

GRADUATE MENTORING, ADVISING AND MONITORING OF ACADEMIC PROGRESS POLICY **(last updated 9/2011)**

Introduction

Mentoring and advising of graduate students are normal expectations for Academic Senate faculty and are essential to ensure the success of these students. For the purpose of this policy, a mentor is someone who is attentive to the professional future of the student, while an advisor is someone who directs the student on what steps are needed to graduate. One person can serve in both roles. Programs' models for mentoring and advising may vary widely. For example:

- Students may find advisors/mentors prior to being admitted.
- Students may find advisors/mentors a couple of years after they enroll.
- A program may designate one person to advise all students.
- Professional master's programs may wish to designate a staff person who has expertise about professional opportunities to provide career advice.

No matter the program or department-specific model, it is expected that each academic (master's and doctoral) and professional student receive both advising and mentoring. It is also recognized that graduate professional programs may implement standards for mentoring that are required by their national accrediting organizations.

Mentoring

Mentoring is an active and sustained relationship-based process for the formal and informal transmission of knowledge and psychosocial support relevant to professional development. The mentor is attentive to the future of the student and serves as an advocate on his or her behalf. The following are minimum standards for mentoring:

- Make students aware of mentoring standards. Develop a graduate program handbook, made available to graduate students upon or before their arrival on the campus. This should be updated annually.
- Hold an orientation for all new graduate students, where program requirements, including normal time-to-degree, are clearly outlined and provided in writing. It is expected that these requirements will be included in the student handbooks as well.
- Require a minimum of one meeting – in person whenever feasible - between each graduate student and his/her mentor each quarter in which the student is enrolled.
- Ensure that students are being advised regarding academic progress and mentored regarding professional development. It is common for the faculty advisor to also serve as students' mentor; however departments may enhance mentoring through peer mentoring, professional development workshops, and other activities. Guidance regarding both academic and nonacademic careers should be provided.

Students who feel they are not receiving adequate mentoring should consult with the Graduate Director or Chair of their Department so that they can discuss remedies and take appropriate action.

Advising

It is the responsibility of each graduate program to advise and monitor the academic progress of each student in their program. Each graduate program **must**:

- Assign a graduate advisor to each graduate student at the time of first enrollment.
- Require the faculty advisor to review student progress quarterly via a review of grades and other available information; and meet regularly (at least annually) with each student to assess progress. Advisors must meet quarterly with students who are not making satisfactory progress. Advisors may suggest that students complete the Individual Development Plan (IDP) form in preparation for a scheduled meeting. The IDP is designed to foster communication in a variety of areas to ensure the

student is receiving comprehensive feedback about both his/her progress to date and future expectations. Accomplishments, challenges and goals must be addressed as well as any performance/progress issues so that both the student and the mentor/advisor have a clear understanding of the student's progress toward the degree. **Please Note: The IDP is to be used as a student planning tool and is not a formal university evaluation or record-keeping document.**

- **Document all meetings and follow up with written communications.** In most cases it is appropriate to speak with the student in person, give him or her a copy of a letter outlining any problem areas and recommendations for remediation, and then follow up the meeting with a written summary of the conversation. Appropriate personnel, including the Graduate Dean, must be copied in cases where the student is experiencing some academic difficulty.
- Establish and adhere to specific goals and timelines for the student.
- Ensure that grades for coursework or research are consistent with the student's actual performance. If the student is not performing at an acceptable level, do not assign a grade that implies acceptable progress.
- Communicate academic deficiencies to the student in a timely manner but no later than one month after the end of the quarter in which the student demonstrated deficiencies. If the deficiencies are particularly serious, the student must be informed early that failure to meet the goals set may result in a recommendation for disqualification.
- Notice of unsatisfactory progress: Students must be given notice as early as possible in writing of potentially unsatisfactory progress. A copy must also be retained in the academic unit files and another copy sent to the Graduate Dean (120 Administration). The written communication must include specific details on areas that require improvement, provide an outline for future expectations of academic progress, and set meeting dates to maintain continuity in advisement. The purpose of the notice of potential unsatisfactory progress is to provide the student with a period of time (usually at least one academic quarter) in which to make the necessary improvement in their academic status, and successfully complete their graduate study. If requested by the academic unit to do so, the Graduate Dean will also send a notice of potential unsatisfactory progress to the student.

Monitoring

Excerpted from the *Graduate Policies and Procedures*:

Criteria for Determining Unsatisfactory Progress:

- An overall grade point average below 3.0; or
- A grade point average below 3.0 in two successive quarters; or
- Fewer than 24 units completed and applicable toward the advanced degree requirements in the last three quarters; or
- Failure to complete required courses or examinations satisfactorily within the period specified by the graduate program; or
- Failure to pass a required examination in two attempts; or
- Failure to progress academically within the Normal Time to Degree framework specified for the student's graduate program; or
- The appropriate faculty committee's evaluation that there has not been satisfactory progress toward completion of the thesis or dissertation.

NOTE: Unsatisfactory academic progress may be determined on the basis of explicit requirements such as those outlined above. However, the professional judgment of the faculty, upon review of all graduate work undertaken by the student, is paramount, and the faculty of a particular academic unit may establish more restrictive criteria for satisfactory academic progress.

If it is determined that a student is not making satisfactory academic progress following efforts at remediation, it is appropriate for a graduate program to recommend to the Graduate Dean that the student be academically disqualified. Please refer to *Graduate Policies and Procedures*, Section VI.A.3., Academic Disqualification for

policies and procedures pertaining to academic disqualification. <http://www.grad.uci.edu/forms/faculty-and-staff/Graduate%20Policies%20and%20Procedures.pdf>