# Advising Expectations: Best Practices

The education of an independent thinker and scientist is built on the student's responsibility to carry out an independent research project and the adviser's to provide scientific opportunity, support and management of a successful collaborative relationship. This document is meant to help best achieve this goal.

| Best Practice | Student's and adviser's joint responsibility | Adviser's responsibility | Student's responsibility |
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| **Establish milestones for academic research and maintain progress toward those milestones** | • Within sixty days of choosing an adviser: discuss and agree upon academic and research milestones to track student progress<br>• By the end of the second year for Ph.D. student: complete Graduate Degree Plan<br>• Annually: document and review student progress | • Communicate expectations with respect to independence, and how student is to function in the graduate school environment<br>• Clarify availability of continued funding (e.g., Assistantship or Fellowship) | • Clearly understand your own motivations for going to graduate school<br>• Be aware of additional funding opportunities in your field (e.g. travel grants, NSF funding) and apply to these sources as needed<br>• Consult Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) to ensure program requirements are met on time |
| **Maintain open lines of communication and provide timely feedback** | • Establish an optimum meeting frequency and meet regularly; many advisers meet students once/week, but a minimum frequency of once/month is strongly recommended<br>• Establish expectations and schedules; update as necessary as the degree program progresses, or with changing circumstances | • Offer prompt feedback on student's work (reports, draft posters, seminar presentations, manuscripts, etc.); acceptable timelines for feedback may vary depending on the nature of the work<br>• Communicate developments that may impact degree progress (e.g. planned absences or sabbaticals, changes in funding) | • Submit progress reports, draft posters or seminar presentations, manuscripts, thesis drafts and other research work in a timely manner<br>• Inform adviser of changes in schedule, including any paid or unpaid leave, and take necessary steps to comply with university policy (e.g. providing documentation, forms, etc.)<br>• Seek help from adviser or from other sources (see next page) to resolve difficulties |
| **Understand the terms and conditions of Graduate Assistant employment** | • Ensure terms of employment are understood<br>• Comply with business practices and policies of the department and university<br>• Follow safe laboratory practices | • Understand graduate student rights (see next page)<br>• Contribute to maintaining a safe work environment free from intimidation, humiliation, or harassment and provide assistance to students if they encounter unprofessional or inappropriate behavior<br>• Clearly spell out deliverables associated with the R.A. position and the effort requirement associated with them | • Complete any required training (e.g., safety, responsible conduct of research, ethics) in a timely manner<br>• Provide feedback on the effort required for and progress made on R.A. deliverables to help maintain realistic expectations |
| **Develop research ideas and graduate student career goals** | • Agree on the scope and sequence of thesis research (thesis proposal) and engage at all stages<br>• Clarify expectations for multiple tasks (e.g., teaching, research, service, writing)<br>• Develop student career goals; revisit and revise periodically | • Give constructive feedback on student's research ideas<br>• Mentor students as they apply for jobs and advise on effects to their degree plan<br>• Support students in exploring the full range of career opportunities, including careers outside of academia | • Understand student has primary responsibility for her or his thesis research<br>• Seek professional development opportunities such as trainings, service work, or teaching opportunities consistent with your desired career path |
| **Connect with the larger campus and professional community** | • Recognize and respect cultural differences<br>• Jointly identify and pursue opportunities for leadership and professional development skills such as the following: public speaking, research ethics, working across differences, collaboration, conflict resolution and data management<br>• Meet commitments and maintain collegiality in collaborations | • Help students network with colleagues at other institutions<br>• Support student participation in professional conferences, campus seminars and committees within the U of M and your department | • Attend campus seminars and events<br>• Serve on committees within the U of M and your department<br>• Participate in graduate student orientation and recruitment activities<br>• Participate in professional conferences (find external travel funding, as needed) |

Adapted from The Dignity Project: http://www.sos.umn.edu/resources-dignity-project

## Graduate Student Rights

- An academic environment free from intimidation, humiliation, and harassment
- For teaching assistant responsibilities, working within the hours appropriate for the appointment
  - The standard 50% teaching assistantship should not exceed 20 hours of work on average per week during the term of appointment (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, UMN Graduate Assistant Employment Policy – policy.umn.edu/hr/gradstudentemployment)
- Research responsibilities not directly related to the thesis project should not unduly hinder progress toward timely graduation
- Timely review and return of manuscripts and thesis drafts (i.e., 30 days)
- Recognition for contributions to research and publications
- Clarity on means of support, including knowledge of funding source
- Paid and unpaid leaves (i.e. parental, holiday, sick, bereavement, military, court appearance, jury duty, voting) (Policy: policy.umn.edu/sites/policy.umn.edu/files/appendix/gradstudentemployment_appf.pdf)
- Leave of absence in emergency situations (Policy: policy.umn.edu/education/gradstudentleave)
- Reasonable religious and disability accommodations (Policies: policy.umn.edu/hr/religiousholidays and regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/policies/DisabilityServices.pdf)
- Assistance when dealing with difficult situations, without concern for retaliation or punishment