

## Graduate Student Advising Policy

Gender and Women's Studies

Approved by the GWS Faculty, May 2021

Advising and mentoring are important contributors to the success of graduate students. Good advising is a collaborative process between advisors and advisees that is based on clear communication and clear expectations. It is important to recognize that people have different relationship and working styles and that different types of scholarship may require different amounts of contact. Thus, there are many models for effective advising and mentoring relationships. In this document, we outline recommended practices for both graduate advisors and graduate advisees in the UK Department of Gender and Women's Studies (GWS).

### Overall Advising Procedures:

**Initial Advising:** When students enter the GWS program, they are assigned an initial advisor, taking into account students' areas of interest. The initial advisor is responsible for all aspects of advisement until students select their dissertation advisor. Students should meet with their initial advisors, at minimum, before registering for courses each semester.

In addition, the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) provides initial advising on policies and procedures for new graduate students. Students can contact the DGS with any questions and concerns or when seeking general advice.

**Advisor Selection:** Once students establish the direction of their scholarship, they formally select an advisor who will guide their dissertation work. Advisors should be selected on the basis of both expertise and working relationship with the student. Students must formally select an advisor as well as an advisory committee by the end of their third semester in the program. This is done by electronically filing the Formation of an Advisory Committee form, which can be found on the Graduate School website.

**Advisory Committee:** Successful graduate advising is a collective endeavor that involves the participation of a student's Advisory Committee. Committees consist of four (or more) individuals: the advisor, two other members of the Graduate Faculty from GWS, and one member of the Graduate Faculty from outside of GWS. If a student's advisor is not a full member of the Graduate Faculty (generally, someone with tenure), another member of the Advisory Committee who is a full member will need to serve as a co-chair. In rare cases, a student may have a committee member from another university with specialized expertise related to the student's dissertation topic. All committee members must be approved by the Graduate School. All members of advisory committees are expected to take an active role in students' academic progress

by, at minimum, reading and commenting on theses and dissertations, participating in qualifying exams and defenses, and offering any other guidance and feedback sought by the student.

## **Recommendations for Graduate Advisors and Advisees**

Effective advisor-advisee relationships can take different forms and styles but should adhere to some basic guidelines.

### ***Roles and Responsibilities for Graduate Advisors and Advisees:***

#### ***Graduate advisors should:***

- Serve as both intellectual advisors and professional mentors to their students.
- Maintain regular communication with students to ensure that they are on track and aware of key steps and deadlines, and meet with advisees a minimum of once per semester (more often is beneficial).
- Meet with students prior to priority registration to discuss course selection.
- Advise students on matters such as research practices, dissertation design, ethics, grant writing, and manuscript preparation and publication.
- Provide timely feedback on student work, and clearly communicate their timeline for returning feedback to students.
- Monitor students' progress in coursework, research, and teaching, and provide feedback on the student's performance in end-of-year evaluations and (for advanced students) GWS 767 evaluations.
- Understand university and department policies related to graduate students, including policies for international students.
- Assist students with finding and applying for fellowships and grants.
- Help students plan and prepare for future employment, including identifying resources related to academic or non-academic positions.
- Help advisees engage in the larger professional community (e.g., conference presentations, workshops, networking opportunities) and mentor students on professional expectations and norms.
- Be aware that many students do not know the "unspoken rules" and expectations of academia and work with advisees to develop this knowledge.
- Assist students with problems that may arise in their academic program.
- Be supportive of students as individuals and, when necessary, direct students to university resources to support them through challenges.
- Interact with students in a respectful and professional manner and maintain a high level of overall professionalism.

- Work with students for preparing plans for summer research activities.
- Ensure that advisees are formally supported (either by themselves or another faculty member) when the advisor is on sabbatical or research leave.

***Graduate advisees should:***

- Maintain regular communication with their advisor and meet a minimum of once per semester (more often is beneficial).
- Keep their advisor informed of progress, important information (e.g., travel, employment, outside sources of funding), and issues that may impact the student's ability to fulfill obligations or make progress towards their degree.
- Discuss course selection and progress to degree with their advisor.
- Work with their advisor to create an agreed upon timeline for reaching program milestones and maintaining timely progress toward degree. Students in 767 need to develop a plan for each semester in conjunction with their advisor by the end of the first week of each semester.
- Inform themselves about, and comply with, department, Graduate School, and university policies, requirements, and deadlines regarding the degree program, research activities, and financial support. Students should seek clarification from their advisor, the DGS, or the department manager when needed.
- Respond to and make constructive use of feedback from their advisor.
- Provide advisors with adequate notice for requests such as letters of recommendation (usually a minimum of two weeks' notice), and be aware of limits to requests for time and resources made to faculty and staff.
- Explore opportunities for professional engagement and development, in consultation with their advisor.
- Interact with their advisor in a respectful and professional manner and maintain a high level of overall professionalism.

***Procedures for Developing and Maintaining Effective Advising Relationships***

To help ensure a successful relationship, the department suggests that advisees and advisors should discuss the following points:

***At the start of the advising relationship***

- Expectations about meeting schedule and frequency.
- Acceptable/expected means of communication (email, text, phone, etc.) and expected frequency of communication.

- Program and degree requirements (e.g., timing of committee formation and other program milestones) and a tentative timeline for completing them.
- Tentative advisee career goals and recommended activities to support reaching those goals.
- Expectations for the advising relationship, including the advisor's supervisory model or style.
- Expectations about timing (e.g., how far in advance does the advisee need to request a recommendation? How quickly will the advisor provide feedback on written work?). *Please note that, although it is helpful to discuss general timeframes, timeframes for specific requests may vary depending on other constraints (e.g., time of year), so it is helpful to discuss timeframes for specific requests on an ongoing basis.*
- Students who have co-advisors should discuss these issues with both advisors.

### ***Throughout the advising relationship***

- Hold regularly scheduled meetings on a timeline that is appropriate for the advisee's stage in the program and the nature of their research or scholarship.
- Discuss expectations regarding what the advisee and the advisor will each do to prepare for meetings.
- Discuss updates to the advisee's career goals and how that should impact their program activities.
- Review progress toward degree at least every semester and, if necessary, update the student's timeline for completion of degree requirements.
- Provide members of the Advisory committee and the DGS with progress updates at least annually.

### ***Accountability for advising meetings***

- Students will be asked to report whether they met with their advisor as part of their progress reports.
- Advisors will be asked to report whether they met with their advisees as part of GWS 767 and year-end evaluations.
- Ensuring that advisement meetings occur at least once per semester (more often is beneficial) is the joint responsibility of advisors and advisees, and either party can initiate such meetings. If issues related to lack of interaction emerge, either party can follow the procedures for addressing and resolving advising issues (section below).

## Other Important Sources of Mentoring

Some key sources of additional mentoring, guidance, and professional development are:

- ***The DGS:*** Graduate students can always approach the DGS with questions and concerns or when seeking general advice. The DGS will be able to direct them to the appropriate person if they cannot answer the students' question or concern. The DGS handles all administrative issues related to the graduate studies: admission of the students, rules of enrollment for funded students, overload credit hours or overload work hours permission, late add/drop, application for degree, application for exit exam, expediting documentation related to teaching assistantships and fellowships, and applications for graduate student conference travel support.
- ***The Teaching Assistant Coordinator (TAC):*** The TAC directly supervises and advises department Teaching Assistants in all aspects of their instruction: pre-teaching orientations, preparation, delivery, and assessment of the instruction, professional development as educators, as well as any issues that may arise related to teaching and communicating with students.
- ***Students' Advisory Committees*** (once formed)
- ***Professional development workshops from the Graduate School***
- ***The Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning***
- ***NWSA and other professional organization mentoring programs and workshops***
- For international students, ***International Student and Scholar Services*** at the International Center
- ***GWS Graduate Student Organization and more advanced graduate students***

## Changing Advisors or Committee Members

There are several reasons why a student may want or need to consider changing or adding advisors or committee members, such as changes in a student's research interests and/or professional direction, faculty retirements, or problems in an advisor-advisee relationship. A student wishing to change or add advisors or committee members should consult with their advisor and the DGS. Changes in advisor or committee members can occur at any point prior to the qualifying exams. After qualifying exams, changes generally are only made under extenuating circumstances. Changes in committee memberships must be submitted to and approved by the Graduate School, and all committee members must be informed about any changes.

## **Procedure for Addressing and Resolving Advising Issues**

Establishing clear communication and setting clear expectations can prevent many problems that arise in the advising process. If an issue does arise, we encourage the advisor and advisee to attempt to resolve the matter together informally. If the issue cannot be resolved, they should arrange to speak with the DGS, and, if needed, the Department Chair. If a student has an advising issue that cannot be resolved within the department, they should contact the Arts & Sciences Associate Dean for Graduate Studies (<https://www.as.uky.edu/deans-office>).