

Mentoring Guidelines for Germanic Languages and Literatures

The German Department is dedicated to strong mentorship of our MA and PhD students. In MA and PhD students' first two years, the Director of Graduate Studies advises students regarding the requirements of the program during coursework. Below are guidelines and responsibilities for both advisors and advisees.

FOR STUDENTS:

The Director of Graduate Studies is the department advisor for all students until they have taken their preliminary exams. However, during coursework, students should also begin the process of deciding who they would like to ask to be their faculty advisor. For the MA, typically, students will select a faculty member whose class they have taken (and for whom they have written the MA paper to be developed). The faculty member will also serve as MA exam committee chair. For the PhD, it is best to ask someone the student has worked with in some capacity. If students are interested in working with someone not scheduled to teach a grad seminar, they should reach out to that faculty member to meet and discuss mutual interests. By the end of coursework, doctoral students will need to have an advisor in place so that they can begin planning for the Preliminary Examinations.

PhD students are free to choose one advisor or, in rarer cases, co-advisors. The students' primary advisors (or one of the co-advisors) needs to be a faculty member in German. German faculty are best equipped to help the student navigate the department's requirements.

Students should bring to the DGS or, if they prefer, the department chair, any concerns about their relationship with their advisor.

While acknowledging the unequal power relationship in the advisor-advisee relations, students still bear some responsibilities:

- Providing advisors with fair warning and timely delivery of materials for all recommendation requests, or any other deadlines
- Regular communication with the advisor: it is the student's responsibility to initiate and maintain communication with advisors, keeping them up-to-date on work, including any intellectual, professional, creative, or personal issues that impede progress on theses, exams, or dissertations
- Respect for faculty members' privacy
- Understanding and adhering to university ethical guidelines, including concerning [sexual misconduct and harassment](#), [discrimination](#), and following the [student code](#).

Students' responsibilities do not include:

- Performing any service for advisors beyond the regular requirements of coursework, preliminary exams, and the like, unless as part of a paid RA position (and then limited to appropriate work as spelled out in the NOA).

FOR ADVISORS:

Our department's success rests largely on maintaining our record of excellent mentoring of graduate students. This is also an area where direct departmental intervention is constrained by the tenets of academic freedom, so it is crucial that individual faculty act responsibly and follow the spirit as well as the letter of our guidelines.

NB: Faculty are expected to work with graduate students even when on leave or sabbatical.

Advisor Responsibilities:

- Regular meetings with students
- Responding to communications in a timely manner and to written work with feedback and attention
- Letters of recommendation for jobs, fellowships, and other applications
- Respecting students' time and labor – only ask students to do work for you when you compensate them fairly (see above)
- Respect for students' privacy
- Recognition of students' diverse backgrounds, needs, and goals
- Reasonable discretion about communications with students; there are times when faculty will need to consult with the DGS or others, and the advisor should, if and when appropriate, let the student know that they will consult with others on questions that come up

Faculty should remember that relationships with graduate students are professional relationships and must adhere to professional ethical standards. All faculty should understand and adhere to university ethical guidelines, including concerning [sexual misconduct and harassment](#), and [discrimination](#).

May 8, 2024