisor/advisee relationship with honesty, empathy, and candor.
- Be clear, candid, and explicit in their communication with the advisee. The advisor should not assume that the advisee is picking up on unspoken social or professional cues, as degrees of familiarity with academic convention and etiquette vary widely, and not always in obvious ways.

## Section 4: Advising Styles

### Section 4.1: What to Ask a Potential Dissertation Advisor

When you meet with a faculty member to discuss their serving as your dissertation advisor, you should be sure that their advising style is compatible with your needs.

Here are some questions you might consider asking a potential dissertation advisor. There is a range of acceptable answers to all of these questions. But understanding how your advisor would answer these questions can help you both determine whether it’s a good fit.

- How often do you typically meet with your advisees? Do you like to set up regular meetings, or make appointments on an ad hoc basis?*
- How quickly are you typically able to get written work back to your advisees with feedback?*

- Do you expect your advisees to work closely with other members of their committee, or do your advisees tend to work mainly with you?
- Have you had advisees whose philosophical views ended up differing in major ways from your own? How would you perceive a situation like that: Completely normal, and even a good thing? Acceptable, but less than optimal? Or perhaps as a sign that the advising relationship was not the right fit after all?
- If you haven't heard from an advisee for a while, do you tend to reach out to them? Or do you expect them to take the initiative in most situations?
- "Area Proposals" are not required by the Grad Regs, but many advisors choose to require one of their advisees as a way to ensure that they are ready for the qualifying exam. Do you typically require an Area Proposal of your advisees? If so, what form do you expect it to take?
- How familiar are you with the ins and outs of the Department Regulations and the Graduate Bulletin? Do you typically keep your advisees apprised of upcoming milestones, requirements, and deadlines, or do you expect them to understand and monitor those things on their own?
- Would you describe your typical style of advising as fitting into any of the categories in the Advising Chart? [See Section 4.2]
- Is there anything else you think I should be aware of when it comes to the possibility of working with you as an advisor?

## Section 4.2: Different Kinds of Advising Relationships

The examples below are adapted from "Advising and Supervising." Gordon B. Davis. In *Research in Information Systems: A handbook for research supervisors and their students*. Butterworth-Heinemann, 2005. Borrowed from the UK *Handbook for Mathematics Graduate Students*.

Style	Advisor Role and Behavior	Student Role and Behavior
Strong master/apprentice style	Advisor is research director. Advisor has a well specified domain of expertise and set of problems within it.	Student is an apprentice working for the advisor. Student works on advisor's problems.
Collegial master/apprentice style	Advisor is expert who limits advising to problems that are within scope of his or her research skill set, but will work on student's problem.	Student develops a problem within advisor's domain and skills, and works under the advisor to develop the research plan and procedures.
Collegial development style	Advisor is senior colleague who will respond to student research problem and extend his or her advising domain to include new problems and new skills.	Student takes initiative to introduce new problem that requires new skill set and works as a junior colleague with advisor in joint development of new domain.
Guidance and suggestion style	Advisor is a senior colleague who gives good general guidance over a wide range of problems and methods but does not have personal skill in all of them.	Student is an independent, junior colleague who takes initiative for presenting problems and research plans for discussion and guidance. Student develops required skills.
Passive hands-off style	Advisor has quality control role and responds only to requests or documents, and performs only general quality control review.	Student is an independent researcher who takes initiative for developing problem, developing skills, and presenting research plans for general review and approval.

## Section 5: Resolving Issues

Expectation management and clear communication are the most important preventative measures for avoiding advisor/advisee relationship issues. But issues do arise, and they are not always resolvable purely between advisor and advisee. In those cases, the following steps can be followed.

The order in which these steps are presented is, in most cases, the best order to follow. However, you can always skip a particular step if you do not feel comfortable discussing the issue with that party.

1. Request a meeting with **other members of your dissertation committee**. Communicate the problem to them, and ask for information and advice on an informal basis.
2. If that doesn't help (enough), or if you are uncomfortable going to the other members of your dissertation committee, request a meeting with **the DGS**. They can give advice, clarify relevant regulations from the Grad Regs or the Bulletin. The DGS can also act as your advocate—reaching out on your behalf to other faculty members, the Chair, the Dean, or any other relevant parties.
3. If that doesn't help (enough), or if you are uncomfortable going to the DGS, request a meeting with **the Department Chair**. Describe the issue to the Chair, and tell them what other steps have been attempted so far. The Chair is likely to be able to help, and may have institutional information or authority that goes beyond what the DGS can offer.
4. If that doesn't help (enough), or if you are uncomfortable going to the Chair, request a meeting with **the College of A&S Associate Dean of Graduate Studies**. Currently, the Dean of Graduate Studies is Professor Mark Meier. You can check the [“Dean's Office” page at the College of A&S website](#) for information on how to schedule an appointment. Scroll down until you find the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies.
5. If none of these other steps help (enough), or if your issue precludes going through the usual procedures, contact **UK Academic Ombud Services**. As stated on their website, “At the University of Kentucky, Academic Ombud Services is responsible for resolving academic related problems and conflicts between students and faculty for which established procedures have not yielded a satisfactory solution or for which no established procedure exists.”

## Section 6: Links

- [Philosophy Department Graduate Regulations](#)
- [Graduate School Bulletin](#)
- [UK Graduate School Student Forms](#)
- [Registrar's "How to Register" page](#)
- [A&S Graduate Students main web page](#)
- [A&S Graduate Student Resources page](#)
- [How “assistantships” work](#)
- [Graduate School Professional Enhancement page](#)
- [Academic Ombud Services](#)