

Guidelines for Mentoring First-Year Students

These guidelines, which have been developed by the graduate committee based on experience and student feedback, are especially intended for faculty members who will be mentoring first and (occasionally) second year graduate students.

In general, once you have been designated as an advisor, you should establish communication guidelines for your relationship with your advisees. How often do you expect to meet? Who should initiate meetings and check-ins? What are your expectations for communication over the summer? Let students know that they can contact you at other times if needed.

The expectation is that you will meet with first year students monthly and send biweekly emails checking in.

Encourage students to bring their own questions/concerns so the faculty mentor isn't running the whole meeting.

Topics to think about covering in those meetings (these are some of the questions first year students have, and later students may have as well):

1. Make sure students know to ask about departmental, college, and other campus funding for their research and for other needs (e.g., equipment, software), and that they know that asking about funding is both acceptable and appropriate. Our website provides awards and funding sources at <http://www.colorado.edu/sociology/students/graduate-students/awards-funding>

For details, click on the expandable tabs. When in doubt about how to apply, ask Susan!

2. Provide information to students about other potential funding sources, such as NSF fellowships and dissertation improvement grants and other federal government grants, as well as deadlines for submitting applications. Students in the department have been successful in obtaining these kinds of grants, and new students should be made aware of these opportunities.

3. Talk to students about coursework, and make sure they are planning course papers that are feasible for those courses.

4. Discuss with students how they should contact other faculty members they may not yet have met. What are good ways to approach faculty?

5. Talk with students about professional socialization expectations around attendance and participation at departmental events such as colloquia, job talks, lunches with job candidates, and workshops. Discuss the importance and value of attending, and when it is appropriate for students to ask questions at these events.

6. Discuss conference and presentation expectations and deadlines. Talk with your students about which conferences they could and should attend, when submission deadlines are, what submission guidelines look like, and what they should expect when they attend a conference.

7. Talk with students about when they should start to think about their own research.

8. Provide guidance on how students should think about different journal outlets and what they can do to get their papers into publishable form, as well as why they should be thinking about publication.

9. Provide advice on how students should think about TA choices and opportunities. Students may also have questions about research assistantships, and you should either provide information (if you are aware of such opportunities) or refer them to the appropriate faculty member.

Intentional conversations:

Year 1

Have an intentional conversation in the spring about whether or not the students want to change advisors, and let students know that first year advisors do not have to be long-term advisors. Students should not feel obligated to stay with the same advisor if they would prefer someone else.

Course scheduling: How should they think about their course trajectory? Is it acceptable to take two vs three courses? How should they plan for course offering rotations?

We have included here the current requirements for first and second year students.

In late October or early November, have a conversation about spring classes.

In late March or early April, have a conversation about fall classes.

In the spring of the *first* year, have a conversation about the third year paper requirements, deadlines, and grading procedures, so that students can begin to think about and plan for their third year paper research.

Year 2

In the fall of the *second* year, be sure that the student has a plan in place for the third year paper.

In the *second* year, have a conversation about the comps process. This conversation should include information about when their comps might happen, what the process looks

like, how many areas people comp in, the committee composition, how to think about how to put together a committee, and that comps committees can have primary and secondary members. Be sure to let students know that their comp committee does not necessarily have to be their dissertation committee.