

**ADVISING AND MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS
Best Practices**

**Department of Sociology
Indiana University**

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INTRODUCTION

The Indiana University Department of Sociology is committed to following best practices in all workplace and professional relationships that involve differences in power; that is, where one individual is in a position to make decisions which affect the educational opportunities, standing, employment, or career of the other. This document sets out our current understanding of best practices for advising and mentoring relationships, faculty and student responsibilities, and supervisory relationships involving faculty members, graduate students, or staff. We consider this a “living” document, subject to regular review, with the oversight of the Graduate Affairs and Evaluation Committee.

ADVISING AND MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

Faculty advisors and mentors play crucial roles in the operation and integrity of graduate education. We distinguish formal advisors—who provide institutionally-required guidance on academic progress—from mentors—who tend to take a broader interest in a student’s professional goals, and who may also have an interpersonal as well as a professional relationship with the student. Advisors often serve as mentors, particularly at such later stages of a graduate career as the dissertation, but students may have mentors who do not serve in a formal advising capacity. Advisor-advisee relationships are required by the institution; mentor-mentee relationships are not required, but are no less beneficial to students’ professional development.

IU Department of Sociology faculty members assume a collective obligation for promoting an intellectually stimulating environment that is free of harassment, and in which all students receive adequate advising and mentoring. The Sociology Department assigns all incoming graduate students with a 1st year mentor, who is expected to meet with a student several times during the year, and to contact the student during the first month of the fall semester to arrange an initial meeting to get acquainted. The Director of Graduate Studies serves as an advisor to graduate students until the passing of the qualifying examination. Students’ formal academic advisors are expected to provide guidance with respect to their academic work, but advisors may or may not serve in a more general mentorship capacity. Because the benefits of mentoring begin with the first year of graduate school and extend through PhD completion (and often beyond), the development of such relationships can be beneficial to establish early in the graduate school career. In addition to this document, further information about the Sociology graduate program’s personnel, policies, and deadlines are detailed in the graduate student portal section of the department’s website (<https://sociology.indiana.edu/student-portal/graduate/forms/index.html>). The Graduate Mentoring Center at the University Graduate School also offers a variety of programs to assist students in developing effective mentoring relationships (<https://graduamentoringcenter.iu.edu>), and a list of campus resources of relevance to both professional goals and health and wellness appears in Appendix I.

Faculty Responsibilities

Effective advising and mentoring encompasses a variety of interpersonal styles and communicative content. IU Sociology faculty reflect the diverse strengths of the discipline and

related, interdisciplinary fields. Spanning these sources of variation in approaches to advising and mentoring are the following expectations:

- Respect for students on the part of faculty, and a willingness to be open and approachable, including during students' first years in the Sociology Department, as early opportunities for advising and mentoring tend to be beneficial with respect of subsequent stages of professional development.
- Clear communication concerning expectations for mentoring and advising relationships. It is useful to reach a working agreement as regards academic progress and performance, the frequency of meetings, communication procedures (email, text, in-person), and the duration and boundaries of a relationship as the student moves through the program.
- Awareness of power imbalances in faculty-student relationships and a commitment to refrain from the abuse of power and act in an ethical and professional manner that serves as a role model.
- Recognition that students from marginalized groups (e.g., with respect to race, gender, sexual orientation, and 1st generation, immigrant or disability status) may find it more difficult to seek advice and support from faculty, and be proactive in offering such support.
- Recognition that some faculty, including those from marginalized groups, may shoulder a disproportionate share of advising and mentoring work, and take this into consideration when referring students for assistance.
- Awareness that some students will pursue careers outside of academe or outside the research discipline, and provide assistance in pursuing career goals.
- Sustained effort to demystify norms or expectations associated with the institutional environment and "hidden curriculum" of graduate school, including with respect to the navigation of professional relationships.

A number of these norms and expectations are addressed in the Department's Proseminar series, and the relationship between the Proseminar and faculty advising/mentoring is a complementary one. It is possible that some faculty and students may wish to consider the use of an explicit set of guidelines as a planning and coordination device; Appendix II provides a list of possible items for consideration.

Advising Relationships

Advisors in the IU Sociology Department are the chairs and members of the MA paper and the Qualifying Examination and PhD Committees, alongside the Director of Graduate Studies (whose advisor role ends when a student passes the qualifying examination). Productive advising relationships are facilitated by the following expectations:

- Encourage students to use time effectively and direct students to resources to support them in their efforts.
- Provide timely feedback and assist students in establishing priorities and goals regarding academic performance and research progress.
- Help students identify gaps in their training, alongside possible resources to address those gaps. In addition to IU Sociology curriculum's training in the design of research, the

acquisition of specific skills, and the navigation of the journal review process, students may also benefit from training in grant-writing, the preparation and presentation of conference papers, and the submission of work for award competitions.

- Assist students with finding mentors. When possible, introduce students to faculty, alumni, and students who may have complementary interests and strengths.
- Develop arrangements for students to receive guidance and feedback as necessary when the faculty member is absent for extended times.
- Provide career advice, offer help with job application and with interview preparation, and write letters of recommendation in a timely manner.
- Dissertation advisors are expected to provide advice to students as regards the selection of a fruitful thesis topic and assist them in identifying members for their dissertation committee.

Mentoring Relationships

Mentors may offer support and assistance that tends to go beyond the advisor role. In IU Sociology, a formal point of entry for mentoring relationships to develop is with respect to the 1st-year faculty mentor, whose role may (or may not) continue (or expand) after the first year. Productive mentoring relationships are facilitated by the following expectations:

- Be available to discuss students' academic and related challenges.
- Provide professional feedback with respect to research projects, conference attendance, and career goals.
- Be mindful of students' experience with discouragement as well as success, including with respect to students who are experiencing emotional or physical distress.
- Encourage students to try new techniques, expand skills, and discuss research ideas.
- Be available to introduce students into professional networks.
- Other contexts of relevance to mentoring include graduate seminars and the department's speaker series.
- Students are encouraged, including during the first and second years, to reach out to multiple faculty for introductory meetings if they are interested in additional mentoring opportunities. As discussed above, faculty are expected to welcome and be responsive to such requests.

Student Responsibilities

Graduate students play an active role in mentoring and advising relationships. Learning how to interact with faculty advisors, mentors, and supervisors is part of students' professional development. Students should strive to:

- Take an active role with respect to identifying personal and professional needs, and with respect to building a suitable network of mentors and advisors.
- Be proactive in developing their own professional careers, and recognize that academic success and degree completion require responsibility to oneself.
- Be open to advisor and mentor suggestions and practice what is learned, while also communicating to advisors and mentors career preferences and any changes in such

preference during the course of the program. Recognize that changing advisors, research directions, or programs are themselves options, and consult with other faculty or department officers to obtain additional perspective.

- Be proactive as regards improving research and teaching skills, including participating in departmental activities and seeking out professional opportunities in the department, graduate school, and Walter Center for Career Achievement.
- Know policies governing graduate studies in the department and in the graduate school and take responsibility for meeting deadlines, while acting in an ethical and professional manner. Be aware of rights and responsibilities concerning students in the role of employees of the university.
- Inform the Chair, Director of Graduate Studies, or Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee of potential or existing conflicts, and obtain outside help from the office of the Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Multicultural Affairs or other faculty if conflicts arise with a specific faculty advisor.
- Be respectful of faculty time and schedules. For example, give faculty plenty of lead time when requesting comments on manuscripts, letters, or other forms of assistance.
- Be respectful of other students' time and schedules as well. Be sensitive to students' need for concentration and focus, and minimize unnecessary interruptions.

Graduate Student Peer Mentoring

Graduate students play central mentoring roles in their own professional development. We recognize that many peer interactions are separate from professional development contexts. The recommendations below should be seen as applying to workplace and professional settings.

- Students may benefit from seeking feedback and support from peers; and peers, in turn, are expected to be respectful of the concerns and communications of peers.
- Here as elsewhere, it is useful to recognize the relevance of social backgrounds and group identities, and strive for inclusion of all students in supportive peer relationships.
- It is likewise useful to be mindful of inequalities between students stemming from, e.g., time in the program and such associated inequalities as access to faculty mentoring or number of publications, while simultaneously recognizing that peers may benefit substantially from the advice and support of experienced students.

SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIPS

The department includes undergraduates, graduate students, staff, and faculty members. This section identifies some basic expectations for professional relationships between members of the department.

Relationships with Graduate Assistants, Associate Instructors, and Research Assistants

We encourage faculty members and others who supervise Student Academic Appointees (SAAs: GAs, AIs, and RAs) to communicate clear expectations for work, and some may find it useful to consider the use of a written agreement concerning responsibilities. Sample documents are

available in K:/ALL/Advising and Mentoring. The faculty supervisor, rather than the student, should initiate discussion of work expectations.

The Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs maintains a record of formal policies regarding SAAs: <https://vpfaa.indiana.edu/policies/bl-aca-c6-student-appointment-process/index.html>. The following recommended practices complement but do not supersede those policies.

- Establish clear expectations regarding student responsibilities at the beginning of the semester. For example, in working with an instructional GA, it is helpful to discuss and clarify who will write the exams, essay prompts, and assignment instructions; who proctors exams; how often the teaching team meets in person; who grades which assignments/exams, how grades will be determined, and when grades are due; and how multiple GAs on the same course team will work together.
- In the case of RAs and other collaborative relationships, faculty should provide and discuss criteria for determining authorship at the start of a project; it is likewise useful to clarify the relationship between research conducted through the RA-ship and the research conducted in a student's MA paper, dissertation, or other research.
- Assign duties and tasks that fall clearly within the scope of the position. For example, instructional GAs' responsibilities should be related to the courses their faculty supervisors are teaching.
- Recognize the relevance of students' disability status in the performance of assigned duties and work towards a suitable accommodation.
- Respect student employees' need to allocate their time among competing demands while maintaining timely progress toward their degree. To this end, faculty supervisors should seek to establish reasonable deadlines for completing grading and other tasks during the semester.
- Discuss policies and expectations for work hours and health contingencies. Most department SAAs specify 20 hours of work per week. Indiana University does not provide paid sick leave to SAAs. Supervisors should have a plan in place to make reasonable accommodations for illness and/or injury.
- Try to distribute workloads evenly (where possible) throughout the semester, and seek out solutions when a workload leads to more hours being required than the student's formal SAA contract allows. If high levels of student enrollment in a course negatively influence the workload, it is appropriate for the instructor to request additional GA assistance and/or to modify course requirements.
- Insofar as possible, faculty supervisors should strive to make students' employment a learning experience. For example, RAs might learn and practice new research skills; instructors might provide experienced GAs the opportunity for further professional development by allowing them to design projects or give guest lectures, or perhaps share pedagogical practices as regards a given topic.

Relationships Between Faculty/Graduate Students and Staff Members

The contributions of all employees are integral to the success of the department's teaching, research, and service missions. Staff members bring specific, valuable forms of education, expertise, and experience to their jobs and deserve to be engaged with as respected professionals.

In addition, members of the staff juggle multiple, and sometimes competing, responsibilities. It is important for faculty members and graduate students to familiarize themselves with the responsibilities and expertise of members of the staff and to take into account a staff member's areas of responsibility and time constraints when making requests or seeking information.

Faculty and graduate students should strive to follow these best practices in their interactions with staff:

- Respect staff members' knowledge of university policies and procedures.
- Allow staff members the autonomy to approach a problem in the ways they find most effective or appropriate.
- Make requests with sufficient lead-time.
- Be sensitive to staff members' need for concentration and focus. Minimize unnecessary interruptions and, when making a request, be mindful that they may be busy with another task. If staff are unable to assist immediately, arrange a time to discuss the issue later.

At the same time, staff members should recognize that as local experts, they hold the knowledge and access that faculty members and graduate students need to fulfill their research, teaching, and service responsibilities. It is important for staff members to familiarize themselves with the responsibilities and demands placed on faculty and graduate students in order to effectively orient, guide, and advise them. Each member of the staff should work to create and nurture an atmosphere of mutual respect that is conducive to the goals of the department.

Appendix I: Campus Resources List

Office Name	Office Location	Phone Number	Office E-mail
African American Arts Institute	275 North Jordan Ave., Room 310	812-855-9501	aaai.indiana.edu
Asian Culture Center	807 East Tenth St.	812-856-5361	acc@indiana.edu
Counseling & Psychological Services (CaPS)	IU Health Center, 4 th Floor	812-855-5711	
Center for Human Growth (Mandarin Counseling)	School of Education, Room 0032	812-856-8302	chgmand@indiana.edu
Commission on Multicultural Understanding	IMU, Room M088	812-855-8187	comu@indiana.edu
Crimson CORPS	Health Center, 4 th Floor	812-855-5711	ccorps@indiana.edu
Culture of Care	IMU	812-855-8187	iucultureofcare@gmail.com
Dean of Students Office	IMU, M088	812-855-8187	iubdos@indiana.edu
Disability Services for Students	Wells Library W302	812-855-7578	iubdss@indiana.edu
First Nations Educational and Cultural Center	712 East Eighth St.	812-855-4814	fnecc@indiana.edu
Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual, Transgender Student Support Services	705 East Seventh St.	812-855-4252	glbtserv@indiana.edu
Graduate Mentoring Center	Wells Library E544	812-856-9379	iugmc@indiana.edu
Graduate Student Emissaries	Wells Library E546		emissary@indiana.edu
Helen G. Simon Hillel Center	730 East Third St.	812-336-3824	hillel@indiana.edu
Incidents Team	IMU, Room M088	812-855-8187	incident@indiana.edu
International Services, Office of	Poplars 221	812-855-9086	ois@iu.edu
IUSA Diversity & Inclusion	IMU	812-855-4311	iusacos@indiana.edu
Islamic Center of Bloomington	1925 East Atwater	812-333-1611	contact@icob.org
La Casa/Latino Culture Center	715 East Seventh St.	812-855-0174	lacasa@indiana.edu
Leo R. Dowling International Center (Office of Overseas Study)	111 South Jordan Ave.	812-855-9304	overseas@iu.edu
MoneySmarts	Bryan Hall & IUPUI	317-274-4460	mnysmrt@iu.edu
Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center	275 North Jordan Ave.	812-855-9271	nmgrad@indiana.edu
Office of Institutional Equity	Poplars, Room 825	812-855-7559	affirm@indiana.edu
Office of Student Welfare and Title IX	Poplars, Room 833	812-855-4889	titleix@iu.edu
IU Police Department (IUPD)	1469 East 17 th St.	911, or 812-855-4111	iupd@indiana.edu
President's Diversity Initiatives	Wells Library E546	812-855-8853	gradschl@indiana.edu
Student Advocates	Eigenmann West 225	812-855-0761	advocate@indiana.edu
Student Legal Services	703 East Seventh St.	812-855-7867	
Title IX Office	400 East Seventh St., Poplars 833	812-885-4889	titleix@iu.edu
University Graduate School	Wells Library E546	812-855-8853	grdschl@indiana.edu
Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Multicultural Affairs, Office of	Bryan Hall 115	812-856-5700	dema@indiana.edu

Appendix II: Sample Items for Optional Advising/Mentoring Guidelines

(for further examples, see: <https://www.rackham.umich.edu/downloads/more-mentoring-plan-example-1.pdf>)

- **Frequency of meeting:** *We plan to meet: e.g., weekly, monthly, as needed?*

- **Will meetings involve other individuals?** *Participation in group meetings will occur: e.g., weekly, monthly, as needed? Deadlines or individual responsibilities for meetings will include [].*

- **Academic milestones to be planned/discussed?**

Academic Milestones	Year 1			Year 2			Year 3			Year 4	Year 5	Additional Years
	F	W	S/S	F	W	S/S	F	W	S/S			
Milestones:												
<i>Qualifying Exam</i>												
<i>Preliminary Exam</i>												
<i>Candidate Exam</i>												
<i>Dissert. Comm. Mtg.</i>												
<i>Dissertation Defense</i>												
Other Milestones:												

Place an X in terms designated for milestones. F=Fall, W=Winter, S/S = Spring/Summer.

- **For mentors considering a joint research project/paper:** *List draft topics for papers on which student will serve as an author. Authorship will be as follows: [1st author, 2nd author, etc.]*

- **For specific joint project, student’s role on a joint project:** *(describe his/her primary area(s) of responsibility and expected contributions as a co-author)*

- **Grants, professional meeting(s), presentations, award competitions:** *(list dates/details for faculty mentor and student to discuss).*