Policies & Practices for Advising Relationships

Shared Values, Shared Goals, Shared Responsibilities

Academic advising by Stanford faculty is a critical component of all graduate students’ and postdoctoral scholars’ education. The nature of advising may vary across disciplines and degrees as well as at different stages in a degree program or postdoctoral appointment. However, certain shared values, goals, and responsibilities apply to all advising relationships, in addition to University policies.

Shared Values

- Educational excellence
- Academic and research integrity
- Spirit of exploration and collaboration
- Respect and care for others
- Professionalism in all aspects of advising relationships

Shared Goals

- Academic progress and graduation of student or appointment completion for postdoctoral scholar
- Mastery of the subject material
- Advancement of knowledge and skills
- Professional development and personal growth
- Career success and satisfaction

Shared Responsibilities

- Uphold and abide by department, School, and University policies
- Maintain a respectful and inclusive learning environment
- Abide by highest professional standards
- Foster a culture of open and honest communication and collaboration
- Use Stanford resources appropriately

Policies

University policies on advising and the conduct of research, and other policies within these policy guides, apply to all faculty and the graduate students or postdoctoral scholars they advise. In addition, departments and programs may establish specific expectations and requirements for academic advising:

- **Graduate Academic Policies and Procedures Handbook: GAP 3.3. Academic Advising:** specifies that all matriculated graduate students must be advised by a faculty member, to be designated within students’ first quarter of enrollment. [https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-3/subchapter-3](https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-3/subchapter-3)

- **Research Policy Handbook 1. Conduct of Research:** summarizes Stanford’s policies and practices related to research, including obligations to students, staff, and sponsors. [https://doresearch.stanford.edu/policies/research-policy-handbook/conduct-research](https://doresearch.stanford.edu/policies/research-policy-handbook/conduct-research)

- **Administrative Guide 1.1.1. University Code of Conduct:** specifies that all members of the Stanford community are responsible for sustaining the University’s highest ethical standards and values. [https://adminguide.stanford.edu/chapter-1/subchapter-1/policy-1-1-1](https://adminguide.stanford.edu/chapter-1/subchapter-1/policy-1-1-1)

- **Stanford Bulletin: Graduate Degrees. Advising and Credentials:** expands on GAP policy noted above, including change of advisor procedures. [http://exploredegrees.stanford.edu/graduatedegrees/#advisingandcredentialstext](http://exploredegrees.stanford.edu/graduatedegrees/#advisingandcredentialstext)

- **Postdoctoral Scholar Handbook. Right and Responsibilities:** outlines responsibilities of faculty advisors and postdoctoral scholars. [http://postdocs.stanford.edu/handbook/responsibilities.html](http://postdocs.stanford.edu/handbook/responsibilities.html)

- **Mentoring Postdoctoral Scholars:** describes requirement that faculty advisors and postdoctoral scholars complete annual Individual Development Plans. [http://postdocs.stanford.edu/faculty_mentors/mentoring.html](http://postdocs.stanford.edu/faculty_mentors/mentoring.html)
Best Practices & Resources
These examples of best practices and resources support faculty and their advisees to develop productive advising relationships. Refer to the VPGE website to download and use these resources or to request an advising workshop: http://vpge.stanford.edu/gradadvising

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<th>Best Practices</th>
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<td>Discuss shared values, goals, and responsibilities</td>
<td>Guidelines for Faculty-Student Advising at Stanford: elaborates the role academic advising plays in graduate students’ development and the responsibilities of students, faculty advisors, and departments. Advising Policies: Review relevant University policies together (see front page).</td>
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<td>Agree on expectations</td>
<td>Student-Advisor Expectations Scales: facilitates discussion between students and advisors about their approach to academic advising, particularly designed for doctoral students. Faculty Expectations Document: faculty may explicitly outline their expectations in a document that they discuss with new students and postdoctoral scholars and in some cases, amend with input from advisees, creating a “living” expectations agreement. Advising Agreements: departments may ask faculty and students to sign an advising agreement that outlines the responsibilities of each.</td>
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<td>Review progress regularly and discuss future plans</td>
<td>Annual Reviews and Individual Development Plans (IDPs): many departments have processes for faculty and their advisees to discuss and document progress and plans at an annual review meeting; some department faculty also review all students’ progress at an annual meeting. Annual IDPs are required for all postdoctoral scholars and in some graduate degree programs.</td>
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<td>Seek out guidance and training</td>
<td>Advising Workshops: VPGE offers workshops on effective advising relationships for students as part of our professional development programs as well as for faculty in collaboration with the Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity, and at the request of Schools or departments. Help: tap into and learn from the experience in your department and School and in the other offices listed below.</td>
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Help
Students and postdoctoral scholars should consult with their department faculty and staff first to obtain help in resolving advising matters, or may want to meet with the University Ombuds or School of Medicine Ombuds first. Department and School Dean’s office staff and faculty often collaborate with University offices:

- **Department**: Director of Graduate Studies, Chair, Student Services Administrator
- **School Dean’s Office**: staff and faculty contacts on VPGE website: https://vpge.stanford.edu/academic-guidance/problem-solving-crisis-intervention/school-deans-office-contacts
- **Graduate Life Office (GLO)**: for concerns about students’ general well being or mental health: https://glo.stanford.edu; 650-736-7078 for 24/7 help
- **Vice Provost for Graduate Education (VPGE)**: for questions about academic policies and the advising practices and resources listed here: https://vpge.stanford.edu
- **University Ombuds and School of Medicine Ombuds**: for help working through specific issues that might benefit from a neutral third party perspective: https://web.stanford.edu/dept/ombuds/ or http://med.stanford.edu/ombuds/contact.html