

UMD DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY GRADUATE STUDENT MENTORSHIP POLICY

Value Statement

The purpose of this document is to articulate our collective commitments to graduate student mentorship that centers core values of the department and creates an accountability structure to ensure that students are given mentorship and resources throughout their graduate program, promoting their ability to thrive. Not only do we adhere to broad UMD ethical values of honesty, integrity, collegiality, mutual respect, responsibility, and accountability, but we are committed to the following additional Departmental values in mentoring our graduate students:

- We commit to centering principles of racial/social justice and equity in our mentorship approach and acknowledge the historical harms that higher education institutions have had on racialized and minoritized graduate students
- We acknowledge that the power dynamics between faculty and graduate students are something that requires constant reflection and work to minimize harm and toxicity
- We aspire to create an environment where diverse students are supported. We strategically consider the needs of students from historically underrepresented backgrounds in academia and anthropology and how racialized and minoritized students experience the graduate student process
- We adopt an intersectional approach to mentoring that is cognizant of the multiple categories of identity which impact the graduate school experience and mentorship dynamics. These identity categories include but are not limited to: race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, international student status, disability status, age, familial and professional responsibilities, among the multiple other categories which intersect graduate school experience.
- We aim to collectively develop mentorship skills as a faculty, which include centering wellness/well-being, empathy, problem solving, and collaboration with our graduate students
- We strive to always center students' best interests in the mentorship relationship and enact strategies that foster growth and enhance their scholarly trajectories. This includes working against taking advisor changes and/or committee selections personally and working against any climate of competition with, or exploitation of, graduate student labor
- We explicitly acknowledge that the above commitments will always require constant work, reflection, commitment, and accountability and will be ongoing processes as a graduate student advances in the program
- We commit to an openness to shaping accountability processes regarding these commitments that is informed by both graduate student and faculty needs and desires

Graduate Student Onboarding

Effective mentoring and successful graduate outcomes require establishing and implementing best practices within the department from the beginning of a graduate student's career. All faculty and students will be provided with the [Anthropology Graduate Handbook](#) outlining

policies, responsibilities, expectations, and available resources for graduate students. Incoming students receive a copy of this handbook during their orientation meeting with the Director and Assistant Director of Graduate Studies. The handbook is also [available online](#) for ease of access. Faculty advisors are strongly encouraged to review the handbook with their student advisees in their first semester so that both parties are familiar with departmental and university expectations and resources, and will seek information together on areas of uncertainty they may have, consulting with the Director and Assistant Director of Graduate Studies as needed.

Master's (MAA) students are assigned a provisional advisor in their area of concentration/subfield of study at the time of admission. The selection of the provisional advisor is based on agreement between the prospective MAA student's preferences for potential advisors as specified on their application, and potential advisor's willingness to work with a given prospective student. As a result, more often than not, provisional advisors become permanent advisors. MAA students meet with their provisional advisor monthly during their first semester, until they choose a permanent advisor, to ensure they receive all support and guidance necessary for success. Students should submit the Advisor Form to the Assistant Director of Graduate Studies indicating their chosen permanent advisor by mid-November. Students may choose a permanent advisor who is someone other than their provisional advisor. All students are encouraged to meet with other faculty in the department within their first semester both to identify potential committee members and to ensure that their permanent mentor is the faculty member who best matches their needs. All students meet with their provisional advisors within their first semester to mutually agree upon a permanent advisor relationship. Doctoral students are admitted to the program with a permanent advisor assigned. As described in the Graduate Handbook, this advisor-advisee relationship is one of mutual agreement, and either party may request termination at any point in the student's graduate career. The department recently established written best practices (see below) and a formal Advisor Transition Plan in support of advisor transitions. The permanent advisor serves as the student's mentor throughout their time in the graduate program. The faculty advisor serves as the chair of the masters and/or dissertation committees, and works with the student to identify potential committee members, appropriate elective coursework, and other training opportunities. The primary faculty advisor provides guidance, expertise, and experience that serves to advance the student's academic, research, and career success.

The Faculty Advisor-Graduate Student Advisee Relationship

The smooth functioning of the faculty advisor-graduate student advisee relationship is essential to student success and should be predicated on the values articulated above. Once the advisor-advisee relationship has been formalized, the faculty advisor and graduate student advisee will meet on a regular basis (at a mutually determined interval) until the student graduates from the program. *Meeting on a regular basis is defined here as meeting at least once a month throughout the academic year, and at the mutual discretion of the faculty and student during the summer.* However, during periods of intense data analysis, writing activity, and/or periods where additional support is deemed necessary, advisors and advisees may need to meet weekly or biweekly. Should either the student or faculty member be away (for

example, conducting fieldwork, on leave, or attending to other responsibilities), monthly check-ins via email or zoom should be arranged.

A critical component of the advisor-advisee relationship is the establishment of clear lines of communication surrounding coursework, research, teaching, and the student's overall wellbeing. This clear line of communication should be established as the graduate student begins the program and maintained throughout their graduate career. It is strongly recommended that the faculty advisor and student establish mutual expectations regarding responsiveness to communications and work products during one of their initial meetings. Though turnaround time on emails and other forms of communication may vary, responses to correspondence, initiated by either the advisee or the mentor, should take place within 72 hours. Turnaround time for feedback will also vary, depending on the length of the written project. Students and advisors should establish clear guidelines for deadlines and expectations for receiving written feedback. Communication should focus on monitoring student progress, establishing mechanisms for providing ongoing feedback to the student, imparting concrete guidance on research/internship development, assisting students in effectively managing their time, and encouraging participation in departmental/campus life. Through these ongoing discussions, advisors should seek to model and cultivate ethical relationships and behavior surrounding research conduct and authorship, including clearly articulating conventions for co-authorship. In general, co-authorship is appropriate when the student has meaningfully contributed to data collection, analysis, and/or writing of manuscripts. Students and faculty advisors should familiarize themselves with the [University of Maryland's faculty/student co-authorship policy](#). Should conflicts arise regarding issues with research conduct and authorship, the student should consult the Department of Anthropology's Graduate Student Grievance Process.

As students begin their program of study, advisors and advisees should strive to align expectations about their graduate training and career aspirations and revisit options on a regular basis. If the student's aspirations are to work outside of academia or traditional applied settings, the advisor should be supportive and foster connections to other mentors who can provide guidance on career development and navigating the job market. Advisors should model professional responsibility and have open conversations with their students about professional development and professionalization.

Funding is a crucial component in supporting graduate students in their academic and research career. Doctoral student funding is provided for four years in the form of departmental graduate assistantships and other College and University funding. This funding is independent of the faculty advisor. Some MAA students receive departmental funding through graduate assistantships, which are also independent of their faculty advisor. Graduate assistantship assignments are made approximately 6 weeks prior to the start of the semester, and may involve teaching, research, or front office responsibilities depending on the assignment. Faculty may hire graduate students on grant funding when available, but these work assignments are independent of the standard PhD and MAA departmental funding packages. All assistantships in the department are contractual, and questions regarding funding should be directed to the Director of Graduate Studies and/or Director of Administrative Services.

The Director and Assistant Director of Graduate Studies regularly communicate information about department, college, and university funding opportunities to all graduate students. Advisors also work with advisees to identify and apply for appropriate funding opportunities through research and peer networks, and specifically for dissertation research funding with doctoral advisees. All graduate students are strongly encouraged to seek out external and internal funding opportunities and communicate with their advisors about their intentions to apply so that both parties can plan in advance for the submission. Faculty advisors are expected to write letters of recommendation for fellowships, scholarships, and awards. However, not all funding opportunities require a recommendation letter which would inform the advisor of student intentions. Therefore, students should share information with their faculty advisor and keep them up-to-date regarding funding they apply for and receive. This funding may include, but is not limited to, graduate assistantships, fellowships, scholarships, awards, and part-time or full-time employment. Copies of successful funding applications should be sent to the Assistant Director of Graduate Studies to keep in the graduate student's file.

Advisors should engage with their advisees holistically, focusing not only on their academic journeys but also on challenges they may be facing in their personal lives that impact degree progress. Advisors should recognize that the educational and personal needs of each of their advisees will vary and that what works for one student may not work for another. Advisors should aim to provide concrete forms of support (e.g., referrals to campus support services) during challenging times and also help students find creative solutions to address these challenges. Students are also encouraged to engage in these personal conversations as helpful with faculty who are not their advisors. Faculty will respect students' personal boundaries and decisions about confidentiality and disclosure of personal circumstances. Should it be necessary, graduate students are encouraged to take parental leave or a leave of absence for personal physical or mental health reasons. Student advisors and the Director of Graduate Studies are expected to work together with students to develop effective leave plans.

Faculty advisors also need support in providing good advising on diverse issues of interest to their graduate student advisees. Faculty advisors should reach out to the Director and Assistant Director of Graduate Studies as needed to receive information on upcoming milestones, activities, and associated forms they will need to complete with their graduate student advisees. They will also participate with fellow departmental faculty members in the annual review of graduate students to develop greater awareness of their advisees' needs and any resources available for providing assistance. Faculty advisors are strongly encouraged to engage in regular training opportunities for mentoring to ensure that they are up-to-date on best practices and emerging issues.

Changing Advisors

Per the [UMD Graduate School](#), the faculty advisor-graduate student advisee relationship is one of mutual agreement. Either party may request termination of the relationship at any point in the student's graduate career. A change of advisor may occur for a variety of reasons, such as students and advisors having different research interests or work styles, or if faculty retire or

leave the university. If both parties agree to terminate the relationship and the student has secured a satisfactory arrangement with a new advisor, no further discussion is necessary, though all parties (the student, the former advisor, the new advisor, and the DGS) will need to complete and sign off on the Transition Plan (see below), which will be maintained for administrative purposes.

When a change of advisor cannot be resolved amicably, the party seeking the change should initiate a confidential conversation with the Director of Graduate Studies and/or the Department Chair. Separate meetings will be held between the graduate student, current advisor, proposed new advisor, DGS, and/or Chair, and faculty members of the Graduate Committee if desired. Meetings will not be convened with all of the stakeholders simultaneously and no formal written statement from either party will be required. If the other party does not already know about the requested change, then they will be notified after meeting/s between the above stakeholders.

If agreement is not achieved between the former advisor and student in terminating the relationship, there is no clear replacement advisor presented by the graduate student, or if this proposed new advisor has not agreed to replace the former advisor, then the DGS and Chair will discuss the best possible candidates to serve as the new advisor. The Graduate Committee and members of the relevant area of concentration will be brought in to discuss possible candidates if needed and at the discretion of the DGS and/or Chair. The consideration of advisor candidates will take into account the best possible match in terms of interests as well as the equitable distribution of faculty advising responsibilities. Candidates for advisor will be approached after these deliberations if they were not already part of them.

The DGS will work with the student, old advisor, and new advisor to develop a clear Transition Plan for the graduate student moving to a new advisor. This Transition Plan should address, among other topics, implications for program requirements (coursework, exams, advancement to candidacy), how students' funding will be maintained, and intellectual property concerns (ownership of data, fieldwork participation and obligations, authorship on completed or ongoing research). The student, the former advisor, the new advisor, and DGS will sign the Transition Plan, which will be maintained for administrative purposes.

Mentorship Beyond the Advisor

Graduate students should foster a diverse network of mentors because they will need multiple types of support for success. Support needs shift throughout the course of a graduate student's study program, and no single individual can provide all the support they will require to be successful in graduate school. This support can come from other committee members and even other faculty members who do not have formal advisement relationships with the student. This support could include resources and assistance for physical/mental health challenges, financial stress, family tensions, caregiving responsibilities, and personal distress, in addition to the recognized learning, research, and teaching challenges associated with academia. As such, graduate students are encouraged to seek **multiple mentors** *within the department and outside of the department*. These mentorship relationships do not need to be formalized in the same way as the faculty advisor-graduate student advisee relationship, though may be per the

preference of the mentor and student to allow mentors credit for their labor and to ensure transparency with the student's advisor. For example, graduate students regularly serve as teaching assistants and instructors for diverse classes at the University of Maryland. Identifying and working with an experienced teaching mentor assists graduate students in building instructional skills, strategizing difficult classroom situations, finding useful learning resources, and developing a personal pedagogy. Faculty advisors are encouraged to introduce their students to peers in the department, other departments on campus, and other academic institutions, government agencies, and non-profit/non-governmental organizations. All graduate students who opt in are assigned peer mentors when they enroll. Peer-to-peer mentoring is strongly encouraged as more experienced students can offer insights into available resources, departmental norms, and non-academic support. An initial conversation between an incoming student and their peer mentor is strongly encouraged to establish clear expectations of relationship boundaries, communication expectations, and departmental norms. Should issues develop in the peer mentoring relationship, the students involved should seek assistance from the Director and/or Assistant Director of Graduate Studies. Having multiple mentors provides graduate students the opportunity to receive the holistic support they need to be successful.