University of Colorado Boulder logo

***Graduate School Advising Agreement Guidelines***

Organized and effective advising is beneficial to both the advisor and advisee. This document is intended to be a supplemental tool created to support a graduate student’s short and long-term goals while also giving advisors tools to clarify expectations. This document is meant to facilitate this conversation between the graduate student and their advisor and should be reviewed once a semester and/or once significant educational milestones have been met. This document should be modified and developed collaboratively throughout the advisee/advisor working relationship. The Graduate School recommends advisees and advisors adhere to the following 10 guidelines:

1. **Regular one-on-one meetings:** Both advisee and advisor should agree on the frequency and length of meetings. Feedback is critical to student success and clear expectations will help insure that both parties are successful and supported during the advisee/advisor relationship. Depending on where the student is in the graduate degree process, meetings may need to be more or less frequent.

Advisors and advisees should agree on how agendas for these meetings will be formulated. One approach, especially for more advanced students, would be for the advisee to send out an agenda to their advisor prior to their meetings with a list of all items that need to be discussed and any issues the advisee would like to bring to the attention of their advisor; if the advisor wishes to add anything to the list, they should make edits to the emailed list and send it back to their advisee.

1. **Intentional Communication:** Both advisee and advisor should properly prepare for meetings and adhere to the agenda.
2. **Documentation and record keeping:** Both advisee and advisor should take notes during meetings. The advisee should email a description of discussion topics and any agreed upon next steps to their advisor. The advisor will let the student know if any corrections or modifications need to be made. These notes will help clarify expectations and provide records for both parties.
3. **Lab Work/Teaching Expectations and Requirements (GRA and TA appointments):** If applicable, the advisor should provide an overview of lab and/or department expectations, practices, and requirements so that the student has the information necessary to succeed in their research and/or teaching role. ***(Please see the included lab sample document for an example of how to address department specific expectations in supplemental materials.)***

Students should be informed in advance about what kind of work they are expected to do and how they will be included in projects/research currently underway.

Students who have teaching appointments should be informed about the responsibilities for the courses they are assigned to teach along with key contacts for the appointment. Will the students serve as teaching assistants or co-teachers? How many course sections will the advisee be required to teach? How many preps should they expect to prepare each semester? How many students will they have in each course? Will the syllabus be provided, or should they expect to create their own? Will their teaching loads be regular or should they expect changes from semester to semester?

Lab, teaching and department documents are supplemental to this form. Advisors, please be sure to include pertinent information about lab, teaching and department expectations to your advisee. Advisees please ask clarifying questions so that you have a holistic understanding of the workload, principles, and expectations surrounding your work for your department/advisor.

1. **Graduation and milestone completion timeline:**

***The chart below is a SAMPLE timeline.***

Advisee and advisor should discuss progression and timelines related to graduation at an early point in the student’s graduate career. Advisee and advisor should have knowledge of [Graduate School](https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/current-students/graduate-school-policies-and-procedures) and program requirements, guidelines and expectations for graduation. Advisees should discuss the timeline of important milestones with their advisors and make sure they understand what is expected at each step. The timeline should be evaluated each semester and updated if necessary.

Milestones marked with \* are required by the Graduate School. Other milestones are program specific and can be removed from the timeline as appropriate. (For example, preliminary exam or dissertation prospectus may be removed if not required by the program.) Other milestones can be added as necessary. Specificity can be added to this document by noting whether the milestone should be completed during a fall or spring semester, if necessary.

In order to have the degree awarded in any given semester, advisees and advisors should be aware of relevant [deadlines](https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/academic-resources/graduation-requirements) set by the Graduate School for the dissertation defense and submission of approved dissertation. Completion dates for these milestones should be set with those deadlines in mind.

Students should also be informed on how and when to form their committees. As this is specific to departments, please add any applicable information to this document.

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| **Academic Milestone** | **Year 1** | **Year 2** | **Year 3** | **Year 4** | **Year 5** | **Year 6** | **Notes** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Preliminary/Qualifying exam |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Completion of coursework\* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Comprehensive exam\* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Dissertation prospectus/proposal |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Dissertation defense\* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Submission of approved dissertation\* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| Other program milestones: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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1. **Professional obligations and dates:** Advisees should be aware of department and lab meetings that they are required to attend. Any service expectations or professional opportunities should be discussed with the advisee.

The advisor should discuss conference attendance recommendations and requirements. Advisors should also explain how advisees should obtain funding for travel.

1. **Publication expectations:** ***(If applicable in the student’s field of study.)*** The advisee and advisor should discuss topics and timeline for student papers/publications. Will the dissertation follow, say, a three-paper model? What must be complete/published prior to the dissertation defense? The advisee and advisor should discuss how the work will be edited and submitted. Advisees should have a clear understanding of primary authorship and co-authorship expectations on papers they publish prior to graduation.
2. **Feedback:** Prior to submitting any work to the advisor, the advisor and advisee should discuss the feedback process. Guiding questions include: Should the advisee ask for specific feedback from the advisor? What is the nature of the feedback that will be provided by the advisor? Does the advisor do line-by-line edits or should the advisee plan on using campus writing support services for documents edits? What are the expectations for turnaround time between when a draft is submitted and when the advisee can expect feedback?

Advisors should let advisees know how long it will take for them to provide feedback. Advisors should commit to providing feedback in a timely fashion based on upcoming milestone goals.

Advisors should provide regular academic performance updates, including clarifying expectations surrounding level and quality of work. Advisors should let advisees know if they are making adequate progress, and what they need to do to meet graduate school level expectations to secure graduation.

1. **Boundaries:** Both advisee and advisor should be clear on one another’s personal and professional boundaries. The power differential in this dynamic could convolute the working relationship, and both advisor and advisee should discuss and agree to the work that needs to be done and how it will come to completion. The advisee and advisor should also decide when phoning or texting a personal number is appropriate.

How will the advisee and advisor communicate? Email, text, phone calls? What kind of response time should both parties anticipate?

1. **Conflict Resolution:** If conflict should arise, the student advisee and faculty advisor should attempt to resolve the issue informally. The Director of Graduate Studies, program director, or Department Chair may also be contacted for context and guidance. The [Ombuds](https://www.colorado.edu/ombuds/) office can act as a confidential resource for conflict resolution, along with assisting with mediation in some cases. If resolution cannot be reached informally, students may consider additional avenues for their complaint. The Graduate School grievance process and procedures document includes information about jurisdiction for a variety of issues, and explains the process for grievances which fall under the purview of the Graduate School. [Resources](https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/current-students/campus-resources) related to conflict resolution and information on the [grievance process](https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/current-students/graduate-school-policies-and-procedures) can be found on the Graduate School website. Conflicts related to discrimination and harassment or sexual misconduct should be reported to the [Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance](https://www.colorado.edu/oiec/reporting-resolution-options). If the student is employed by CU and has an employment grievance, they should consult [Faculty Affairs](https://www.colorado.edu/facultyaffairs/) for guidance.

In conclusion, this document can assist in establishing productive professional relationships. This document serves both the advisee and the advisor by providing guidelines and a plan for clarifying expectations, lessening conflict and providing structure. By initialing below, both parties are acknowledging that they have received, read, and understand the information above.

*The information contained in this document is intended to provide recommended best practices and guidelines for graduate student mentoring. It is not intended to, nor does it, create an express or implied contract between the advisor and advisee or between or among the university and any faculty member or graduate student.*

**Please feel free to add any other points of concern below prior to initialing.**

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Student Initials: Advisor Initials:

Please contact The Director of Graduate Community and Program Development, Dr. Leslie-Ellen Blood <leslie.blood@colorado.edu>, with any questions you have on how to use this document.