

Mentoring Guidelines for Mentees

The Doctoral Program in Social Welfare assumes that an effective mentoring relationship is a shared responsibility of both the mentor and mentee. These guidelines aim to ensure that students experience maximum benefits from working with a faculty group that is ranked #1 in the nation in terms of their research productivity and that faculty, in turn, benefit from working with our outstanding doctoral students

Definitions:

Academic advising: A developmental process that assists students in the clarification of their life/career goals and in the development of educational plans for the realization of these goals. It is a decision-making process by which students realize their maximum educational potential through communication and information exchanges with an advisor; it is ongoing, multi-faceted, and the responsibility of student and advisor. ¹

Mentoring: A professional relationship with one or more faculty who provide coaching on skills development in research and teaching, career consultation, demystifying graduate school, providing feedback and encouragement, and helping the student develop a professional network. A mentor provides you with wisdom, technical knowledge, assistance, support, empathy, and respect throughout, and often beyond, your graduate career. Mentoring helps students understand how their ambitions fit into graduate education, department life, and career choices.²

At the UW School of Social Work

Throughout the Doctoral Program, students have ongoing relationships with the Doctoral Program Director and Assistant Director. The Assistant Director, in particular, provides academic advising to students and coordinates communication about milestones, available courses, and opportunities for learning.

In the first year, all students are assigned a faculty advisor. The first-year advising role is primarily a starting point to connect students with programmatic information and faculty resources and to address policy and procedural matters and questions. This means a substantive match is less important than a willingness to help guide the student during the transition to graduate school in Year 1 and preparation for Year 2. One central task that advisors perform in Year 1, however, is to work with their advisee on writing their *Individual Development Plan (IDP)*. The IDP is a process through which students reflect on, plan and discuss their academic and professional goals; it is to be submitted annually to the Doctoral Program Office

When a student establishes a supervisory committee, typically at the end of the second year, the Committee Chair (who may or may not have been the Year 1 advisor) becomes the primary mentor for the remainder of the students' time in the program.

¹ Winston, Jr. R. B., Enders, S. C., & Miller, T. K. (Eds.) (1982). Developmental approaches to academic advising. New Directions for Student Services.

² From UW Graduate School: <https://grad.uw.edu/for-students-and-post-docs/core-programs/mentoring/mentoring-a-guide-for-faculty/what-a-mentor-does/>

In contrast to first-year advising, mentoring is longer term and characterized by:

- A collaborative learning relationship between individuals who share mutual responsibility and accountability for helping the mentee work toward the fulfillment of clear and mutually defined learning goals – and to achieve professional excellence.
- Shared scholarly interests as identified by both the mentee and mentor.
- Attention to building trust as central to an effective mentoring relationship.
- A focus on the student’s progress through the program’s *Academic Milestones*, (<https://socialwork.uw.edu/sites/default/files/sswfiles/PhD%20Program%20Milestones.pdf>) particularly the Qualify Paper (QP) and the Dissertation.
- Updating the IDP to reflect changing needs and goals.
- Assisting mentees at specific stages of professional development and career transition.
- Helping the mentee establish a research community within and outside the School of Social Work.

The suggestions for effective mentoring relationships in this document are a synthesis of best practices from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, San Francisco State University, University of Michigan, and the University of Washington Center for Clinical and Translational Science, Institute of Translational Health Sciences, and the Graduate School. It is also useful for you as a mentee to think back on what kind of mentoring you have found helpful in the past. How might those experiences apply to what you are looking for in a mentor and what you will bring to the mentoring experience?

Ways in which Mentors Provide Guidance

Areas or topics through which mentors often help, directly and/or by finding other people or opportunities to meet your needs, are listed below. Some of these are primarily oriented toward success in the program, others to scholarly/professional and career development, but these often overlap. The importance of these topics will vary with the different stages in your development as an independent scholar:

Oriented toward Programmatic Success

Oriented toward scholarly/professional development

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choosing appropriate courses outside the School based on program requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating networking with others in your substantive area and introducing you to key scholars at professional meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervising or assisting to establish independent studies, if appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turning your research into publications – developing and submitting manuscripts, responding to reviewers, etc.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formulating a QP topic, outline, and timeline, and communicating with your committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with mentor to create a structure for timely completion of the QP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a dissertation topic, proposal, and timeline, and communicating with your committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparing presentations and/or posters for professional meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working on your IDP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practicing research and professional planning skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing <i>Academic Program Milestones</i> on a quarterly basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role modeling in professional situations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informing you of appropriate TA and RA opportunities (in addition to those identified by the Doctoral Program Director and the Dean's Office) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussing job options, preparing for the job market and negotiating an offer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applying for grant or fellowship funding, as appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that you are aware of major trends and issues in the field, such as the Grand Challenges for Social Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying other mentors to help you with topics that are not your primary mentor's strengths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing protocols for the IRB for your research if needed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offering advice on teaching opportunities and strategies for improving teaching, where appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helping you develop attainable research and career goals and a plan for attaining them
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategizing on building an effective mentoring team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducting peer review of research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demystifying the graduate school and faculty experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nominating you for appropriate awards and fellowships (local and national)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting your questioning, curiosity, and innovative creative work that can help with tackling the Grand Challenges facing the profession 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fostering transdisciplinary opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socializing you to productivity expectations of doctoral education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socializing you to productivity expectations of academia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring timely completion of the program and advising you regarding career opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brainstorming ideas for time management and for maintaining work/life balance

Getting Started with a Mentoring/Mentee Relationship

The responsibility to identify a mentor (or mentors) rests with you, the student, although first-year advisors and the Doctoral Program Director can assist with identifying a roster of potential mentors for you to contact. One strategy for getting to know possible mentors is to take a one- (or more) credit independent study with a potential faculty mentor. Although your primary mentor

must be a Social Welfare Doctoral Faculty member, students typically develop mentoring teams that include faculty from other departments, particularly for their Supervisory Committee. This allows for complementarity of the mentors' skills and rank, and can foster transdisciplinary skill development.

Before contacting a potential mentor, it is useful to do a short self-appraisal regarding your:

- Goals for graduate school and beyond
- Research/scholarly priorities and goals
- Strengths and areas that need development: competencies that you bring, areas that you need to work on, and experiences that will help address gaps
- Preferred work style (independent, collaborative, structured) and why
- Limitations that you may face, such as finances, family demands, etc., and whether you want to share those with a mentor

Here is a list of **possible characteristics or qualities to look for in a mentor** while recognizing that one mentor is unlikely to be able to meet all of your needs. As you modify this list to fit for you, think about which characteristics are most important to you in addressing the needs and goals you have identified through a self-appraisal.

- Substantive or methodological expertise related to your research goals
- Have time, energy, and ability to support your progress
- Have a genuine interest in helping you develop professionally
- Possess a strong professional network that they will introduce you to
- Be an excellent listener
- Be well known in your substantive area
- Be available to you on a timely basis when you need assistance
- Have the ability to help structure your learning
- Capability of providing written feedback within 1 to 2 weeks after you submit a written document
- Other attributes that are important to you

Here is a list of **qualities of an effective mentee as perceived by our doctoral faculty**

- Faculty should not work harder than the student; mentoring is collaborative
- Students who are characterized by curiosity, flexibility, openness to critical feedback, intellectually hungry
- Willingness to develop an informal contract
 - Timeline for feedback
 - Permission to “bug” faculty for feedback
 - How best to structure communication
- Committed to making the best possible revisions – not the minimal ones
- Come with a targeted agenda for the meeting rather than completely open-ended discussion
 - This is what I said I would do, this is what I did, these are the three major issues that I would like to talk about, here are my ideas for solutions

Preparing for Your First Meeting with a Potential Mentor

The more time you put into preparing for your first meeting, the more productive it is likely to be.

- Set up an appointment in advance: don't just drop in.
 - Send a well-crafted professional email or voice mail asking for a meeting: communication impressions matter!
 - Be respectful of your mentor's time – including don't cancel meetings at the last minute.
- Be clear about what you need and expect from a mentor – do not bring a long shopping list of all the things you want your mentor to do!
 - Be knowledgeable about potential mentor's research.
 - Define your goals and needs while recognizing that these may change over time depending upon year in the program.
 - Be able to tell your mentor how they can be most helpful. Where are you going to need the most support and guidance?
 - Set realistic expectations.
- **An introductory meeting** might cover the following:
 - Find commonalities in terms of scholarly (substantive and/or methodological) interests.
 - Share professional backgrounds and goals.
 - Discuss your research goals and needs while recognizing that these may change over time depending upon your year in the program.
 - Acknowledge both your strengths as well as concerns and areas that need development.
 - Identify and begin to align expectations to assess if working together is realistic and mutually beneficial. Will the faculty member have the time, energy and ability to support your professional development? Will they be available to provide assistance when you are most likely to need it?
 - Discuss what each of you perceives as the boundaries of the mentoring relationship.
 - Agree on a timeline for when a decision will be made on whether you will work together.
 - Any other issues/topics that will help clarify if this is likely to be an effective mentor/mentee relationship.

Sustaining a Positive Mentoring Relationship:

A mutual responsibility of mentee and mentor

These are derived from the documents of other social work programs nationally as well as the UW Institute of Translational Health Sciences and the Graduate School.

- Be knowledgeable about policies, deadlines and requirements of the doctoral program – all of which are in the [Student Manual on the website](#).
- Be proactive:
 - It is your responsibility to identify your research focus driven by your passions and interests
 - Your mentor provides guidance and feedback to help you get clarity – but is not a coach or miracle worker.
 - Take the initiative for your own development and accept responsibility for your progress and career goals.

- Strive to be increasingly independent in your training and scholarly activities over time to hone your career development skills (writing for publication, conducting research).
- Maintain a high level of professionalism, self-motivation, engagement, and ethical standards for conducting research and pursuing other scholarly activities.
- Come to meetings prepared with an agenda and a list of targeted questions/issues that you want to discuss.
- Be prepared to listen but also to contribute to the relationship by sharing your ideas.
- Be flexible, open, and willing to take the reins for exploring new ideas and approaches that are different from your own and suggested by mentor.
- Seek out and accept constructive feedback nondefensively, recognizing that the feedback you receive is intended to improve your work.
- Commit to effective communication, including periodic reviews of any mentoring agreement that will help ensure that the expectations of both of you are being met.
- Recognize the learning/professional development inherent in mistakes.
- Be aware that the Doctoral Program Director is always available to help with difficulties you may encounter.