Advising and Mentoring

GRADUATE STUDENT ADVISING GUIDE

ACADEMIC CONCERNS

Keep in mind that there are many causes of academic difficulty including:

- Difficulty in course material, including socialization into a new field, difficulty balancing new roles of student and teacher/researcher, and limited experience writing for new scholarly audiences.
- Diagnosed or undiagnosed disability issues (attention deficit disorder, learning disability).
- Mental health concerns (depression, anxiety, etc.).
- Cultural, family, or personal concerns.

Many students appreciate an instructor taking the initiative to express concern about their academic performance. Faculty may be able to help a student with content-related difficulty, or may wish to refer to the resources below for these and other concerns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Academic Success Services &amp; Thesis Support Groups</th>
<th>The Graduate School</th>
<th>International Student &amp; Scholar Services</th>
<th>Disability Resource Center</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| University Counseling & Consulting Services 109 Eddy Hall (services also available at 199 Coffey Hall, St. Paul) | 316 Johnston Hall  
Phone: 612-625-3490  
Web:  
http://www.grad.umn.edu/students/ | 190 HHH Center  
Phone: 612-626-7100  
Web:  
http://www.isss.umn.edu/ | 180 McNamara Alumni Center  
Phone: 612-626-1333  
Web:  
https://diversity.umn.edu/disability/ |

Developed by a work group promoting academic civility at the University of Minnesota  
Summer 2008
PERSONAL CONCERNS

**BE CLEAR** about what you can and cannot do.

**RESPECT** the student’s value system and culture.

**Bear in mind:** Resist the temptation to be a hero or savior.

- Recognize the limits of your role and refer to other professionals when needed.
- Refrain from making promises you cannot or may not be able to keep.
- If the student or others are in danger, you will need to act; so be cautious about promises of confidentiality.
- Doing something in response to a student’s concerns is almost always better than doing nothing.
- Students may be in a new and potentially disorienting day-to-day cultural context while some students also feel disconnected from their normal support groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Counseling &amp; Consulting Services (UCCS)</th>
<th>Boynton Health Service Mental Health Clinic</th>
<th>Office for Equity and Diversity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>109 Eddy Hall (services also available in 199 Coffey Hall, St. Paul)</td>
<td>4th Floor Boynton Health Service Clinic: 612-624-1444 Urgent Counselor: 612-625-8475</td>
<td>Phone: 612-624-0594 Web: <a href="https://diversity.umn.edu/">https://diversity.umn.edu/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Phone: 612-624-3323</em></td>
<td><em>Clinic: 612-624-1444</em></td>
<td><em>Web: <a href="http://www.bhs.umn.edu">http://www.bhs.umn.edu</a></em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Web: <a href="http://www.uccs.umn.edu">http://www.uccs.umn.edu</a></em></td>
<td><em>Urgent Counselor: 612-625-8475</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Web: <a href="http://www.bhs.umn.edu">http://www.bhs.umn.edu</a></em></td>
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CONCERNS RELATING TO THE ADVISING RELATIONSHIP

The relationship is dynamic and is defined by the expectations, needs, and interests of both student and adviser.

Conflict is often a part of the advising relationship. Engaging constructively in conflict can provide for diverse perspectives and positive outcomes.

Clarifying expectations early in the relationship can minimize misunderstanding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Conflict Resolution Center (SCRC)</th>
<th>University Counseling and Consulting Services (UCCS)</th>
<th>Academic &amp; Professional Development, Graduate School</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>254 Appleby Hall</td>
<td>109 Eddy Hall (services also available in 199 Coffey Hall, St. Paul)</td>
<td>321 Johnston Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone: 612-624-7272</td>
<td>Phone: 612-624-3323</td>
<td>Phone: 612-625-2809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web: <a href="http://www.sos.umn.edu/">http://www.sos.umn.edu/</a></td>
<td>Web: <a href="http://www.uccs.umn.edu/">http://www.uccs.umn.edu/</a></td>
<td>Web: <a href="http://www.grad.umn.edu/professional-development/index.html">www.grad.umn.edu/professional-development/index.html</a></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UCCS offers targeted programming (e.g., thesis support groups) to help advanced graduate students complete their program successfully.</td>
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EMPLOYMENT CONCERNS

Graduate assistant employment is often integrally related to a graduate student’s success in the graduate academic program and to financial resources, such as tuition benefits. When things go wrong at work, there can be damaging ripple effects that can derail an academic career.

Graduate students are exploring new roles within the academic environment that can create frictional challenges.

Steps you can take to reduce conflicts during the semester for Graduate Assistants (TA/RA/Graduate Fellows) include:

- Communicate clearly before the semester about work responsibilities and the work relationship.
- Establish a method for mutually communicating throughout the semester about any adjustments, changes, or concerns that impact the workload, expectations, or relationship.
- Coordinate schedules at the beginning of the semester between work responsibilities and the graduate student’s other responsibilities, e.g., academic deadlines and religious observances (e.g., Ramadan and Rosh Hashanah), ideally at the beginning of the semester.
- Consider in advance the professional development opportunities your graduate assistant will engage in to successfully function in their roles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office for Conflict Resolution</th>
<th>Center for Teaching and Learning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>662 Heller Hall</td>
<td>Suite 400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone: 612-624-1030</td>
<td>University Office Plaza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:ocr@umn.edu">ocr@umn.edu</a></td>
<td>Phone: 612-625-3041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web: ocr.umn.edu</td>
<td>Web: <a href="http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn">http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR TAKING ACTION

1. **ENSURE PRIVACY** when you talk and choose a time when you are not preoccupied or rushed.

2. **LISTEN** to the student in a sensitive, non-threatening way.

3. **DEMONSTRATE** your understanding by repeating the essence of what the student has said. Try to include both the **CONTENT** (“So you are new to this campus...”) and the **FEELINGS** (“...and you are feeling overwhelmed”) as appropriate.

4. **ASK QUESTIONS** to get a better understanding of the scope and nature of the problem.

5. **EXPRESS CONCERN** in specific, nonjudgmental, behavioral terms. (“I noticed you haven’t been to class in three weeks,” not “Where have you been lately?”)

6. **COMMUNICATE HOPE** by reminding the student that there are always options, and things tend to look different with time.

7. **RECOMMEND RESOURCES** appropriate to the situation. Take the time to consult the resource ahead of time if you are unsure or would like more information on how they might be helpful in a particular situation. Remind the student that using resources is a sign of strength and courage, not weakness or failure.

8. **FOLLOW UP** in a reasonable length of time.

9. **CONSULT** with other professionals by contacting any of the offices listed above, especially if you are concerned about your safety or the safety of others.