



# Guide to Advising Processes for Faculty and Students

Yale

Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

## Acknowledgements

This reference is the result of extensive collaborative efforts and contributions from members of the Yale Graduate School of Arts and Sciences community, specifically the Graduate Student Assembly, the Executive Committee, the Climate and Inclusion Committee, Deans, Directors of Graduate Studies, and numerous other faculty.

## A Message from the Dean

Advising by Yale faculty is a critical component of all graduate students' education. The nature of advising may vary across disciplines and degrees as well as at different stages in a degree program. However, certain shared values, goals, and responsibilities apply to all advising relationships.

We encourage faculty members to review this guide on a regular basis and to share their successful personal advising approaches with colleagues to adopt the best practices within their own program. We hope this guide will serve as a resource for faculty advisers who are new to advising as well as those who seek to improve their effectiveness as advisers.

Graduate students should review this guide and use it to discuss expectations with faculty members prior to choosing a principal faculty adviser and subsequently, as needed, throughout their time in graduate school.

Note that the suggested guidelines and resources provided in this document are not meant to be exhaustive, nor do they replace any department or program-specific policies or procedures. We invite any student or faculty member to submit additional suggestions, which we will review and incorporate, where appropriate, at regular intervals.

Suggestions should be submitted to: [ogsdd@yale.edu](mailto:ogsdd@yale.edu).

## I. Choosing an Adviser: A Shared Process

### Introduction

Students and their advisers share responsibility for ensuring productive and rewarding advising relationships. Both parties have a role to play in the success of advising. It is important to note, as well, that while each student will select a principal faculty adviser, Yale provides an array of faculty and staff who are able to advise graduate students in unique and personalized ways. As Yale is committed to becoming a more open, welcoming, inclusive, and unified institution, students from diverse backgrounds will bring unique and varied experiences to the advising process. While some students will seek out an adviser with whom they have a strong affinity based on shared research interests or personal background, all faculty members can be effective advisers when they and their students mutually agree on shared values, goals, and responsibilities. Individuals have relative strengths in their capacity for advising, and advisers should be clear about what they can and cannot offer. **Part of effective advising is knowing when to refer someone to a colleague who might be better placed to offer advice and mentorship.**

When students begin their graduate education, the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), a senior faculty member, appointed by the dean, provides general academic oversight and serves as a resource to all graduate students in their respective departments and programs. The DGS plays a central role in: (1) ensuring that specific department advising functions smoothly and (2) advising students directly as they plan their academic course work and program. The DGS typically maintains a role throughout a student's academic career at Yale, although this will change and develop with respect to individual students as they advance through the program. Typically, it is the responsibility of the graduate student, in consultation with the DGS and faculty, to identify a principal faculty adviser. However, some graduate students will arrive with their principal faculty adviser already identified. Principal faculty advisers for doctoral candidates must have appointments to the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences faculty. Traditionally the principal faculty adviser is a faculty member in the student's primary department or program.

### Faculty Adviser

Before an initial meeting with a graduate student advisee, faculty may find it useful to reflect on their own experiences in graduate school. It may be helpful for a faculty member to consider the following questions:

*What kind of advising did they receive?*

*What did they like and dislike about the advising they received?*

*How well did their adviser help them progress through their graduate program?*

*How well did their adviser prepare them for their academic career?*

*What did they not receive in the way of advising that would have been helpful to them?*

*What in their eyes, is the gold standard of ethical and inspiring academic advising?*

*Has the field changed since they were a graduate student? If yes, in what ways?*

### Graduate Student

Graduate students who enter without an identified principal faculty adviser should begin the faculty adviser selection process by undertaking a critical self-analysis. This process is intended to help graduate students to understand what they need to thrive as graduate students before they can recognize who might best meet those needs. They should ask themselves, and discuss with people who know them well, questions such as:

*What are their objectives in pursuing a graduate degree?*

*What type of training do they desire?*

*What are their strengths?*

*What areas of knowledge and skills do they need to develop?*

*Are there any aspects of their academic writing style which they need to improve?*

*What kinds of research or creative projects will engage them?*

*How much independent versus team work do they want to do?*

*What is their working style?*

*What type of career do they want to pursue?*

Ways to identify a faculty adviser vary by discipline. The first step is becoming familiar with the work of faculty to gain a sense of their past and current research interests and methodologies. As an example, in the sciences, laboratory rotations are common. For many other programs, it



may be helpful to immerse oneself in departmental academic and social activities to see how faculty interact with colleagues and graduate students. Graduate students may also enroll in classes taught by faculty whose work most interests them and attend their public presentations. New graduate students should share their interests and ask advanced graduate students for suggestions about whom they should meet. They may also consult with their DGSs about finding faculty advisers. Ultimately, they should schedule time to meet with potential faculty advisers.

For graduate students arriving with a principal faculty adviser already identified it is still beneficial for them to reflect upon the questions above. The questions may help to guide the initial conversations with their principal faculty adviser.

### Faculty Adviser and Graduate Student

Both parties should be transparent about their expectations concerning the form and function of the relationship, and about what is reasonable to expect and what is not. It is important to pay attention to boundaries, both personal and professional. Both parties must always be respectful. Being honest and open about expectations and ensuring that expectations align are key factors in determining the success of an advising relationship.

Graduate students should bear in mind that the principal faculty adviser should not be their only adviser during their graduate education. There will be numerous opportunities to build relationships with faculty members who may serve as secondary advisers, dissertation committee members, and/or dissertation readers. The principal faculty adviser can provide additional support by introducing their students to other faculty, students, alumni, staff, and colleagues who may also serve as informal advisers.

## II. Guidelines for Advising

Excellence in graduate education depends upon the professional and ethical conduct of all members of our community. In making expectations explicit, faculty advisers and students gain a shared understanding of Yale's commitment to best practices that establish clear communication within faculty-student advising relationships. The goals of the principal faculty adviser are to guide the student in producing a successful research project in a timely manner and to train the student as a competent researcher and teacher with the transferable skills necessary to pursue their intended career path, whether in academia or in other fields.

### Faculty Advisers

#### **Assist in the intellectual and professional development of their graduate students by:**

- helping students develop academic and professional skills expected by the discipline;
- providing written feedback when appropriate and in a timely fashion on students' written work;
- providing reasonable amounts of time for projects and assignments;
- establishing a shared expectation about the frequency of meetings;
- facilitating students' thesis research by guiding students to design relevant academic or research experiences;
- encouraging and modeling dedication to high quality teaching, research, and advising;
- encouraging collaboration that, where appropriate, entails the sharing of authorship or rights to intellectual property developed in research or other creative or artistic activity;
- encouraging students to be open about any problems in their work relationships, including with an adviser, and actively help to resolve those problems;
- being aware of and directing students to University resources to support students through challenges, some of which can be found in the Appendix;
- recognizing that success in academic work is contingent upon student mental and physical health by having reasonable leisure and vacation time available to all students;
- meeting with students to provide timely, regular, and constructive feedback on their progress.

#### **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 requirements, such as coursework, language acquisition, research, examinations, and thesis or dissertation;
- discussing laboratory, studio, or department/program authorship policies in advance of entering into collaborative projects;
- informing students of their responsibility to comply with all University policies including those pertaining to: Guidance on Authorship in Scholarly or Scientific Publications, Human Research Protections Program, Animal Research, Academic Integrity, and Title IX.

#### **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;
- acknowledging student contributions to research presented at conferences, in professional publications, or in applications for

copyrights and patents;

- encouraging 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 students' career choices or pointing students to resources that provide that information;
- respecting students' desired or chosen career paths, that may or may not be within academia;
- encouraging students to acquire the professional skills necessary for success in a rapidly changing world.

#### **Maintain a high level of professionalism by:**

- abiding by the "Yale Teacher-Student Consensual Relations Policy" as well as the official "Yale Policies and Procedures";
- abiding by the "Yale Expectations for Faculty and Teaching Fellows" while ensuring effective pedagogical development;
- excusing themselves from participating in committee or other decisions regarding any student with whom they have a relationship that could represent a conflict of interest;
- never impeding graduate students' progress toward the degree or toward employment to benefit from students' proficiency as teaching or research assistants;
- assigning, where appropriate, work beyond the scope of the dissertation (e.g. event programming, mentoring of undergraduate and graduate students, research projects not related to dissertation work) to promote development of important skills, while ensuring that such workloads are manageable and do not interfere with progress on their dissertation;
- being attentive to signs of trouble and approaching and assisting students they feel may be experiencing some type of difficulty;
- interacting with students, staff, and faculty colleagues in a professional manner;
- working to create and maintain a safe, respectful, and inclusive workplace;
- being attentive to their own biases and how they may impact the workplace;
- not asking students for inappropriate personal favors (e.g. walking dogs, child-minding, picking up dry cleaning, and unpaid secretarial or editorial work).

#### **Graduate Students**

**Understand faculty advisers' central role, as well as constraints on their time. This includes:**

- recognizing that faculty advisers provide the intellectual environment

in which students learn and conduct research, and, through access to teaching and research resources, may provide students with financial support;

- recognizing that faculty advisers 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 advisers before attempting to publish or present results of work done under the advisers' direction and/or in the advisers' studio or laboratory, as the quality reflects on students, faculty advisers, and Yale;
- being aware of time constraints and other demands imposed on faculty members and staff;
- understanding expectations about the frequency of meetings;
- coming prepared to advising meetings;
- taking the initiative to arrange meetings or communicate via other mechanisms with faculty advisers as often as necessary to keep the advisers informed of any factors that might affect their academic progress, including research or time to degree;
- consulting with the advisers to resolve any problems in their working relationships with their advisers or others, 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, the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences "Programs and Policies" bulletin, the official "Yale Policies & Procedures", and the "Yale Teacher-Student Consensual Relations Policy";
- fulfilling the expectations of policies and requirements;
- seeking clarification from faculty advisers and staff if they are uncertain about the precise meaning or application of a regulation or policy.

#### **Maintain a high level of professionalism by:**

- maintaining absolute integrity in taking examinations, creating original works and, for those doing research, in collecting, analyzing, presenting, and disseminating research data;
- responding openly and positively to fair and constructive feedback on work submitted for feedback;
- giving advisers sufficient time to read and comment on work in progress and due notice for requests for letters of recommendation;
- taking special care to preserve the data collected during experiments or noted during research (with precise identification of sources) to

avoid future confusion or disputes about access or ownership;

- acknowledging the contributions of faculty advisers and other members of the research team in all publications and conference presentations, and acknowledging sources of financial support;
- maintaining the confidentiality of faculty advisers' professional activities, including research, creation of original works and other creative endeavors, in accordance with existing practices and policies of the discipline;
- informing faculty advisers of conflicts and working towards a clear resolution;
- seeking the advice and approval of the principal faculty adviser, when appropriate, before taking on work beyond the scope of the dissertation (e.g. department event planning, peer tutoring, serving as a graduate student fellow for the McDougal Center, the Office of Career Strategy, or the Office for Graduate Student Development and Diversity) as these may slow progress on the dissertation work;
- interacting with students, staff, and faculty in a professional manner to create a safe, inclusive, welcoming, and respectful workplace;
- being attentive to their own biases and how they may impact the workplace;
- seeking assistance if or when problems arise.

## Departments and Programs

### Responsibilities include:

- creating an intellectual community where students, faculty, and staff can thrive in pursuit of academic excellence;
- creating and maintaining an environment where faculty, students, and staff feel welcomed, supported, included, respected, valued, and safe;
- introducing new graduate students to the policies, practices, and resources of the department and the University through an orientation or advising session and follow up as needed to ensure students' understanding;
- providing students with documentation of departmental policies, degree requirements, and timelines;
- designating one or more members of the faculty as resources to help graduate students and faculty resolve conflicts: the department chair, the director of graduate studies, or a designated departmental resource person;
- resolving problems locally and quickly if possible; consult with organizations listed among the additional resources in the Appendix of this guide as needed;
- providing guidance to students and faculty as needed (e.g. principal faculty adviser leaves Yale, principal faculty adviser and student have irreconcilable conflicts, student wishes to change principal faculty adviser).

## III. Post Degree Completion

Yale takes pride in contributing to the development of its scholars. It is in this regard that we hope advising relationships and former students' professional involvement with Yale continue beyond the completion of the degree requirements.

### Faculty Advisers

Faculty advisers' continuing role should be discussed with the student just before the student officially graduates. Faculty advisers are encouraged to continue to provide the following types of support:

- advice and assistance regarding public engagement;
- advice on publishing research;
- advice about professional and career matters;
- assistance in creating and sustaining professional networks;
- writing of references in a timely manner.

### Master's and PhD Degree Recipients

Former graduate students are encouraged to maintain ties with Yale by:

- completing post-graduation Yale surveys;
- providing the Association of Yale Alumni with recent contact and career information;
- serving on the Association of Yale Alumni Board;
- helping to recruit prospective graduate students;
- serving as a mentor for current graduate students;
- periodically conducting workshops and seminars related to career development or research.

***This guide was adapted from numerous resources on advising including:***

Advising & Mentoring. Stanford University Office of the Vice Provost for Graduate Education,  
[vpge.stanford.edu/academic-guidance/advising-mentoring](http://vpge.stanford.edu/academic-guidance/advising-mentoring).

Cultivating a Culture of Mentoring. Duke University, The Graduate School,  
[gradschool.duke.edu/professional-development/cultivating-culture-mentoring](http://gradschool.duke.edu/professional-development/cultivating-culture-mentoring).

"Guidance on Appropriate Forms of Supervision of Research Degree Students." University College London (September 2016),  
<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/academic-manual/research-degrees/supervisor-guidance/forms#top>.

How to Get the Mentoring You Want: A Guide for Graduate Students. Rackham Graduate School, University of Michigan (2011),  
<http://www.rackham.umich.edu/publications/>.

How to Mentor Graduate Students: A Guide for Faculty. Rackham Graduate School, University of Michigan (2015),  
<http://www.rackham.umich.edu/publications/>.

Best Practices in Graduate Student Advising. MIT Graduate Student Council & The Office of the Dean for Graduate Education (2015),  
[http://gsc.mit.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/CommonValues\\_Brochure\\_Rev5.pdf](http://gsc.mit.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/CommonValues_Brochure_Rev5.pdf).

## APPENDIX

### Additional Campus Resources

*Faculty members and students are encouraged to seek assistance in improving their advising relationships and resolving any issues through a variety of Yale's resources and offices. These include but are not limited to:*

- **Graduate School of Arts & Sciences Dean's Office**  
1 Hillhouse Avenue; (203) 432-2733  
<http://gsas.yale.edu/office-directory>
- **Office for Graduate Student Development & Diversity**  
1 Hillhouse Avenue; (203) 436-1301  
<http://gsas.yale.edu/diversity/office-graduate-student-development-diversity>
- **University-Wide Committee on Sexual Misconduct**  
55 Whitney Avenue; (203) 432-4449  
<https://uwc.yale.edu/>
- **Office for Equal Opportunity Programs**  
221 Whitney Avenue; (203) 432-0849  
<http://equalopportunity.yale.edu/>
- **Sexual Harassment and Assault Response & Education (SHARE)**  
55 Lock Street, Lower Level; (203) 432-2000  
<http://sharecenter.yale.edu/>
- **Mental Health & Counseling**  
55 Lock Street, 3rd Floor; 203-432-0290  
<http://yalehealth.yale.edu/mentalhealth>
- **Resources for Students to Address Discrimination and Harassment Concerns**  
<https://student-dhr.yale.edu/>
- **Center for Teaching and Learning**  
301 York Street; (203) 432-4765  
<http://ctl.yale.edu/>
- **Office of Career Strategy**  
55 Whitney Ave., 3rd Floor; (203) 432-0800

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