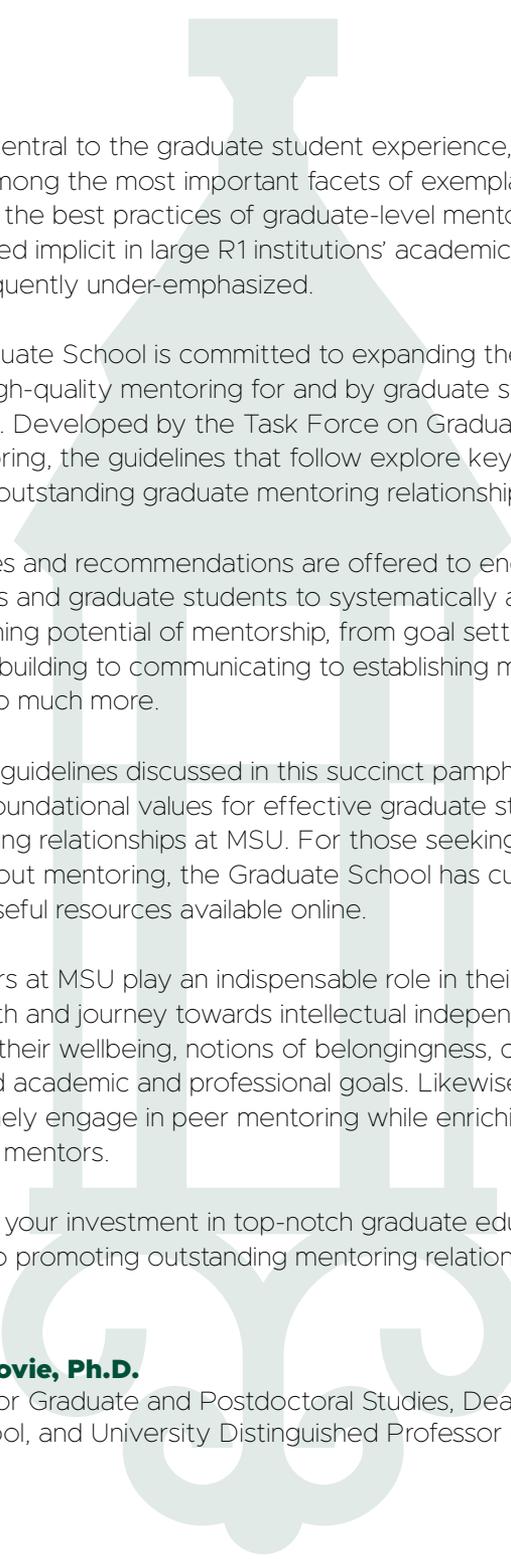


# MSU Guidelines for Graduate Student Mentoring and Advising



February 2026



Dear Spartans,

Mentorship is central to the graduate student experience, and mentoring is among the most important facets of exemplary doctoral education. Yet the best practices of graduate-level mentoring are often considered implicit in large R1 institutions' academic culture and, in turn, are frequently under-emphasized.

The MSU Graduate School is committed to expanding the university's capacity for high-quality mentoring for and by graduate students across campus. Developed by the Task Force on Graduate Student Mentoring, the guidelines that follow explore key elements characterizing outstanding graduate mentoring relationships at MSU.

These principles and recommendations are offered to encourage faculty mentors and graduate students to systematically approach the wide-reaching potential of mentorship, from goal setting to relationship building to communicating to establishing mutual expectations to much more.

Preceding the guidelines discussed in this succinct pamphlet are three central foundational values for effective graduate student and faculty mentoring relationships at MSU. For those seeking additional information about mentoring, the Graduate School has curated a collection of useful resources available online.

Faculty mentors at MSU play an indispensable role in their mentees' personal growth and journey towards intellectual independence by supporting their wellbeing, notions of belongingness, career aspirations, and academic and professional goals. Likewise, graduate students routinely engage in peer mentoring while enriching the lives of their faculty mentors.

I thank you for your investment in top-notch graduate education and commitment to promoting outstanding mentoring relationships.

**Pero G. Dagbovie, Ph.D.**

Vice Provost for Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, Dean of the Graduate School, and University Distinguished Professor of History

# **Foundational Values**

## **for Graduate Student and Faculty Mentoring Relationships at Michigan State University**

Effective mentoring relationships are formed and sustained through principles of reciprocity and mutual responsibility. Mentors and mentees should respect one another both as researchers/scholars/creative practitioners and as individuals. That respect is formed through a shared commitment to scientific, creative and professional excellence, and a recognition of these common values:

- **Commitment to respect and care**
  - Establishing a relationship based on trust and open communication
  - Engaging in ways that are respectful and culturally responsive
  - Actively promoting an environment of civility
  - Using inclusive and non-discriminatory language
- **Commitment to professionalism, ethics, and integrity**
  - Communicating regularly about expectations in the graduate degree program in the disciplinary field
  - Promoting the highest standards of integrity in research, scholarship, and creative activities
  - Engaging in continuing professional development in mentoring skills
- **Commitment to the professional and personal growth and independence of the student**
  - Talking with students about their interests in a range of career paths
  - Encouraging and supporting career exploration and professional development
  - Supporting mental and physical health

# Guidelines for Graduate Student Mentoring and Advising

This document provides guidelines and tools intended to be useful to all within the MSU community who have advising and mentoring roles related to graduate education. While attention to compliance issues (e.g., Responsible & Ethical Conduct of Research, Title IX) is essential to creating a community of integrity and excellence, the purpose of this document is to highlight the essential role of advising and mentoring.

Advising involves providing basic information about requirements, policies, and procedures that apply to everyone. All students have the right to expect thoughtful, timely, and accurate advising. Mentoring involves a deeper relationship and has a more extensive impact.

Effective mentoring relationships are formed through principles of reciprocity and mutual responsibility. Mentors and mentees respect one another both as researchers/scholars/creative practitioners and as individuals. That respect is formed through a shared commitment to scientific, creative, and professional excellence.

The following guidelines are intended to foster faculty-graduate student relationships that are characterized by honesty, courtesy, and professionalism and that provide students with intellectual support and guidance.

The academic unit is especially important, since it forms the community of scholars responsible for cultivating a stimulating intellectual environment and, through the joint efforts of all faculty members of the unit, for the mentoring of graduate students.



MSU is committed to excellence in graduate education. Graduate education, research, and creative activities take place within a community of scholars where constructive relationships between graduate students and their advisors and mentors create an environment characterized by the highest standards of scholarship, ethics, and professional integrity. These guidelines recognize the rights and responsibilities that underpin a vibrant, supportive, and inclusive culture of graduate education.

## Shared Rights

- The right to a safe, supportive environment in which individuals can flourish and grow in their pursuit of knowledge
- The right to an environment that emphasizes tolerance, encourages respect for diverse viewpoints, and promotes civility toward others<sup>1</sup>
- The right to an inclusive environment where every individual feels respected, valued, and welcome
- The right to collegiality in scholarly interactions and sharing of resources
- The right to an environment that actively promotes research and creative excellence

Ensuring the actualization of these rights depends on individual members of the community recognizing their role in upholding them, and on a mutual commitment to the shared values underpinning them [see the *Foundational Values for Graduate Student and Faculty Mentoring Relationships at Michigan State University*<sup>2</sup>]. Sustaining such a community of integrity and excellence at MSU is the responsibility of everyone.

## Shared Responsibilities

- The responsibility to hold one's self and one another accountable for integrity in educational and research practices, and for reporting behaviors and practices that violate policies
- The responsibility to know and adhere to federal, university, and academic unit rules, procedures, and policies applicable to teaching, graduate study, research, and creative activities (including those in FERPA, The Code of Teaching Responsibilities, Academic Programs, Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities, Medical Student Rights and Responsibilities, Academic Freedom for Students at Michigan State University<sup>3</sup>) and to ensure that they are followed at all levels of the university
- The responsibility to respect confidentiality

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1 From President Guskiewicz's Statement on Civil Discourse - <https://president.msu.edu/communications/2024/08/2024-08-08-letter>

2 <https://grad.msu.edu/mentoring>

3 <https://reg.msu.edu/ROInfo/Notices/PrivacyGuidelines.aspx>

Effective advising and mentoring of graduate students is the joint responsibility of the university, the Graduate School, graduate degree-granting and program units (hereafter referred to as academic units), the faculty advisors, and the students.

### **Responsibilities of MSU include:**

- Creating a climate of mutual accountability
- Communicating the value of graduate education to MSU's mission
- Setting expectations that graduate student mentoring is an important faculty and unit responsibility
- Supporting MSU's offices that contribute to graduate student education and well-being

### **Responsibilities of the Graduate School include:**

- Providing resources and training to help faculty and graduate students continuously improve their mentoring skills and abilities
- Providing information to units to help them fulfill their mentoring responsibilities
- Advocating for excellence in mentoring including inclusive mentoring practices
- Regularly assessing various aspects of mentoring on campus (e.g., through surveys, focus groups, or other applicable means)
- Partnering with other units to provide additional mentoring and professional development opportunities
- Recognizing and rewarding faculty and students who exemplify excellence in mentoring (e.g., through annual mentoring awards)
- Serving as a contact point for faculty and students who experience difficulties in mentoring relationships

## **Collective Responsibilities of the Academic Unit/Graduate Program include:**

- Creating explicit expectations and transparent policies that are consistent with MSU policies (e.g., maintaining an updated, online Graduate Handbook that follows the Graduate School Handbook Template and academic unit requirements for degree completion)
- Enabling graduate students to make timely progress in their degree programs by ensuring that required courses and examinations are scheduled in a timely manner
- Creating opportunities for networking and expanding career and professional development (e.g., organizing speaker series, colloquia, and other formal and informal events)
- Creating opportunities for graduate students to become familiar with the various forms of scholarship in the field
- Sharing responsibility with guidance committees and faculty advisors for fostering the professional and career development of graduate students (e.g., providing venues for honing professional writing and presentation skills, grants writing, and publishing)
- Ensuring that regular progress checks are provided for students (including annual written evaluations)
- Providing education in research ethics and integrity
- Recognizing and rewarding excellence in mentoring and identifying opportunities for professional development so that faculty can improve their mentoring skills and abilities
- Connecting faculty to a broader community of support by sharing information about MSU and Graduate School resources that can support them in mentoring graduate students

## **Responsibilities of the Director/ Coordinator of the Graduate Program include:**

- Helping new students transition to the program (e.g., providing orientation sessions, introducing students to the unit's Graduate Handbook, and creating opportunities for students working in different areas and in various cohorts to meet together)
- Ensuring that students have consistent advising by providing advice on matters such as course selection until a permanent faculty advisor and guidance committee are selected, or appointing a committee or temporary advisor to assume that role
- Helping students find appropriate guidance and support for their work by facilitating the selection of a faculty advisor and guidance committee, and facilitating changes of faculty advisor and/or guidance committee if necessary
- Ensuring a consistency of standards across the unit by monitoring the standards and fairness of components of the program (e.g., examinations, expectations for dissertation completion, timeliness to degree)
- Fostering shared values and the upholding of rights and responsibilities by working toward fair resolution of conflicts between graduate students and faculty
- Connecting graduate students to a broader community of support by sharing information about MSU and Graduate School professional development and mentoring resources

## **Responsibilities of the Faculty Advisor include:**

- Ensuring that graduate students receive information about requirements and policies of the graduate program (e.g., advising graduate students on developing a program plan, including appropriate course work, research or creative activity, and on available resources)
- Providing training and oversight in creative activities, research rigor, theoretical and technical aspects of the thesis or dissertation research, and in professional integrity and research ethics (e.g., advising graduate students on the selection of a thesis or dissertation topic with realistic prospects for successful completion within an appropriate time frame and on the formation of a guidance committee, helping graduate students to develop professional skills in writing reports, papers, and grant proposals, making professional presentations, establishing professional networks, interviewing, and evaluating manuscripts and papers, and encouraging graduate students to stay current in the literature and ideas in the field)
- Providing regular feedback on the progress of graduate students toward degree completion (e.g., providing feedback on research or creative activities, course work, and teaching, and constructive criticism if the progress does not meet expectations, completion of annual written evaluations)
- Helping graduate students develop into successful professionals and colleagues (e.g., encouraging students to participate and disseminate results of research or creative activities in the appropriate scholarly or public forums, writing letters of reference for appropriate fellowship, scholarship, award, and job opportunities)
- Facilitating career development and exploration, including advising graduate students on appropriate job and career options, as well as on the preparation of application materials for appropriate fellowship, scholarship, and other relevant opportunities
- Providing for supervision and advising of graduate students when the faculty advisor is on leave or extended absence
- Assisting the graduate student in navigating disagreements among the guidance committee

## **Collective Responsibilities of the Faculty Advisor and Guidance Committee include:**

- Advising graduate students on course work, research, or creative activities
- Providing regular and timely feedback and guidance concerning progress towards the degree
- Administering exams in a fair and professional manner
- Reviewing and providing feedback on research proposals and the thesis or dissertation in a timely, constructive, and critical manner
- Providing guidance to help students achieve their career goals

## **Responsibilities of the Graduate Student include:**

- Meeting university and academic unit requirements for degree completion
- Exploring career options and pursuing professional development opportunities in support of them
- Forming a guidance committee that supports the thesis or dissertation research as well as career and professional development needs
- Practicing uncompromising honesty and integrity according to university and federal guidelines in collecting and maintaining data
- Seeking regulatory approval for research in the early stages of thesis or dissertation work where applicable
- Keeping the faculty advisor and guidance committee apprised on a regular basis of the progress toward completion of the thesis or dissertation

## Online Mentoring Resources

<https://grad.msu.edu/mentoring>



*Scan this code to view  
mentoring resources from  
the Graduate School.*

*Contact the Mentoring  
Coordinator  
at  
**mentoring@grd.msu.edu.***



The Graduate School  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

466 West Circle Drive, 130D | East Lansing, MI 48824