

Principles of Good Practice Relating to Mentoring of Graduate Students

1. Departments should have procedures which facilitate the process of students becoming acquainted with faculty and research areas and the process for selecting a mentor. Students should receive information and be involved in these processes as soon as possible and practical after entering the graduate program.
2. Departments should have admissions processes which carefully assess the potential of students to conduct research in the areas represented in the department as well as the likely match between students' expressed interests and the expertise of the faculty. Students accepted on these bases should be made aware early in their program that they have the primary responsibility for making an informed selection of a research mentor and that they must obtain the agreement of the faculty member to serve in this capacity. Provided the student has a satisfactory record of work in the department and is willing to work in areas represented by the faculty, there should not be a problem in reaching an agreement on selection of a mentor. There also may be instances in which it is possible to establish arrangements acceptable to the department for the student to work in areas outside the primary areas of expertise of department faculty through a co-chair arrangement with a qualified faculty member in another unit. In cases in which the student's performance in the program does not meet expected standards, or in which the student insists upon working in an area not represented among the faculty's expertise, the department is not obligated to appoint an unwilling mentor.
3. Faculty have the right and obligation to clearly inform potential advisees of their expectations before the student makes a choice of research mentor. They should also be informed of departmental policies regarding authorship, ownership of intellectual property, work commitments, etc., to which all members of the department must adhere.
4. Once the selection of a research mentor has been agreed to, both parties have an obligation to work in good faith to accomplish the student's educational goals and the research required for the degree.
5. There must be provision for a student to change a mentor and/or research area for valid reasons or for incompatibility. Neither the department nor administrative officials can coerce professional relations between persons who are incompatible. In establishing departmental policies for changing mentors, careful consideration should be given to what constitute valid bases for either students

or mentors to request approval for a change, and to include documentation of agreements to make such changes. It is always easier to establish the terms of any agreement to sever a previously agreed-to mentor/advisee relationship if there is an initial agreement covering various areas of research. Departments should consider drafting checklists, including topics such as ownership of data, use of equipment, authorship of conference presentations and publications (including the order of authorship), ownership of intellectual property, etc. The checklist could be used to guide the initial discussions between student and prospective faculty mentor, and documents that the discussion of these topics occurred or, in some cases, that the parties agree (sometimes by signing the form) to stated terms involving these issues. Having such discussions and/or agreements becomes even more important if the research has external sponsorship, where an external agent may have rights or requirements relating to the research results. However, lack of an initial agreement cannot be used to deny the right to sever a mentor/advisee relationship, although the terms of severance then become something that may require mediation or formal grievance procedures to address.

6. When a change of mentor and terms of severance of the relationship are agreed to, both parties must abide by the agreement. Retaliation by either party would almost certainly constitute a violation of University Policy on Academic Freedom and Professional Responsibilities (Policy 1220) or other applicable policies, and could constitute the basis for a grievance.