

## Graduate Student Advising Guidelines

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References: UFA Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA); [Graduate School Policy](#) C6.000, D4.000, F1.000, G1.000; The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) Accreditation Standards 2.D.3 and 2.D.10; University Policy 410  
Approved by: Graduate Council  
Resources: Samples of Best Practices, see section F

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### A. Purpose & Scope

Provide students and faculty with guidelines for graduate advising at the University of Montana, and provide reference for existing policy.

### B. Assumptions

Academic programs have various cultures and styles for student advising that meet their program requirements and student needs. Each Master's and Doctoral degree program has an orientation session to introduce graduate students to the policies, practices, and resources of the department, including a mechanism for addressing student complaints.

### C. Definition(s)

Advisors are critical to the success of a graduate student's education. Graduate advisors provide essential training and mentoring through close collaboration with students. The primary responsibility of the advisor is to assist the student to reach their academic and professional goals. The advisor and student should work together to determine suitable thesis, professional paper / project, or dissertation objectives per program requirements. While students may seek mentorship and advice from any source, particularly the students' dissertation or thesis committee, the term "principal faculty advisor(s)" refers to the principal formal supervisor(s) overseeing their work.

### D. Relevant Existing Policy

[Collective Bargaining Agreement](#) (CBA) available on the Provost's Office Website

[Graduate School Policy](#) found on the Graduate School Website

- C6.000 – Thesis/Professional Paper Examining Committee
- D4.000 – The Dissertation
- F1.000 – Graduate Student Advising
- G1.000 – Qualifications of Graduate Committee Members

## E. Guidelines for Graduate Students and Advisors

Graduate programs should provide students with timely, specific, accurate information and advising about the requirements of their program of study, including key steps with timelines towards graduation. This information could be in the form of a student handbook, and disseminated at appropriate points in students' education.

General guidelines for all graduate students are available on the Graduate School website and specific information is on the program's website.

Faculty advisors are available to assist graduate students in planning their academic programs, but students have the responsibility for meeting all requirements for their degree. To identify an advisor for their graduate studies, students are urged to consult with professors, academic advisors, department chairpersons, Graduate School staff and others, as needed and following specific programs' guidelines.

Graduate students take primary responsibility for informing themselves of the regulations, policies, and practices governing their degree, course requirements, research activities, and conflict resolution. They understand faculty advisors' central role:

- Students should understand that advisors are essential to the intellectual and instructional environment.
- Students are responsible for ensuring that the contributions of all participants in research and creative activities are properly acknowledged in publications and presentations.
- Students should be aware of time constraints and other demands imposed on faculty members and program staff.
- Students should take the initiative to arrange meetings with faculty advisor as often as necessary and to keep the advisor informed of any factors that might affect progress towards achieving their graduate degree. Circumstances and diverse academic cultures will dictate the frequency of meetings; best practices suggest a minimum of twice a semester.
- Students should seek an early and informal resolution of problems that may occur in their working relationships with their advisor, or others, by first consulting with the advisor prior to starting a formalized process.

Faculty advisors must take an active role in understanding the relevant university policies that pertain to graduate students. These include, but are not limited to, requirements of coursework, tools and methods used by the student in the course of scholarly or creative activity and research, examinations, authorship, intellectual property, environmental health and safety, ethical standards and standards of conduct relevant to the student's graduate work, Institutional Review Board guidelines, and the Student Code of Conduct.

- Faculty advisors or graduate programs should clearly communicate to students who receive funding the expectations, requirements, limitations and duration of financial support, whether through teaching or research funds.
- Advisors serve as intellectual and professional mentors to their graduate students. Because certain academic, research or creative traditions encourage faculty-graduate student collaborations and the sharing of authorship or rights to intellectual property developed in research or other creative or artistic activity, advisor and advisee are counseled to seek mutual agreement about expectations for such collaboration.
- Advisors are responsible for monitoring the accuracy, validity, and integrity of the student's research, scholarship, or creative works to the extent dictated by graduate program policy and practice.
- Advisors provide students with evaluation of their progress and performance in regular, timely and informative ways.
- Advisors seek to prepare students to be competitive for employment, encouraging them to participate in professional meetings, perform or display their work in public settings, and publish the results of their research.
- Advisors seek to provide a realistic view of the field and the current job market.
- Advisors maintain a high level of professionalism and excuse themselves from participating in committees where they have a conflict of interest.
- Advisors shall never impede a graduate student's progress toward the degree sought, either through negligence or to benefit from a student's proficiency as a teaching or research assistant.

#### F. Resources for Evaluating the Effectiveness of Advising

In general, all units of the University of Montana must meet the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities Standard for Accreditation 2.D.10 for advising. Specifically, the Graduate Council and Graduate School expect units to develop mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of advising within the unit, and procedures employed to mitigate instances of ineffective advising.

Guidance and information on best practices adopted by public universities for Advising is available at The University of Michigan publication [How to mentor graduate students: a guide for faculty](#) and The Ohio State [University Graduate Student Handbook](#).