



Department of **Community Sustainability**

Graduate Student Mentoring: Overview

The advisor-advisee relationship is a critical part of the success of graduate students. As a department, we expect both faculty and students to support effective mentoring. Below is a set of expectations for how faculty and graduate students can achieve an effective mentoring relationship. A mentoring agreement form and guidelines, including expectation scales, also are provided (see Appendix E of this handbook, and use the digitally fillable/signable copy available on the CSUS Graduate Forms webpage). The mentoring agreement should be completed by faculty advisors and new graduate students within a student's first month at MSU, then filed with the Graduate Secretary. This conversation may be repeated as activities shift (e.g., a PhD student completes course work or the comprehensive exam). Students have the right to expect that their advisors will fulfill these expectations and vice versa. The *Conflict Resolution and Grievance Procedure* section of the Handbook describes the formal process that students may engage if they believe appropriate mentoring procedures have not been followed. Faculty can record grievances during the student's annual review if they believe appropriate mentoring procedures have not been followed.

Expectations of Faculty

1. Be the advisee's advocate, and to commit to mentoring the student from the time they receive their letter of acceptance into CSUS, through their time in the program, and after graduation.
2. Facilitate the entry of the advisee into the University culture, including the structures, processes, and interpersonal climate of the University.
3. Enhance the supportive academic environment for the graduate studies of the advisee.
4. Facilitate the development of appropriate skills and approaches related to the conduct and evaluation of research and scholarship, as well as facilitating training in complementary skills needed to be a successful scholar, such as oral and written communication skills, grant writing, project management, mentoring, and professionalism.
5. Enhance decision-making and other skills related to the advisee's career development and advancement.
6. Provide opportunities for developing and working on mentored and independent interdisciplinary research projects.
7. Develop, with the advisee, clearly delineated and specific milestones and timelines for achieving program goals.
8. Know the policies, deadlines, and requirements of the CSUS graduate program, the Graduate School, and the University. Comply with all institutional policies and participate in semesterly/annual evaluations and assessments.
9. Be available for regular meetings with the advisee, show up on time, and be prepared for meetings. Advisors should discuss with the advisee preferred styles of communication and schedule.
10. Meet agreed-upon deadlines and communicate when unable to do so.
11. Be mindful of constraints on the advisee's time.
12. Respond to advisee emails promptly.

Expectations of Student

1. Acknowledge that the advisee has the primary responsibility for the successful completion of their graduate degree. This includes commitment to work in classrooms and independently, and maintaining high levels of professionalism, self-motivation, engagement, scholarly curiosity, and ethical standards.
2. Actively cultivate their own professional development. The advisee will share career plans with the advisor, recount initiatives on behalf of his/her professional development, ask for advice, and reflect on the advisor's observations.
3. Engage in collaborations beyond the advisor and be a good collaborator – this requires effective and frequent communication, mutual respect, trust, and shared goals.
4. Develop, with the advisor, clearly delineated and specific milestones and timelines for achieving program goals.
5. Know the policies, deadlines, and requirements of the graduate program, the graduate school, and the university. Comply with all institutional policies and participate in semesterly/annual evaluations and assessments.
6. Conduct regular meetings with the advisor to provide updates on progress. Advisees should use this time to communicate new ideas and challenges that they are facing – remember, the advisor cannot address or advise about issues that have not been brought to their attention. Advisees should discuss with the advisor preferred styles of communication and schedule.
7. Be responsive to advice and constructive criticism.
8. Meet agreed-upon deadlines and communicate when unable to do so.
9. Be mindful of constraints on the advisor's time.
10. Respond to emails from the advisor promptly and be on time and prepared for meetings.



Department of
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Graduate Student Mentoring Agreement

This agreement template is intended to facilitate communications between an advisee (i.e., graduate student in CSUS) and his/her advisor/s. **It is suggested that the document be thoroughly reviewed and completed by the advisee and advisor individually, who should then jointly review the answers to the below questions and the expectation scales to reach an agreement about how the mentoring relationship will proceed.** The advisee should re-write the agreed upon answers before the agreement is signed and dated by each. Both the advisor and advisee are responsible for keeping a copy of the agreement; the agreement should be completed when the student begins their program and then revisited during annual review and updated, as needed. All students should have a mentoring agreement filed with the Graduate Secretary.

Questions to Answer

1. What type of assistance does the advisee want from the advisor in achieving their career goals over the next 1-3 years? Where does the advisee hope their career will take them in five years?
2. What expectations does the advisor have of the advisee?
3. What expectations does the advisee have of the advisor?
4. What are the expectations for the advisee working in their assigned office?
5. What are the expectations for the maximum time period for responding to email?
6. How often will you meet?
7. When and where will you meet?
8. For how long will you meet?
9. Who will be responsible for scheduling the meetings?
10. What will meeting topics include?
11. What will be the ground rules for discussions (e.g., confidentiality, openness, candor, truthfulness, etc.)?
12. If problems arise, how will they be resolved?
13. How much notice do advisors need to be given to prepare letters of reference?
14. Any additional areas/issues you want to discuss and agree to?
15. Any concerns the advisee or advisor wants discussed and resolved?
16. We have agreed that our initial meetings will focus on these three topics:

Advisee Name: _____ Date: _____

Advisee
Signature: _____

Advisor Name: _____ Date: _____

Advisor
Signature: _____

Advisee-Advisor Expectation Scales

This expectation scale worksheet can assist with creating the mentoring agreement. The worksheet lists 19 pairs of statements describing end points on a continuum. Individuals will take different positions on each scale, reflecting variations in educational philosophy, personality, and the norms of their discipline. There is no *right* answer here. Advisors and advisees will mostly likely fall at different places along these continuums, and this is perfectly acceptable so long as codes of conduct are being followed. However, these are issues about which most advisees and advisors need to reach agreement, and often advisees and advisors do not directly discuss their perspectives about how these matters should be resolved and why. This is an exercise to assist advisors and advisees in aligning their expectations. Making expectations explicit and having regular conversations about expectations helps to minimize misunderstandings. In many cases, perspectives change over the advisee's time in their graduate program.

It is important to recognize that most students do not feel comfortable asking their advisor to complete the worksheet. Faculty members should initiate these conversations.

Instructions:

Read each pair of statements describing end points on a continuum. Estimate your position and mark it on the scale. **Students and faculty should complete the scales separately before coming together for a conversation to discuss the scales and create the mentoring agreement.** The conversation should include:

- Which items are non-negotiable?
- Which items can be discussed and decided upon together?
- When and how should students ask for clarification of expectations?

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Course of study and project/thesis/dissertation planning			
1.	The advisor should suggest and approve which courses the student takes	1 2 3 4 5	Students should solely determine which courses they should take
2.	It is the advisor's responsibility to select a promising project/thesis/dissertation research topic	1 2 3 4 5	The student is solely responsibility for selecting the project/thesis/dissertation research topic
3.	The advisor should select the other members of the committee	1 2 3 4 5	The student should select the other members of the committee
4.	The advisor is responsible for ensuring the student follows the responsible code of conduct	1 2 3 4 5	The student is solely responsible for ensuring they follow the responsible code of conduct
Contact and involvement			
5.	The advisor should determine how often and when to meet with the student	1 2 3 4 5	The student should decide how often and when to meet with the advisor
6.	Faculty-student relationships are purely professional, and discussing personal matters is not appropriate	1 2 3 4 5	Close personal relationships are essential for successful advising
7.	The advisor should check regularly that the student is working consistently and is on task	1 2 3 4 5	Students should work independently without having to account for how they spend their time
8.	The advisor should be the first place to turn when the student has problems with the research or professional project	1 2 3 4 5	Students should try to resolve problems on their own, e.g., by seeking input from others, before bringing a problem to the advisor
9.	The advisor is responsible for providing emotional support and encouragement to the student	1 2 3 4 5	Emotional support and encouragement are not the responsibility of the advisor – students should look elsewhere

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

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The project/thesis/dissertation			
10.	The advisor should insist on seeing all drafts of work to ensure that the student is on the right track	1 2 3 4 5	Students should submit drafts of work only when they want input and feedback from the advisor
11.	The advisor should assist in the writing of the project/thesis/dissertation, if necessary	1 2 3 4 5	The writing of the project/thesis/dissertation should only ever be the student's own work
12.	The advisor should determine when and where to present or publish the research or scholarship emerging from the project/thesis/dissertation	1 2 3 4 5	The student should determine when and where to present or publish the research or scholarship emerging from the project/thesis/dissertation
13.	The advisor should decide when the project/thesis/dissertation is ready to be defended and submitted	1 2 3 4 5	The student should decide when the project/thesis/dissertation is ready to be defended and submitted
14.	The advisor has direct responsibility for the quality of the project/thesis/dissertation	1 2 3 4 5	The student bears sole responsibility for the quality of the project/thesis/dissertation
Support			
15.	The advisor is responsible for finding funding for the student until they graduate	1 2 3 4 5	Students are responsible for finding their own sources of funding
16.	The advisor is responsible for introducing the student to others in the field, especially at conferences	1 2 3 4 5	Students are responsible for building their networks in the field
17.	The advisor is responsible for providing career advice and preparation to the student	1 2 3 4 5	Career advice and preparation are not the responsibility of the advisor – students should look elsewhere
18.	The advisor is responsible for providing the student with opportunities to publish outside of their project/thesis/dissertation work	1 2 3 4 5	Students are responsible for finding their own opportunities to publish outside of their project/thesis/dissertation work
19.	The advisor is responsible for building the student's communication skills	1 2 3 4 5	The student is solely responsible for building their own communication skills