

Institute for Systems Research

Statement of Expectations for Graduate Student Advising and Mentoring

M.S. in Systems Engineering

January 2023

This document articulates the Institute's expectations for advising and mentoring graduate students in our M.S. in Systems Engineering program. These expectations should help our faculty establish and maintain good advising relationships. They will also provide the Institute with guidance if a member of the Institute falls short of these expectations.

Key Values

These expectations are based on the following key values:

- **Respect.** The advisor should respect the student's autonomy, professional goals, research goals, and time. The student should respect the advisor's expertise, advice, research goals, and time.
- **Professional behavior.** The advisor and the student will be professional in their interactions with each other. Both persons should understand and perform their roles and responsibilities.
- **Transparency.** A good advising relationship is based on good communication, which should be clear and prompt, with no ambiguity or deception.
- **Responsiveness.** The advisor and student should be responsive to each other.
- **Recourse.** If necessary, the advisor or the student can end the advising relationship.

Advising and Mentoring Goal

The advisor should help the student achieve his research and professional goals.

Responsibilities

The following are the advisor's key responsibilities:

- Overseeing research activities, including identifying a thesis topic;
- Supervising the thesis; and
- Providing advice about professional goals.

Although postdocs and other researchers can provide valuable technical assistance to graduate students, advisors are expected to advise students personally and directly without relying on intermediaries.

The advisor should seek to form a good advising relationship that develops over time into mutually beneficial mentoring, which can be defined as a “long-term relationship in which faculty offer experiential wisdom to help build the many aspects of students’ careers” (quote from the Graduate School’s guidelines).

Best Practices

Advisors are expected to use the following best practices:

- Establish a regular meeting schedule with at least one individual meeting per month.
- Establish how the advisor and student will communicate.
- Agree on how quickly the advisor and student will respond to each other (for example, emails will be answered within two business days).
- Agree on how they will respect each other’s work-life boundaries.
- Agree on which topics, beyond thesis research and administrative tasks, are appropriate for discussion.
- Avoid topics that are not appropriate for a professional relationship. If the student raises such a topic, refer the student to campus resources who can assist him.
- Ensure that the student knows that they can end the advising
- Invite the student to participate in research group (or research lab) meetings and activities.
- Provide the student with access to lab equipment, software, and other resources that the student needs to complete assigned tasks and research goals.
- Instruct the student on how to conduct research ethically and to uphold standards of academic integrity.
- Provide clear feedback to the student about research performance and productivity at least twice a year.

Student Responsibilities

An effective advisor-student relationship depends also on the student.

The student has the following responsibilities:

- The student should approach the relationship as a professional one and should respect the advisor’s time. Students should seek guidance on matters appropriate to their research and professional goals.
- The student should treat the advisor in a respectful and professional manner.
- If an advising relationship becomes inadequate, unhelpful, or even detrimental, the student should promptly inform the graduate program director or the Institute director, who will assist in resolving the issue.

- The student should use the resources that are provided efficiently and without damaging or disabling them.
- The student should seek and pursue opportunities for post-graduation employment.
- The student should respond to feedback in a constructive manner. The student should recognize that the advisor is offering constructive criticism to improve the research approach, results, and publications.