The relationship between faculty advisors of all types and graduate students should be founded on mutual respect and open communication and should be guided by norms of fairness and professionalism. Advisors and students should discuss the nature of their working relationship early and continue this discussion throughout their period of collaboration to ensure mutually understood and compatible expectations. These discussions should be frequent and open, and should include consideration of the nature and quality of the students’ work, their research and/or teaching goals, their progress in their academic programs, and any other factors that might impact the student-faculty working relationship. When applicable, these discussions should include the topics of authorship and/or ownership of intellectual property resulting from the efforts of students and faculty members in fulfilling their respective duties at Georgia State University. Both faculty members and graduate students should avoid relationships which conflict with their respective roles and duties at the university.

Administration of Policy

Mandating Authority:
University Senate

Responsible Office(s):
Senate Committee on Academic Programs
Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs
Senate Committee on Research

Responsible Executive(s):

Policy History

Approving Body: Senate

Rationale or Purpose
The mentoring relationship between faculty members and their students is a valued and integral part of graduate education at Georgia State University. Faculty members advise graduate students in various capacities: as thesis or dissertation advisors, as research and/or teaching advisors (including GRAs and GTAs), and as program and curriculum advisors. In many cases, a single faculty member will advise a particular graduate student in more than one of these capacities.

Additional Information

In light of the importance of mentoring to successful graduate education, each department should specify procedures that facilitate the process of graduate students becoming familiar with the research/teaching interests of its faculty members and with the process by which faculty advisors are selected and/or assigned within the department. Students should be made aware early in their program that, while other types of advisors often are assigned to the student by the department, students have the primary responsibility for making an informed selection of a faculty thesis/dissertation advisor, and that they must obtain the agreement of the faculty member to serve in this capacity.

Changes in advisors and/or research areas may be made for valid reasons following consultations with the present and future advisors, Departmental Graduate Director/Coordinator (when applicable), and the Chair of the Department.

Concerns relating to academic or work situations should be raised promptly between the persons directly involved and handled informally if possible. Both students and advisors have the responsibility to raise and address concerns and conflicts honestly and in a manner that conforms with academic integrity and professionalism. Georgia State University expects that graduate students’ concerns will be responded to fairly and promptly.

If a problem remains unresolved, the student or advisor may seek assistance, either formally or informally, from the Departmental Program Director (when applicable), Departmental Graduate Director/Coordinator (when applicable), Chair of the Department, Associate Dean/Dean of the College, and/or the Office of the Ombudsperson.

Approval by University Senate March 14, 2002

Additional Helpful Resources