

Note: This document is intended for both graduate students and graduate faculty advisors.

Best Practices for Graduate Education

Graduate education is a preparation for careers that make important contributions to society. The primary responsibility for successful completion of a graduate degree rests with the student but advisors play an important role in guiding this progress. The relationship between advisee and advisor may not be familiar from the undergraduate environment and so this document aims to set out the responsibilities and expectations of both partners in this relationship.

A guiding principle for the NC State community of scholars is that we work respectfully with diverse faculty, students and peers, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation or national origin, striving for an environment that is safe, free of harassment and welcoming to all.

General

1. The student and the advisor are expected to behave in a professional way.
2. Both the student and the advisor are expected to be familiar with the policies of the Graduate School, and of the relevant graduate program.
3. Advisors should seek funding to support advisees' research, in disciplines where it is customary and possible for advisors to do so.
4. The advisor should encourage participation in the intellectual community of the profession, and the student should take advantage of such opportunities. This includes membership and participation in professional societies, attending scholarly meetings, conferences, seminars, and colloquia, meeting with and hosting visitors, participation in graduate student association events, journal clubs, etc.
5. Advisors should not ask advisees to undertake tasks for the personal (non-professional) benefit of the advisor, nor are advisees obligated to perform such tasks. However, it is appropriate for advisees to help on occasion with tasks or events benefiting the research program, or the department.
6. Advisors should avoid involving advisees in disagreements with colleagues, and should not interfere with advisees' interactions with colleagues.

Conduct of Research

1. The advisor and student should negotiate clear expectations about the graduate degree before agreeing to work together. The advisor should make clear particularly any expectations for publication before graduation. These expectations should not change over time in a way that lengthens the time to degree for the student.
2. The advisor and student should work together to identify a suitable thesis/dissertation topic, and to select the advisory committee.

3. The advisor and student should meet regularly to report progress and results, to review the same, and to address research difficulties. Both advisor and student should strive to maintain steady progress towards the degree, which requires advisors to provide timely, constructive feedback. The advisor should be candid and fair, and committed to the advisees' best interests.
4. The advisor and student should be aware of, and follow, university and professional standards for research ethics, scholarly integrity, and the responsible conduct of research. They should likewise be aware of, and follow, university policies concerning intellectual property.
5. The advisor and student should jointly seek opportunities for professional development, such as attending conferences, writing and submitting proposals for funding, presenting research results at professional meetings, reviewing, etc.
6. It is recommended that the advisor and student meet with the advisory committee at least once a year to review the student's progress and status. Both should be responsive to the constructive advice and criticism of committee members.
7. At the start of each semester, the advisor and student should agree upon the standards for receiving a satisfactory grade for any research/thesis/dissertation credits in which the student will be registered.
8. Both the advisor and the student should acknowledge the contributions of all members of the research team in publications and presentations. The advisor and student should discuss and agree on the list of authors of any work submitted for publication.
9. The advisor is expected to help prepare the student for a successful career following graduation, to help them find appropriate career opportunities, and to provide guidance in the job search process.

Teaching

1. Instructors and teaching assistants are expected to meet before the beginning of the semester to establish roles and responsibilities. The instructor should provide access to all materials and facilities needed for the course, lab, or studio.
2. Teaching assistants are expected to attend the course they are assisting unless otherwise notified by the instructor.
3. The teaching assistant should notify the instructor any time there is a problem meeting their responsibilities.
4. Instructors and teaching assistants should communicate regularly about problems or issues that may arise, and instructors should provide constructive feedback to TAs.
5. Instructors should respond promptly to requests for guidance, and teaching assistants should likewise respond promptly to requests for information or grading results.
6. Both instructors and teaching assistants are expected to be helpful to students, to act professionally at all times, and to be respectful when communicating with students.
7. It may be useful for the instructor and teaching assistants to assess the course after its completion, with the goal of continual improvement.