

## Developing Shared Expectations and Goals

Select and adapt from these suggested topics. You can also review to documentation at the end of the form for guidance and suggestion for items to include.

You should fill out this form with your advisor soon after you start working together (within the first semester) and review/update at least yearly, or shortly after changing advisors. The student and advisor should each retain a copy of the document and provide an electronic copy to the Graduate Program Director and Graduate Program Coordinator.

1. Communication and meetings.
  - a. What is the best way/technology to get a hold of each other? What is the appropriate time frame to expect a response?
  - b. When do you plan to meet (be as specific as you can), is an agenda required, how long will the meetings be?
  
2. Student's role on project: Describe student's primary area(s) of responsibility and expectations (e.g. reading peer-reviewed literature, in-lab working hours, etc.).
  
3. Participation in group meetings (if relevant). Student will participate in the following ongoing research group meetings. What does this participation look like?
  
4. Tentative papers on which student will be an author or coauthor. Discuss disciplinary norms around authorship; list the papers and the likely order of student's authorship, e.g., first, second, etc.
  
5. Opportunities for feedback. In what form and how often can the student expect to receive feedback regarding overall progress, research activities, etc.? How much time is needed by the mentor to provide feedback on written work, such as chapter and publication drafts?

6. Professional meeting(s) that the student will attend and dates: What funding is available to attend these meetings?
  
7. Networking opportunities: Discuss additional opportunities to network (e.g. meeting with seminar speakers, etc.)
  
8. Vacations, absences, and time away from campus. Discuss expectations regarding vacations, time away from campus, and family emergencies, and how best to plan for or handle them. What is the time-frame for notification regarding anticipated absences?
  
9. Funding: Discuss the funding model and plans for future funding (e.g. internal and external fellowships, teaching and research assistantships, etc); discuss any uncertainty in future sources of funding, and contingencies.
  
10. Completion of programmatic milestones and other milestones (as applicable). Which subject exams courses still need to be completed, which subject exam courses are required, what elective course work is important, when should what coursework be pursued?
  
11. Anticipated date of oral subject exam/first guidance committee, defense and graduation.

12. Professional goals: Identify short-term and long-term goals, and discuss any steps/resources/training necessary to accomplish the goals.
13. Skill development: Identify the skills and abilities that the student will focus on developing during the upcoming year. These could be academic, research, or professional skills, as well as additional training experiences such as workshops or internships.
14. Other areas: List here any other areas of understanding between the student and mentor regarding working relationship during the student's tenure.
15. Any feedback for the advisor or student that is helpful to document?

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Student Name                      Student Signature                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Advisor Name                      Advisor Signature                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Graduate Program Director    Signature                      Date  
(physics students) or  
Associate Chair Astronomy  
(astronomy students)

## Guidelines for graduate student advising

It is an important goal of the Department of Physics and Astronomy to provide high quality education, training, and mentoring to graduate students. A key element in this educational process is the relationship between faculty members and the students whom they advise. To be successful, this partnership must be based on shared values, goals, and responsibilities that guide the conduct of all partners, on a commitment to responsible research practices, and on the professional and ethical conduct of all members of our community.

- The **shared values** include educational excellence, academic and research integrity, a spirit of and enthusiasm for exploration, respect and care for everyone participating in activities at the Laboratory, and a high level of professionalism and honesty in all aspects of advising relationships.
- The **shared goals** include a commitment to make strong progress towards completion of the Ph.D. degree or postdoctoral research projects, to master the subject material, to advance knowledge and skills, and to achieve professional development, personal growth, and a successful, satisfying career that well-balanced between work and non-work related activities.
- To maintain our values and achieve our shared goals we maintain **shared responsibilities** to uphold, abide, and improve policies and rules set by the Laboratory, the University, and state and federal regulations, to maintain and stimulate a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment, to abide by and hold each other accountable for the highest professional standards, to foster a culture of open, respectful, and honest communication and collaboration, and to use the resources provides to us in appropriate and efficient manners.

In this document we provide guidelines and expectations for faculty advisors and students that reflect the above values, goals, and responsibilities<sup>1</sup>. In making expectations explicit, faculty advisors and students gain a shared understanding of these common values, goals, and responsibilities, and work together towards achieving them. These guidelines are to complement the existing MSU faculty advising guidelines that can be found here: <https://grad.msu.edu/sites/default/files/content/mentoring/MSU%20Guidelines%20for%20Graduate%20Student%20Mentoring%20and%20Advising.pdf>

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<sup>1</sup> The following guidelines were partially adapted from the equivalent document at Stanford University.

## FACULTY ADVISORS:

### **Serve as intellectual advisors and professional mentors to their graduate students by:**

- Helping students develop academic and professional skills necessary for their future careers; understanding that students pursue a broad range of careers in and outside of academia.
- Guiding students to design academic or research experiences that build on their interests and strengths and that can be completed in a timely manner;
- Encouraging and modeling dedication to high-quality teaching, mentoring, and outreach to communities outside of the Department;
- Encouraging collaboration that enhances the research endeavors, values the contributions from all collaborators, and where appropriate, entails the sharing of authorship or rights to intellectual property developed in research;
- Encouraging students to be open about any problems in their work relationships, including with an advisor, and actively helping to resolve those problems;
- Being aware of and directing students to Departmental, University, and other resources to support students through challenges and/or that are useful to further their career;
- Providing students with honest, timely, regular, and constructive feedback on their progress, especially if students' lack of progress may prevent them from obtaining the desired degree.
- Being respectful of other advisors' mentoring styles, while holding each other accountable for adhering to shared values, goals, and responsibilities; being open to advice and feedback from other faculty, staff, postdocs, and students.
- Helping to plan and guide the student's projects, setting reasonable and attainable goals, and establishing a timeline for completion of the project. The research advisor should anticipate conflicts between the interests of (externally) funded research programs and those of the graduate student, and should help keep these interests from interfering with the student's research.
- Providing honest letters of recommendation and being accessible for advice and feedback on career goals.
- Embracing the diverse manners in which students seek and find successful careers and understanding that their own path to success is not necessarily a model for their students.

### **Understand the academic and non-academic policies that pertain to graduate students including:**

- Helping students understand the degree program's requirements and timely progress to degree, such as coursework, languages, research, examinations, and thesis or dissertation;
- Discussing laboratory, studio, or departmental authorship policy in advance of entering into collaborative projects;
- Informing students of their responsibility to comply with all University and Laboratory policies including Intellectual Property, Environmental Health and Safety, Responsible Conduct of Research, Sexual Harassment Prevention, Sexual Assault Prevention, Laboratory and Laboratory and Professional Organization Codes of Conduct
- Requiring the graduate students to perform tasks ONLY related to his/her academic and/or professional development.
- Prepare students to be competitive for future employment, by:

- Promoting free inquiry and free exchange of ideas, while abiding by policies on confidentiality of research and maintaining respect for each other and the high standards set by shared values, goals, and responsibilities;
- Acknowledging and promoting students' contributions to research presented at conferences, in professional publications, or in applications for copyrights and patents;
- Encouraging and preparing graduate students to participate in professional meetings, perform or display their work in public settings, and publish the results of their research;
- Providing a realistic view of the job market and career options, including what is needed to succeed in the student's career of choice, or pointing students to resources that provide that information;
- Encouraging students to acquire the professional skills necessary for impact in a rapidly changing world.

**Maintain a high level of professionalism, including:**

- Abiding by MSU policies that set parameters on the nature of faculty-student and faculty-postdoc relationships as well as policies on professional conflict of commitment and interest;
- Abiding by MSU policies on consensual amorous or sexual relationship
- Never impeding graduate students' progress toward the degree or toward employment in order to benefit from students' proficiency as teaching or research assistants;
- Interacting with students, postdocs, staff, and faculty colleagues in a professional manner within a respectful workplace.
- Taking actions on the basis of the best interest of the student.
- Being proactive and timely in involving Departmental, College, and University leadership and stakeholders to address problems related to the advising of students

## GRADUATE STUDENTS:

### **Understand their role and responsibilities. This includes:**

- Understanding that students are strongly encouraged to bring up any issue that impedes or could improve the quality of their work and the research environment in the Department. Issues can be shared with their advisor, mentoring and guidance committees, faculty and staff, or other Departmental leadership, including the Chair and Associate Chairs.
- Recognizing that faculty advisors provide the intellectual environment in which students learn and conduct research, and, through access to teaching and research resources, provide students with financial support;
- Recognizing that faculty advisors are responsible for monitoring the accuracy, validity, and integrity of the students' academic work, and, in the case of research, ensuring that the contributions of all participants are properly acknowledged in publications;
- Consulting with their advisors before attempting to publish results of work done under the advisors' direction and/or in the advisors' studio or laboratory, as the quality reflects on students, postdocs, staff, faculty advisors, and the laboratory;
- Being aware of demands and constraints imposed on faculty members and staff; students should follow regular procedures and processes for conducting work in the Department;
- Taking the initiative to arrange meetings or communicate via other mechanisms with faculty advisors as often as necessary to keep the advisors informed of any factors that might affect their academic progress, including research or time to degree;
- Consulting with the advisors, members of the guidance/mentoring committee, Departmental leadership, and other stakeholders, to resolve any problems in their working relationships with their advisors or others, and seeking guidance from other faculty or staff as needed.
- Take primary responsibility for informing themselves about policies, requirements, and practices governing their financial support, degree and course requirements, research activities, and conflict resolution. This may involve:
- Consulting departmental guidelines for graduate students: <https://pa.msu.edu/academics/graduate-program/graduate-handbook/>
- MSU Graduate School policies and procedures: <https://grad.msu.edu/policies-and-procedures>

### **Exercise high professional standards in all aspects of their work. This includes:**

- Observing the University's policies on academic integrity and the responsible conduct of research, which apply to students, postdocs, faculty, and staff in all disciplines;
- Maintaining absolute integrity in taking examinations, creating original works and, for those doing research, in collecting, analyzing, presenting, and disseminating research data;
- Taking special care to preserve the data collected during experiments or noted during research (with precise identification of sources) in order to avoid future confusion or disputes about access or ownership;

- Acknowledging the contributions of faculty advisors and other members of the research team to their work in all publications and conference presentations, and acknowledging sources of financial support;
- Maintaining the confidentiality of the faculty advisors' professional activities, including research, creation of original works and other creative endeavors, in accordance with existing practices and policies of the discipline;
- Informing faculty advisors, other mentors, departmental leadership of conflicts and working towards a clear resolution;
- Interacting with other students, postdocs, staff, and faculty colleagues in a professional manner to create a respectful workplace.