Department of Anthropology | Stanford University, ANTHRO Best Practice Reference for Academic Advising: Guidelines for Graduate Students and Faculty

STUDENT INFORMATION:

____	_____________________________________
Student name (First, Last)	SU Emplid ID#
____	_____________________________________
SU email	Telephone
____	___________________________________
Assigned Faculty Mentor or Chosen Primary Advisor	Entering Quarter and Academic year

Ph.D. Degree Program Track:

☐ Archaeology Ph.D. Track , or ☐ Cultural and Social Ph.D. Track

Academic Advising Expectations

The Department of Anthropology is committed to providing Ph.D. students with academic advising in support of their scholarly and professional development. Advising relationships, when most effective, entail collaborative and sustained engagement by both advisor and the advisee. In these relationships, the department expects faculty members and students to maintain professionalism and integrity.

Why this document?

At the start of graduate studies at Stanford University, many Ph.D. students are unsure what is expected of them when it comes to interacting with faculty. This document is intended to clarify student expectations. It further serves as a reminder to faculty of their responsibilities.

Why all the rules?

Described here are not rules, but rather guidelines or best practices. There may be exceptional situations, and whenever possible both faculty and graduate students should try to accommodate them.

Big Tent Advising

The department strongly encourages Ph.D. students to work with a variety of faculty throughout their degree program at Stanford. This expectation begins in Year One. Ph.D. students are encouraged to arrange to meet with a number of faculty as they settle into life on *The Farm*, including faculty who work outside of a Ph.D. student's area of geographic/topical foci. This will serve the Ph.D. student well in terms of creating a strong, nimble network of scholarly support as well as helping to guard against falling into any intellectual silos. [Also, see the Department of Anthropology Ph.D. Student Handbook reference on the Dissertation Reading Committee.] One of the best ways to foster a 'big tent' of advisors is to stay in contact with a wide variety of faculty members and to attend their office hours regularly.

First-Year Mentor, Primary Advisor, and Transitions

On admission to the graduate program, Ph.D. students will be assigned a <u>First-Year Mentor</u> and master students will be assigned a <u>Primary Advisor</u>. Ph.D. students should meet with their First-Year Mentor and Primary Advisor regularly, seeking out advice and support, and have that faculty member write needed letters of recommendation.

For the doctoral program, the Primary Advisor will be chosen by the individual Ph.D. student. Whether a Ph.D. student is transitioning from a First-year Mentor to a Primary Advisor or a Ph.D. student is making a change to their Primary Advisor, the transition should occur in a composed manner, one marked by forethought and supportive consultation with faculty. The transition from First-Year Mentor to Primary Advisor should occur no later than the last day of the Autumn quarter of the second year. At this time, the Ph.D. student should declare the Primary Advisor change using the Graduate Report of Degree Progress form appropriate for the Ph.D. student's cohort year. All tenure-line departmental faculty are available to take on the duty of primary advising.

What's the best way for students to contact faculty remotely?

Please use the @stanford.edu email correspondence as the primary means of documented communication. A reasonable expectation for response from a faculty member should be within 3-5 days.

But, remember that email messaging is a poor replacement for one-on-one office hour meetings. So, meet with faculty regularly, and, whenever possible, save your questions for those meetings. Ph.D. students are well-advised to use the following descriptive in the subject line of the message when emailing a faculty member, "Secure" (for confidential or restricted information), "Time Sensitive" (for deadline-related requests for information), and "Urgent" (for an information request that requires an immediate response).

Office Hour Meetings

Actively populate your own "big tent" by signing up for office hours! Don't wait for a faculty member to ask for a meeting. Most faculty will have a signup mechanism (e.g., signup sheets posted outside their office or an online tool) for predesignated time slots each week. Prioritize these time slots and limit asking faculty to meet at other times, that is unless you have obligations that cannot be missed. Here are some suggestions for how often to meet with faculty; they apply to both M.A. and Ph.D. students.

First year Ph.D., Ph.D. minor and M.A. students	Ph.D. students and their "First-Year Mentor," or M.A. students and their "Primary Advisor," should meet at least twice per quarter. Graduate students should also meet once per quarter with faculty with whom they are taking a course, and once per quarter with a variety of other faculty.
Second and Third-year Ph.D. students	Meet three times per quarter with your Primary Advisor and, in the case of PhD students, 2x/quarter with exam committee members.
Fourth-year Ph.D. students	Meet twice per quarter with Primary Advisor and once per quarter with Committee Members (or send email updates if in the field).
Dissertation Writers	Meet twice per quarter with Primary Advisor and once per quarter with other Dissertation Committee Members (more often if on the job market). Also, if logistically feasible, consider convening one or two progress-report meetings with the Dissertation Reading Committee before completing a first draft of the dissertation.
Ph.D. student advising in Summers quarters	No office hours are usually offered - but email updates from Ph.D. students to their Primary Advisor (every 4-6 weeks) during Summer research is recommended.

Progress meetings. At least once per academic year in the Autumn, Winter or Spring quarters, each Ph.D. student and First-year Mentor/Primary Advisor should meet outside of regular office hours (for 30-60 minutes) to discuss the Ph.D. student research in more depth. Responsibility lies with the Ph.D. student to initiate and schedule these meetings. In addition to student progress, an important topic to take up during these longer meetings is a discussion of the progression of the advising relationship. Both advisor and advisee should set aside some time to discuss what is working with the relationship as well as what could be improved.

How should students prepare for meetings with faculty?
Drafting documents for each and every meeting is unnecessary, and certainly so for an introductory meeting with a faculty member. Still, in most cases, some conceptual preparation is recommended. Ph.D. students are encouraged to bring questions and current concerns (i.e. regarding classes, professionalization, work-life balance, research design, academic ethics, or a wide array of other topics). Most importantly, Ph.D. student should know their topics of discussion. Although, most faculty welcome the exchange pleasantries and personal anecdotes, graduate students should avoid vague chatty questions, recognizing that office hour meetings are professional encounters. Here are a few preparatory tips (this is hardly an exhaustive list).

1. If graduate students have text for review by a faculty member, the text should be submitted several days in advance. Long documents (i.e. grant proposals, dissertation chapters) generally require submission at least two weeks in advance. Ph.D. students should inquire whether the faculty member prefers to review documents digitally, or in hard copy. Faculty may ask for a hard copy.
2. Graduate students should bring only completed forms for the faculty member to review and sign.
3. If there is something specific to be discussed, it is appropriate to email a faculty member about the discussion topic in advance on the meeting. In this way, the faculty member has time to consider the topic in advance.

Letters of Recommendation
It is the function of Committee members, especially the Committee chair, to represent the Ph.D. student advisee in their applications for fellowships, grants, and jobs. Typically representation occurs in letter form. Letters of recommendation are incredibly important documents. They are also time-consuming, and faculty tend to produce much better letters when Ph.D. students follow the following guidelines.

1. Request letters of recommendation at least two weeks before the submission deadline. A longer period of notice given in advance of a deadline is optimal. If the deadline is during an academic break (e.g. Thanksgiving, Winter Closure, Spring Break, and the summer) Ph.D. students should give the faculty member <u>at least two weeks' notice before the start of the academic break</u>. *Faculty cannot guarantee that they can fulfill reference requests received with less than two weeks' notice.*
2. If a recommendation is to be submitted through an electronic form, submit the electronic request A.S.A.P.
3. At least two weeks before a deadline, Ph.D. student should send the faculty recommender an information packet with the following:
    a. a description of what the Ph.D. student is applying for. If the application includes specific criteria for the applicant, include this information.
    b. a copy of all application materials. *<u>DRAFTS are OK!</u>*
    c. a current CV, whether or not it's required in the application
    d. a short note – one or two paragraphs – stating what the recommendation will (should) emphasize. <u>This is probably the most important thing to include</u>.
4. At least two days before the recommendation is due, the Ph.D. student should contact the faculty recommender to confirm that the letter has been or will be sent (unless automated confirmation is given).

<u>Further tips regarding letters</u>:

- Be organized. If the Ph.D. student is applying for multiple grants/fellowships/jobs, the student should provide an annotated list of all the recommendations needed, and the associated due dates. The Ph.D. student should organize all the recommendation materials at once and send the materials the faculty recommender in a bundle. Ask the recommender to emphasize certain things for particular letters, if that is appropriate.
- Do not assume that the faculty recommender will remember everything. Be bold: remind faculty of your accolades and why, in the Ph.D. student's opinion, the faculty recommender should stake their reputation on the Ph.D. student's future career. If the Ph.D. student did excellent work as a Teaching Assistant for a class three years ago, for instance, then the student should remind faculty recommender by providing relevant articles from the Ph.D. student teaching portfolio (i.e. lesson plans, student evaluations). If the faculty recommender gave the Ph.D. student an A+ last quarter for a paper on "The phenomenology of eggplant cultivation," for instance, the Ph.D. student should remind the faculty recommender of what was said about the paper. If the Ph.D. student dissertation is breaking new ground in some key topic, the Ph.D. student should remind the faculty recommender of this information. Prompting the faculty recommender of these things in writing (see above) is highly recommended.

Qualifying Examinations (also see the departmental info sheet: "Best Practice Reference, Doctoral Qualifying Examination in the Third-year")

- Start thinking about exams in Year One, and take relevant seminars and independent readings.
- Ph.D. students may have trouble differentiating between "area" and "topic" o Area: a conceptual domain bounded by time and space (e.g., postcolonial S.E. Asia).
    - Topic: a conceptual domain (e.g., the gastronomy of waste) bounded less by time and space and more by other themes.
    - Please note: "area" and "topic" will NOT encompass everything related to the dissertation.
- Read a variety of *Annual Review of Anthropology* (AR) articles to better appreciate best practices for defining, analyzing, and critiquing a field of research. Once an appreciation is gained, Ph.D. students should meet with faculty advisors to discuss how AR approaches can be applied to area and topic literatures.
- In close consultation with the Primary Advisor, form two exam committees (area and topic). Although, the Qualifying Examination committees are not considered the Dissertation Reading Committee, the Qualifying Examination committee members should be faculty who are likely finalists for the Ph.D. student's Dissertation Reading Committee.
- In consultation with the area and topic committees, Ph.D. student should prepare bibliographies for each exam. Selecting items for inclusion in these bibliographies is part of how the Ph.D. student will demonstrate knowledge of the field of study (i.e., area and topic). At minimum, the bibliographies need to be fecund enough that the graduate student will be able to draw upon them to generate the following lines of thought:
    1. Rigorous assessments of the stages of development for a given field of study.
    2. Rigorous assessments of the key debates, past and present, for a given field of study.
    3. Rigorous assessments of the emerging (a.k.a., "cutting edge") scholarship of a given field of study.
    4. A stocktaking of what continues to be systemically lacking in one's fields and, within that, what is uniquely poised for redress. (Here is where, drawing together rigorous assessments, to be communicated in a strong authorial voice to critiques and to suggest some promising analytical remedies.)
- By January of Year 3, graduate students should finalize the exam bibliographies (do not keep adding and removing things after that point unless required by the exam members) and, in consultation with topic and area committees, begin drafting exam questions you'd want to answer.

Dispute Resolution:
It is common for any long-term relationship, in or outside the academy, to go through brief periods of discordance. *The department encourages both students and faculty to work openly with one another to manage wrinkles cropping up in advisor/ advisee relationships*. Such relationships can sometimes generate more than wrinkles, however. And what seems like a short-term discordance from one perspective can be something that is far more substantial and/or persistent from another's vantage point.

The Department of Anthropology firmly holds to the principle that every graduate student deserves, at minimum, healthy and productive relationships with their Primary Advisor and committee members. If changes to committees (member or chair) are needed, this is something the department supports. Many students can handle such assignment changes themselves. But in some instances this feels too fraught for the student to do alone. Because we recognize that the advisor-advisee relationship is inherently unequal, the department feels it is all the more important to emphasize there are resources to help you mediate issues in this domain.

Graduate students should know of the following relevant procedures and point people available to them whenever disputes in their advising relationships do occur. The procedures are listed here as "steps," but it should be noted that students can jump ahead whenever they feel such a move would be useful.

> Step one: reach out to Anthropology's Director of Graduate Studies (who may opt to immediately refer your matter onto the departmental chair).
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> Step two: reach out to the chair of the Department of Anthropology.
>
> Step three: reach out to the Associate Dean for Graduate and Undergraduate Studies in the School of Humanities and Sciences.
>
> Step four: contact Stanford University Ombudsman office.

At each of these four levels, your University point person will have professional resources s/he can deploy in confidential ways to help you resolve disputes.

Some other things that may help fortify your scholarly interactions with faculty and make your professionalization at Stanford more successful:
<u>At least one faculty member in the department recommends advisees read a book (not about anthropology)</u>—*How to Write a Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing* by Paul J. Silvia. Buy and (used, cheap) and read it.

<u>There are no foolish questions, only incomplete answers</u>. *Part one means*: Ask anything. Academia is a highly opaque work environment. One should not assume that they should know how things function or what things signify. It is better to ask than not to ask. *Part two means*: The guidance any one faculty provides is shaped by their own experiences and training. Students will face situations beyond the scope of a particular faculty member's expertise. So, build a strong team of mentors who can address a wide range of situations related to graduate student professional development.

<u>Faculty leaves</u>. Another reason that graduate students should actively build a strong network of faculty advisors at Stanford is that, for various reasons, including sabbatical, a student's Primary Advisor may go on leave from university duties. Before an extended leave, Primary Advisors and their advisees should discuss mechanisms and expectations for communications during that period.

<u>Faculty can only respond to the information provided by the graduate student</u>. If graduate students are Interested in careers outside of academia, they should let the faculty advisor(s) know so that this information can be included in professionalization discussions. If health issues or financial stress is affecting graduate student academic progress, the faculty advisor can connect graduate students with resources only if the faculty advisor is informed about the problem. If the dissertation proposal is late because of writers' block, graduate students are not alone – there are

resources that can help. In addition, if a graduate student is having second thoughts about pursuing a Doctoral degree, faculty advisors can suggest options for completing the degree given the current circumstance, as well as strategies for a graceful early exit from the program. There are many resources on campus that graduate students can access, directly, without the assistance of a faculty member. In that regard, graduate students are encouraged to be cognizant of the variety of University resources outlined in the following document: Office of the Vice Provost for Grad Education: Problem Solving & Crisis Intervention.

Positive feedback. Because feedback – peer review – is a regular part of academic life, graduate students should develop strategies for handling challenging feedback early in their career. The faculty intend to provide constructive feedback emphasizing what may need improvement in the areas of course performance, academic writing, or professional conduct, as well as what may be praised.

One reason the department brings guest speakers to campus is so that **graduate students** can build relationships with them. Graduate Students are encouraged to read the work of guest speakers, attend their lectures, and meet with them one-on-one, as well as to talk with them about graduate student research and ask for their advice. This is one way to build the graduate student professional network.

Become an expert on one's chosen profession. Graduate school is a step toward a goal, not a goal in itself. The goal is a productive and satisfying career that supports graduate student professional interests and passions. To succeed, graduate students need to take initiative to become fluent in the standards and customs of that domain. Be involved in one's chosen profession and the associated organizations as well as to be active in the development of that field.

Graduate school begins in the classroom but that's actually the smallest part of it. Graduate student should not be satisfied with simply meeting the department degree requirements. They should develop leadership in their planned career *before* graduating in the degree program. Leadership in academia is demonstrated in a variety of ways, from external funding, to organizing conference symposia, publications, and disciplinary service.