

# Faculty and Staff Advising Guidebook



GRAND VALLEY  
STATE UNIVERSITY®  
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

An Advising Guide for quality advising  
and mentoring experience

2023-2024

[gvsu.edu/gs](https://gvsu.edu/gs)



# Introduction

---

Quality academic advising and mentoring are critical for the successful educational experience of graduate students. There is considerable research to support the idea that good advising and mentoring, which begin early in the student's career, facilitate efficient degree completion. Furthermore, survey results of our own graduates have indicated that GVSU graduate students highly value good advising. As a result, we have developed the GVSU Advising Guidebook for Graduate Faculty and Staff to ensure that all our graduate students have a high quality and engaged advising and mentoring experience. The Advising Guidebook for Graduate Faculty and Staff is the result of considerable research and discussion from many campus stakeholders including graduate students, faculty and staff, university governance, and university leadership. This document is intended to promote interaction between faculty and graduate students regarding their mutual expectations.

Our Advising Guidebook for Graduate Faculty and Staff provides insight into the roles that GVSU faculty members and staff play in supporting graduate students from the time of acceptance into a program through degree completion and entry into a professional career. By recognizing the complex program and curricular structures that exist at GVSU, these guidelines can be used to customize an advising and mentoring plan specific for students in all of our graduate programs. While it is important to acknowledge the leadership role that faculty and staff play in the relationship with graduate students, it is also vital for graduate students to maintain open communication and to find out for themselves what may be needed for their academic success. The expression of clear expectations will result in an advising and mentoring relationship that is of mutual benefit to all. We hope everyone will use these guidelines to provide the best advising and mentoring experience for all our graduate students.

Respectfully,



Jeffrey A. Potteiger, Ph.D.  
Associate Vice-Provost for The Graduate School

## Acknowledgements

---

The Advising Guidebook for Graduate Faculty and Staff was originally developed by the following individuals:

Claudia Bajema, Seidman College of Business

Sean Lancaster, College of Education and Community Innovation

Shabbir Choudhuri, Seymour and Esther Padnos College of Engineering and Computing

Andrew Booth, College of Health Professions

Dawn Hart, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Troy Bouman, Graduate Student Association

John Stevenson, The Graduate School

Jeffrey Potteiger, The Graduate School

The Advising Guidebook for Graduate Faculty and Staff was reviewed by the following groups:

Graduate Student Association

Graduate Council

Graduate Program Directors Group

Academic Deans

Office of the Provost

*This publication is based in part on “How to Mentor Graduate Students” produced by the Rackham Graduate School at the University of Michigan and “Strategies for Improving Advising and Mentoring of Graduate and Professional Students” from the University of Minnesota. We thank our colleagues for publishing best practices that allow us to provide guidance for the faculty, staff, and students at Grand Valley State University.*

*Produced by The Graduate School*

*Grand Valley State University*

*2023-24*

*Comments may be directed to [gradschool@gvsu.edu](mailto:gradschool@gvsu.edu)*

## Table of Contents

---

Purpose of graduate academic advising	5
Sources of graduate academic advising	5
Best practices associated with each source of academic advising:	6
Academic unit	6
Unit Head and/or Graduate Program Director	6
Faculty member advisor	7
External advisor	7
Thesis/dissertation committee member	8
The Graduate School	8
GVSU Career Center	8
Graduate Advising Offices	9
Padnos International Center	9
Library Faculty and Staff	9
Office of Fellowships	10
Graduate Student	10
Ensuring quality advising:	11
Create an expectation of quality advising	11
Train the advisor/student	11
Evaluate the quality of advising	11
Provide feedback to advisor and student	11
Resources:	12
Academic Resources	12
Health and Wellness Resources	12
Campus and Student Life Resources	12
Social Justice Centers	12
Appendices:	13
Survey 1 – Individual Advisor Model	13
Survey 2 – Cohort Program Model	14
Survey 3 – Clinical Education Program Model	15

## Purpose of Graduate Academic Advising

---

Excellence in graduate education requires adherence to the highest standards of professional integrity, ethics, and scholarly activity. This excellence is best facilitated within a community of scholars and practitioners where constructive relationships between graduate students and their advisors and mentors are essential. Effective advising and mentoring of graduate students is the joint responsibility of the degree-granting program and academic units, faculty advisors and program faculty, non-faculty advisors, and the students. The academic unit forms the community of scholars and practitioners responsible for cultivating a stimulating intellectual environment and, through the joint efforts of all graduate faculty members of the unit, mentoring of graduate students. Non-faculty advisors work collaboratively with the graduate students and academic unit to provide additional expertise and specialized guidance that fosters the educational, personal, and career goals of the student. Accordingly, the following best practices are intended to foster relationships that are characterized by integrity, courtesy, and professionalism and that provide students with intellectual support and guidance. Advising and mentoring graduate students entails a considerable commitment of time and effort on the part of the student and members of the university community.

## Sources of Graduate Academic Advising

---



## **Best Practices Associated with Each Source of Advising**

The diversity in how graduate programs function across GVSU necessitates an understanding that each individual program must be responsible for providing the most appropriate academic advising structure to its students. As such, each graduate program should strive to implement the best practices provided as deemed applicable to the advising structure.

### **The best practices of the academic unit may include:**

- Preparing and maintaining a Graduate Program Handbook that includes the graduate program requirements for degree completion and information outlined in the Graduate Student Guidebook and the Graduate Program Director's Handbook
- Providing opportunities for graduate students to interact with a wide array of colleagues and professionals from within and outside the university through such activities as speaker series, colloquia, and other formal and informal events (including virtual events)
- Creating and promoting opportunities for graduate students to become familiar with the various forms of research and scholarship in the field
- Sharing responsibility with thesis and dissertation committees and faculty advisors in fostering the professional and career development of graduate students. For example, providing venues for honing professional writing and presentation skills, and organizing seminars on issues such as ethics, professional integrity, and grantsmanship

### **The best practices of the unit head and/or graduate program director may include:**

- Knowing university and academic unit rules, policies, and procedures applicable to graduate study, research, and creative activities and ensuring that they are followed in the academic unit
- Providing the academic unit's Graduate Program Handbook to all graduate students
- Organizing orientation sessions for new graduate students in the program
- Ensuring that required courses are scheduled on a regular basis, thereby enabling graduate students to make timely progress in their degree programs
- Sending names of faculty advisors and their advisees to the Office of the Registrar for recording on the student record
- Providing advice on matters such as course selection until a permanent faculty advisor is selected or appointed
- Facilitating selection or appointment of a faculty advisor and facilitating changes of faculty advisors should this become necessary
- Periodically monitoring the progress of students in all aspects of their graduate program
- Monitoring masters' thesis and doctoral dissertation proposals and defenses to ensure acceptable standards of rigor and fairness
- Monitoring the performance of faculty advisors and thesis and dissertation committees to ensure that graduate students are receiving appropriate mentoring
- Working toward fair resolutions of conflicts between graduate students and faculty members
- Acclimating students to the graduate school environment
- Facilitating internship opportunities and professional development activities

**The best practices of the faculty/staff advisor may include:**

- Ensuring that graduate students receive information about the requirements and policies of the graduate program
- Guiding graduate students in developing a program plan of study, including appropriate course work, research or creative activity, and available resources
- Assisting graduate students with the selection of a project, thesis, or dissertation topic with realistic prospects for successful completion within an appropriate time frame
- Aiding graduate students with the formation of a thesis or dissertation committee
- Providing training and oversight in creative activities, research rigor, theoretical and technical aspects of the thesis or dissertation research, and professional integrity
- Ensuring graduate students are aware of current literature and cutting-edge ideas in the field
- Helping graduate students develop professional skills in writing reports, papers, and grant proposals, making professional presentations, establishing professional networks, interviewing, and evaluating manuscripts and papers
- Providing regular feedback on the progress of students in all aspects of their graduate program
- Helping graduate students develop into successful professionals and colleagues, including encouraging graduate students to participate in and disseminate results of research or creative activities in appropriate scholarly or public forums
- Facilitating career development, including advising graduate students on appropriate job and career options, as well as preparation of application materials for appropriate fellowship, scholarship, and other relevant opportunities
- Writing letters of reference for appropriate fellowship, scholarship, award, educational, and job opportunities
- Arranging for supervision and advising of graduate students when the faculty advisor is on leave or experiences an extended absence

**The best practices of the external advisor may include:**

- Helping graduate students develop into successful professionals and colleagues
- Facilitating career development, including advising graduate students on appropriate job and career options, as well as on the preparation of application materials for appropriate fellowship, scholarship, and other relevant opportunities
- Writing letters of reference for appropriate fellowship, scholarship, award, educational, and job opportunities
- Providing feedback to the appropriate individual within the academic unit/graduate program about graduate student performance

**The best practices of the thesis/dissertation committee members may include:**

- Advising graduate students on coursework, research, scholarship, or creative activities
- Administering proposal and defense examinations in a fair and professional manner
- Reviewing the thesis or dissertation in a timely, constructive, and critical manner with a critical eye for content and grammar
- Writing letters of reference for appropriate fellowship, scholarship, award, and job opportunities

**The best practices of [The Graduate School](#) may include:**

- Producing and distributing the [Graduate Student Guidebook](#)
- Producing and distributing the [Graduate Director's Handbook](#) and [Graduate Faculty Handbook](#).
- Offering [new graduate student orientation](#) prior to the start of each semester, including Spring/Summer.
- Developing and offering a robust schedule of professional development events specifically designed for graduate students (e.g., financial literacy, applying to Ph.D. programs, and more)
- Posting [thesis or dissertation](#) proposal and defense announcements on The Graduate School website
- Organizing and hosting annual events that feature model graduate student work
- Holding regularly scheduled meetings to inform the Graduate Program Directors about issues within and outside the university that are relevant to graduate education
- Holding regularly scheduled meetings of the graduate faculty to provide a forum for the dissemination of information and discussion about issues related to graduate education at GVSU
- Monitoring advising outcomes across the university through systematic evaluation processes
- Continuing to modify and improve the graduate student experience

**The best practices of the GVSU [Career Center](#) may include:**

- Providing career-related resources, including career planning, preparation, and transition assistance
- Providing access to [Handshake](#), giving students and alumni access to student worker positions, internships, and full-time job listings with GVSU employer and community partners
- Helping students with career exploration, interviewing skills and resume/cover letter development, job/internship search strategies, and networking strategies
- Fostering employer connections through on-campus interviews, career fairs, and other employer networking opportunities (including virtual or remote options)
- Serving as liaisons between employers and students, maintaining current databases of employment opportunities as well as student resumes, and providing workshops that develop skills for students seeking employment



**The best practices of the Graduate Advising Offices may include:**

- Assisting with admitting students to the program
- Providing graduate students with program updates and changes
- Sending “graduate student success tips” to admitted students in the graduate program
- Assisting with program and degree audits
- Assisting prospective students with the application process
- Providing help to students with any challenges to program completion
- Assisting both prospective and admitted students with scholarship opportunities
- Maintaining a supportive and welcoming environment for constituent groups

**The best practices of the [Padnos International Center](#) may include:**

For Study Abroad opportunities:

- Assisting graduate students in finding study abroad opportunities
- Advising students on the online application process, required documents, and other key resources
- Serving as a liaison for Graduate Program Directors and students during study abroad program selection
- Providing a pre-departure orientation for graduate students who study abroad

For International Student support:

- Communicating the needs of incoming international graduate students to the Graduate Program Directors and Faculty Advisors
- Encouraging Advisors to meet online with students prior to arrival
- Assisting students with scheduling appointments during orientation events
- Hosting a [Graduate International Student Orientation](#)
- Advertising the [New Graduate Student Orientation](#)
- Advertising the [New Graduate Assistantship Orientation](#)

**The best practices of the [Library](#) Faculty and Staff may include:**

- Ensuring there is a subject librarian for each graduate program
- Selecting and providing access to resources to support the curricular needs of graduate programs
- Partnering with classroom faculty on in-class and self-guided instruction related to library resources and research techniques
- Supporting and providing resources in the areas of information literacy, scholarly publishing, and copyright
- Providing a broad range of library services to graduate students
- Developing and offering library research and copyright related programs
- Hosting graduate student theses and dissertations in the university’s institutional repository (i.e., [ScholarWorks@GVSU](#))

**The best practices of the [Frederik Meijer Office of Fellowships](#) may include:**

- Assisting students with identifying nationally competitive scholarship and fellowship award opportunities that match the student's strengths, interests, and ambitions in pursuit of scholarly activities such as study abroad, research, and/or graduate study
- Designing a plan of action for students to pursue fellowship goals
- Providing guidance, encouragement, and endorsement through the awards application process
- Assisting with feedback on components of a nationally competitive scholarship or fellowship application, including personal statements and statements of grant purpose

**The best practices of the graduate student may include:**

- Adhering to university and academic unit/program rules, procedures, and policies applicable to graduate study
- Meeting university and academic unit/program requirements for degree completion
- For those students completing a thesis or dissertation, forming a committee that meets university and program requirements
- Following disciplinary and scholarly codes of ethics in course work, project, thesis or dissertation research, and in creative activities
- Practicing uncompromising honesty and integrity according to university and federal guidelines in collecting and maintaining research data
- Seeking regulatory approval for research in the early stages of project, thesis, or dissertation work where applicable
- Keeping the faculty advisor and thesis/dissertation committee members apprised on a regular basis of the progress toward completion of the project, thesis, or dissertation
- Seeking professional development activities and internship opportunities by asking about professional associations, conferences, professional presentations, and other scholarly activities.
- Consulting with their graduate program director and/or advisor on any questions regarding progress toward degree completion, academic course planning, funding, publishing, attending conferences, teaching, research, career goals, and the job search process.
- Utilizing the [Graduate Student Blueprint](#) to engage in semester check-ins with your advisor on relevant topics for each stage of degree completion

## Ensuring Quality Graduate Academic Advising

---

In an effort to ensure quality academic advising for graduate students, Grand Valley State University and the academic units and graduate programs should engage in the following practices:

**Create standards for quality graduate academic advising by having graduate programs produce an advising expectations document, which addresses the following questions:**

- How often are advisors expected to meet with their advisees?
- What are the key functions of an advisor?
- What are the boundaries of the relationship between an advisor/advisee?
- What challenges do faculty members face in providing quality advising?
- How do conflicts between students and advisors get resolved?

**Train the advisor/student**

- Provide each graduate advisor and graduate student with a copy of the Advising Guidebook for Graduate Students
- Offer seminars or workshops (including virtual options) on various topics that will assist faculty with improving graduate level advising.

**Evaluate the quality of advising**

- Administer an advising evaluation once per academic year (see appendix for examples)
- Monitor responses from the Graduate Student Exit Survey

**Provide feedback to advisors**

- Provide a summary of advising evaluation survey results to academic programs and the graduate program director

## Resources

---

### ***Academic Resources***

GVSU Career Center  
616-331-6708 or 616-331-3311  
<http://www.gvsu.edu/careers/>

The Graduate School  
616-331-7105  
<http://www.gvsu.edu/gs/>

Knowledge Market  
<https://www.gvsu.edu/library/km/>

PACES Professional Development  
<http://www.gvsu.edu/paces/>

Padnos International Center  
616-331-3898  
<http://www.gvsu.edu/pic/>

Registrar's Office  
616-331-3327 or 616-331-2025  
<http://www.gvsu.edu/registrar>

Speech Lab  
616-331-8115  
<http://www.gvsu.edu/speechlab/>

Statistical Consulting Center  
616-331-3355  
<http://www.gvsu.edu/scc/>

Fred Meijer Center for Writing and  
Michigan Authors  
616-331-2922  
<http://www.gvsu.edu/wc/>

University Libraries  
616-331-3500  
<http://www.gvsu.edu/library>

### ***Health and Wellness Resources***

Recreation and Wellness  
616-331-1732  
<http://www.gvsu.edu/rec/>

GVSU Family Health Center  
616-331-9830  
<http://www.gvsu.edu/fhc/>

University Counseling Center  
616-331-3266  
<http://www.gvsu.edu/counsel/>

### ***Campus and Student Life Resources***

Graduate Student Association  
<http://www.gvsu.edu/gsa/>

Office of Student Life  
616-331-2345  
<http://www.gvsu.edu/studentlife/>

Peter Secchia Military and Veterans  
Resource Center  
616-331-2597  
<http://www.gvsu.edu/veterans/>

### ***Social Justice Centers***

Campus Interfaith Resources  
616-331-5702  
<https://www.gvsu.edu/campusinterfaith/>

Milt E. Ford LGBT Resource Center  
616-331-2530  
<http://www.gvsu.edu/lgbtrc/>

Office of Multicultural Affairs  
616-331-2177  
<http://www.gvsu.edu/oma/>

Gayle R. Davis Center for Women and  
Gender Equity  
616-331-2748  
[http://www.gvsu.edu/women\\_cen/](http://www.gvsu.edu/women_cen/)

Disability Support Resources  
616-331-2490  
<http://www.gvsu.edu/dsr/>



## ***Appendix A – Individual Advisor Model Sample Survey***

---

*Survey Example: Individual Advisor Model*

**Include a welcoming statement to students, assuring their answers will be kept confidential, such as:**

- Thank you for taking this survey, which seeks to gather information about your graduate advising experience over the past year. This important feedback will be used to help improve the quality of advising. Please answer as many questions as you wish. Your advisor will not see this form; however, the faculty members in your graduate program may be informed of the summary of responses from all graduate students who complete the survey.

**Ask students frequency and nature of their visits to their advisors:**

- How many times have you met with your academic advisor in the current academic year?
- Have you talked with your advisor about any of the following topics? Examples of topics to offer as choices: progress to date, academic course planning, funding, publishing, attending conferences, teaching, research, career goals, and job search process.
- Did you meet with your advisor face-to-face, virtually, or by phone?

**Ask students to rank advisors' effectiveness (using a scale such as 1=Strongly Agree, 5=Strongly Disagree, or Not Applicable):**

- Advisor availability
- Advisor understanding of overall academic progress
- Advisor listens to concerns or questions
- Advisor provides constructive feedback
- Advisor initiated scheduling the first advising meeting

**Ask students about demographic information such as year of study, graduate program, and/or emphasis area.**

**Allow students a space for additional comments at the end of the survey. For multiple-choice questions, include an option for “other” so that students can expand their answers if necessary.**

## ***Appendix B – Cohort Program Model Sample Survey***

---

### *Survey Example: Cohort Program Model*

**Include a welcoming statement to students, assuring their answers will be kept confidential, such as:**

Thank you for taking this survey, which seeks to gather information about your graduate advising experience over the past year. This important feedback will be used to help improve the quality of advising. Please answer as many questions as you wish. Your program faculty members will not see this form; however, the faculty members in your graduate program may be informed of the summary of responses from all graduate students who complete the survey.

**Ask students how many times per year they have been offered academic advising.**

**Ask students frequency and nature of their advising opportunities:**

- How many times have you been offered academic advising in the current academic year?
- Have you talked with your advisor about any of the following topics? Examples of topics to offer as choices: progress to date, academic course planning, funding, publishing, attending conferences, teaching, research, career goals, and job search process.

**Ask students to rank access and effectiveness of advising (using a scale such as 1=Strongly Agree, 5=Strongly Disagree, or Not Applicable):**

- Able to obtain advising when needed
- Program advisors have a thorough understanding of overall academic progress
- Program advisors listen to concerns and questions
- Program advisors provide constructive feedback

**Ask students for information such as year of study, graduate program, and/or emphasis area.**

**Allow students a space for additional comments at the end of the survey. For multiple-choice questions, include an option for “other” so that students can expand their answers if necessary.**

## ***Appendix C – Clinical Education Program Model Sample Survey***

---

*Survey Example: Clinical Education Program Model*

**Include a welcoming statement to students, assuring their answers will be kept confidential. See examples in Appendix A or B.**

**Ask students to rate their faculty advisors for each statement that is relevant to their interactions with those advisors (1=Strongly Agree, 5=Strongly Disagree, or Not Applicable).** If needed, ask students to provide the name of their advisor.

**Ask students to rate their advisors on items related to knowledge of the program and university, such as:**

- Campus services and resources
- Awareness of other health related programs at GVSU
- Knowledge about courses required for degree completion

**Ask students to rate their advisors on items related to interpersonal skills, such as:**

- Advisor listens to concerns and questions
- Advisor acknowledges the student's needs and interests
- Advisor assists in the development of professional behaviors and identity
- Advisor demonstrates professional behavior
- Overall satisfaction with the assistance received from advisor

**Ask students to rate themselves on items related to advising, such as:**

- Did the student make an appointment to see an advisor?
- Did the student keep scheduled appointments with an advisor?
- Was the student well prepared for advising appointments?
- Did the student participate in group advising?

**Ask students for information such as year of study, graduate program, and/or emphasis area.**

**Allow students a space for additional comments at the end of the survey. For multiple-choice questions, include an option for “other” so that students can expand their answers if necessary.**