

# EXPECTATIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT, ADVISOR AND GRADUATE GROUP

## Responsibilities of the Student

Good mentoring practice entails responsibilities not only of the advisor but also of the student. When a student enters a doctoral program, that student commits time and energy necessary for research leading to a dissertation that makes a substantial and original contribution to knowledge. It is the responsibility of the student to conform to University and program requirements and procedures. Although it is the duty of the advisor to be reasonably available for consultation, the primary responsibility for keeping in touch rests with the student. The student's responsibilities include the following:

- Becoming familiar with, and adhering to, the rules, policies, and procedures in place in the graduate group, home school, and the University as outlined in available resources such as graduate group student handbooks/web sites and the University's policies (<http://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/academic-rules-phd>). Of particular importance are rules around Academic Integrity.
- Knowing and following the rules and policies of the graduate group and the University. Adhering to all deadlines and policies regarding registration, leaves of absence, limitations on time and recertification, dissertation submission and graduation (<http://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/academic-rules-phd>).
- Selecting and planning an original research topic that can be successfully completed within the expected time frame for the degree program; in some cases, this will be done in consultation with the thesis advisor.
- Preparing a research plan and timetable in consultation with the advisor as a basis for the program of study, including any proposed fieldwork.
- Learning and adhering to responsible conduct of research standards for your field. Acquiring the necessary health and safety skills for undertaking the proposed research.
- Meeting with the advisor when requested and reporting regularly on progress and results.
- Establishing a dissertation committee, with the assistance of the advisor, early in the dissertation stage, as required by the graduate group.
- Keeping advisors informed on how they can be contacted and informing them of any significant changes that may affect the progress of the research.
- Maintaining good records of each stage of the research.
- Be a good citizen of the research group, laboratory, department, or other entity that requires cooperation from its members (e.g., lab chores).
- When necessary, planning to seek additional funding as needed well in advance.
- Thinking critically about career trajectory and mindfully pursuing opportunities to support career goals, for example, through teaching,

publishing, presenting, externships, etc. (See Appendix A: Skill Building for more information.)

## Responsibilities of the Faculty Advisor

Within the context of their role as advisors, a faculty member's primary task is to guide and inspire his or her students to reach their scholarly potential. At the same time, each advisor must try to ensure that each student is in compliance with the rules and regulations of the University. The advisor should promote conditions conducive to a student's research and intellectual growth and provide appropriate guidance on the progress of the research and the standards expected.

Good mentoring practice includes the following:

- Guiding the student in the selection and planning of an original research topic that can be successfully completed within the expected time frame for the degree program.
- Establishing with the student a realistic timetable for completion of various phases of the program.
- Being accessible to give advice and provide feedback, while also establishing for the student a realistic timeline for receiving feedback. Feedback should be professional and constructive and provide concrete guidance for improvement.
- Ensuring that students have an understanding of the relevant theories and the methodological and technical skills necessary for the research, including provision of information through an ethical review process where applicable. Ensuring that students adhere to responsible conduct of research standards for your field.
- Establishing with the student a dissertation committee early-on in the dissertation stage (e.g., after the qualifying exam) and ensuring that the committee meets with the student at least once a year, as a committee, and provides an annual written report of the student's progress.
- Making arrangements to ensure continuity of supervision during leaves or an extended period of absence.
- Encouraging participation in graduate group seminars and colloquia.
- Encouraging and assisting students to attend and present work at local, national, or international conferences and to publish their work in appropriate journals.
- Advising on matters of career options, job market, preparation of the CV, and strategies for launching a career in research.
- Contributing to the student's professional development through letters of reference and general advice.
- Advising the student on seeking additional funding, as needed.
- Ensuring that the research environment is safe, equitable, and free from harassment and discrimination.
- Avoiding personal or business relationships that may constitute a conflict of interest.
- Being sensitive to academic needs and concerns that may arise for international students, students from underrepresented groups, students with disabilities, and/or students with family responsibilities.
- Communicating in a timely manner if the student's academic performance is not meeting expectations, providing an outline for what actions need to be taken in order to return to academic good standing, and a timeline for doing so. While dealing with inadequate academic performance can be difficult, it is in no one's best interests to prolong a program of study if success is unlikely.

- Serving as an advocate for the student.

Students sometimes experience personal difficulties. These can include family difficulties, problems in personal relationships, cultural adjustments, financial pressures, medical issues, and problems associated with employment. The importance of these various problems should not be under-emphasized. Advisors should not act in a counseling capacity with their students, nor should they intrude into the personal lives of their students with unwanted advice. However, advisors should try to ensure that their relationships with students are such that students will be comfortable telling advisors that they are having significant personal difficulties. Sometimes a timetable can be rearranged or a referral made to appropriate campus resources (<http://www.gsc.upenn.edu/resources>).

## Responsibilities of the Graduate Group

The graduate group chair, the graduate group coordinator, and other support staff play key roles in the lives of graduate students. The graduate group must endeavor to create an environment within which scholarly work by graduate students can flourish, and problems can be resolved in an effective manner. Students should take the time to get to know the graduate group administrators. In this way, students can stay current with regulations and graduate group activities and events.

Responsibilities of the graduate group include the following:

- Producing a handbook/brochure/web site that outlines program requirements, regulations and procedures, financial support and information on faculty members and their area of research/expertise. If requirements change, past versions of the information should be maintained for students admitted under the previous requirements.
- Having procedures in place to facilitate the search for an advisor and to allow a change in advisor in the unlikely event that this becomes necessary.
- Establishing an effective communication system with graduate students (i.e., mailboxes and/or e-mail lists) and workspace, where possible.
- Providing orientation sessions for both new and continuing students. Information conveyed in these sessions should include: overview of program policies and requirements, areas of faculty expertise for research supervision, expected performance and timelines for completion of degree requirements, intellectual property policies, publication and authorship issues, scholarship/funding information, information on policies regarding the proper conduct of research, sexual harassment, safety and workplace regulations, and procedures for complaints and appeals.
- Providing responsible conduct of research training as appropriate for your field.
- Ensuring that the student's dissertation committee meets University guidelines (<http://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/academic-rules-phd>) and that the membership is documented in the student's official file.
- Ensuring that the committee meets once a year and that an annual written progress report is filed in the official student file at the graduate group office.
- Providing a mechanism for resolving problems, which may arise between graduate students, advisors and/or members of the dissertation committee.
- Establishing a graduate group appeals process to review formal complaints from students.

- Ensuring a safe, equitable and fair working environment for students and informing them of all relevant safety and work regulations.
- Being sensitive to academic needs and concerns that may arise for international students, students from underrepresented groups, students with disabilities, and/or students with family responsibilities.
- Disbursing financial support in a fair and equitable manner that is consistent with the graduate group's funding policy.
- Being knowledgeable about University resources (<http://www.gsc.upenn.edu/resources>) in place to support students, and making referrals when appropriate.