

Effective Practices in Graduate Advising
November 8, 2015

This document, which accompanies “Mutual Expectations between Research Advisors and Advisees,” outlines practices that can help advisors and advisees navigate successful relationships, focusing on communicating regularly and establishing explicit, mutual expectations. Because there is no one-size-fits-all formula, recommendations on methods and timeframes should be taken as advisory.

- An initial meeting to set mutually-understood, clear expectations, including:
 - Preferred modes and frequency of communication
 - Expectations for the path to success in the advisor-advisee relationship
 - Explicit information on the culture and work process of the research group: hours expected, results expected, special requirements of this group’s sponsor, laboratory responsibilities, and so on
- Continuing open and clear communication that includes:
 - Regularly scheduled meetings; these will be most productive when student prepares an agenda of topics that needs to be discussed, and prioritizes them so that the most important items are addressed first. Suggested practice is a face to face meeting every two weeks, with new assignments given not more than once a week.
 - Discussion of progress towards research and academic goals
 - Constructive, positive, and negative feedback; acknowledgement of improvement. If performance problems develop that may lead to dismissal, the advisor must communicate these clearly and the student must be given a chance to improve.
 - Responding to communications and providing feedback in a timely manner. Suggested practice is one week for feedback from the advisor on written work that will be graded and three weeks for dissertation materials or articles for publication.
 - Review of the working relationship periodically to ensure it is working productively for both
- Explicit attention to culture and power
 - Discussion between advisor and advisee and within the research group on the ways that diversity affects communication
 - Active efforts to encourage communication across differentials of power
- Clear and realistic timelines and goals:
 - Development of a work plan that includes both short-term and long-term objectives and a series of deadlines for each step
 - Reasonable expectations of progress while student holds a GTA/GRA position that requires time spent on duties outside of thesis/dissertation research
 - Development of an individual development plan (IDP) in which the student outlines short- and long-term goals for career development and with annual updates and revision as appropriate
- Managing and resolving conflicts:

- Communication of the resources that are available in case of problems or conflict
- No tolerance for misconduct; support for reporting it
- Discussing difficulties and conflicts with the advisor before moving to formal means for conflict resolution
- Timely information about any change in advising relationship (i.e. student or faculty leaving Georgia Tech) or funding, and support for finding new arrangements. Suggested practice from the student is two weeks' notice of change plus an orderly transfer of research responsibilities to the replacement. Suggested practice from the faculty member is a half-term's notice of discontinued funding or advisor relationship and cooperation between former and future advisors on work assignments.

Faculty and students should note the services provided by the Georgia Tech faculty and graduate student ombuds (for neutral, confidential consultation) and by the Assistant Provost for Academic Advocacy and Conflict Resolution (for authoritative action). See <http://www.provost.gatech.edu/conflict-resolution>. Ethics violations can be reported anonymously to the [Georgia Tech Ethics Hotline](#). Processes to deal with "Student Complaints and Grievances Against a Faculty Member" are covered in [Section 4.7](#) of the *Faculty Handbook*.