



Advisee & Adviser or Mentor Checklist

Amanda Allard –
CAC GA Rep., COM Ph.D.
2023

Anastasia Kononova – Associate
Professor, Advertising + Public
Relations

Linda White – J-School GradRep., I&M
Ph.D. 2023

Ahmed Yousef – CSD &
Mechanical Engineering
Ph.D. 2023

Geri Alumit Zeldes, Ph.D. – Professor,
School of Journalism

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Judith Stoddart, Associate Provost for Collection & Arts and MSU's Graduate School who led in 2021 a university-wide effort to create mentoring materials; Ann Marie Ryan, Professor in the Psychology Department, who provided the model for this checklist, and Esther Thorson, former ComArtSci Associate Dean of Graduate Studies for supporting this effort. Bree Holtz, Associate Professor in Advertising and Public Relations and Grad Students Ireland A. Ingram and Huiyi Lui reviewed this Checklist. In fall 2024, ComArtSci PhD Directors Allison Eden (COM) Pat Huddleston (Information & Media) and Scott Yaruss (CSD) and these PhD Students revised this document: Jessica Pettengill (I&M), Megan Arney (CSD) Maruf Md Ikram (CSD) and Yichao Wang (COM). Thank you to Nicole Bond, I&M Academic Program Coordinator, for formatting and proofreading this document.



Overview

The purpose of this Advisee and Adviser Checklist is to align expectations in the College of Communication Arts & Sciences between faculty and students and to be a tool for Advisees and Advisers to discuss goals and parameters for doctoral study at the **beginning** of a Graduate Student's program. This template can be altered to meet individual needs based on philosophies, personalities, the department's policies, and the home discipline's norms. **Advisers and Advisees should use this Checklist and the Advisee's Graduate Program Handbook when discussing student milestones, timetables for coursework, and other requirements.** The Checklist should be **re-visited at least annually** to ensure continued alignment and to accommodate major changes, such as a change in circumstances, expectations, or adviser. At the end of the spring semester, the adviser and advisee need to meet to complete and discuss the adviser's annual evaluation. This would be a good time to review the notes made during the previous meeting and to revise the Checklist.

The Advisee is the graduate student, and the Adviser is the faculty member **selected** by the program or unit to assist the Advisee in choosing coursework and navigating the expectations of the graduate program.

Mission

The intent of this Checklist is to foster understanding between Advisers and Advisees, thereby creating an environment in which graduate students feel supported and prepared to become professionals and/or scholars. Graduate school and academia should be a place to learn ethical standards in the pursuit of creating new knowledge. Herein is an opportunity to grow and learn.

Building a Mentorship Network

To build a supportive environment, an Advisee may also select other faculty and students in and outside ComArts to be mentors who will help the Advisee gain knowledge in select areas; these faculty and student mentors are not bound by this Checklist. If an adviser does not have the answer to a question, Advisees are encouraged to reach out for answers from the Graduate Program Directors (GPDs), other faculty, the Academic Program Coordinators (APCs), or graduate students in your program. Regarding the latter, peer mentors can help new students ease the transition to graduate school.

Changing Advisers/Advisees

Goals, interests, and other factors change. At any stage, Advisees and Advisers may ask the GPD of their unit or program to change an advisee or adviser.

- **IMPORTANT:** Graduate students who are thinking of switching adviser(s) should notify all parties — current adviser, prospective adviser, APC and GPD — of changes. Students who need assistance in communicating changes should contact their APC or GPD.





In case conflicts need to be resolved ...

If issues arise between Advisers and Advisees, the Adviser and/or Advisee should **first** contact the APC, GPD, or the unit Chair/Director. If the resolution is unsuccessful, the student may contact any other ComArtSci administrators such as — the Academic Program Grad Studies Manager, Graduate Studies Dean, DEI Director or Human Resources Director — who can address the situation.

MSU's Mandatory Reporting, CAIT, and Confidentiality Policies

Before reviewing the checklist, the Adviser and Advisee should also review these MSU policies created to ensure the safety of the community and to also assist those in crisis:

- Unless designated as a confidential source, employees are obligated to report sexual harassment, sexual violence, sexual misconduct, stalking, and relationship violence that are observed in university-sponsored events or learned as an employee at MSU (<https://civilrights.msu.edu/policies/index.html>)
- In an emergency where student behavior presents an imminent risk to the individual's or others' health and safety, employees must call 911. Even in a non-emergency, in which students display emotional distress or behavioral issues, employees can call MSU Police Department's non-emergency line at 517-355-2221 and/or report concerns to the MSU Care and Intervention Team (CAIT). If an MSU student or employee exhibits [concerning behaviors](https://oss.msu.edu/report), make a referral by visiting [ossa.msu.edu/report](https://oss.msu.edu/report).
- Information that could affect a student's academic standing or progress is not confidential and may be shared with other faculty or administrators on a need-to-know basis.

MSU Resources on Advising and Mentoring

- [MSU's Guidelines for Graduate Student Mentoring and Advising](#)
- [Optimizing Research Mentoring Relationships — Online Mentoring Resource](#)





Checklist

The following checklist is long, and not all the goals may apply to all students; however, many do. This is a tool to start and continue conversations between Advisers and Advisees. The Appendix contains an example of an email that Advisees can send to their Advisers to request a meeting to complete the Checklist.

Goals	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> Advisers & Advisees should discuss <u>short-term goals</u> for the next year (e.g. present at a local or national conference, apply for a grant, participate in university governance, etc.) and the advising needed to achieve these goals.	
<input type="checkbox"/> The Advisees' <u>long-term goals</u> (e.g. tenure-track appointment, fellow in an academic association, national teaching award, industry position, etc.) and the advising needed to achieve these goals should also be discussed. Tip: Schedule a recurring meeting on the calendar to discuss goals, especially ones that change.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Advisers should share their <u>short- and long-term goals</u> for the Advisee.	
Communication Platforms & Frequency	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> The Adviser & Advisee should share their communication platform preferences such as email, texting, calling, Zoom, Teams, office drop-ins, etc.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Meeting preferences such as frequency, duration, location, and agenda should be established. Tips: The Advisee and adviser should set early on communication norms such as scheduling monthly meetings and a time once each semester with the Graduate Director to provide feedback on the advising experience.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Responsibility for initiating check-ins and updating progress for data analyses, manuscripts, conference posters/presentations, etc., rests with both parties. For example, progress updates could include detailed summaries of ongoing analyses, drafts of manuscripts, or outlines of upcoming conference presentations. Tip: Keep a log of meetings and agreed-upon tasks/goals, such as deadlines for submitting draft sections or completing specific analyses, which can be revisited during future check-ins.	

Communication Styles	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> Adviser's/Advisee's conceptualization of roles (e.g., a guide, a teacher/trainer, an advocate, giver of emotional support, colleague, friend, boss/employee, etc.) See Resource page for types of Mentor/Trainee relationships.	
<input type="checkbox"/> The Advisers should explain their areas of expertise and identify additional guidance needed from other advisers/faculty members/professionals (be sure to discuss whose responsibility it is to seek out additional guidance, if needed).	
<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss ways in which the adviser can offer constructive feedback to encourage a culture of open and respectful communication.	
<input type="checkbox"/> The Advisee and Adviser should also determine procedures for conflict resolution for adviser/advisee Note: Students should be able to report dissatisfaction with aspects of the relationship without negative impact from the adviser.	
Research	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> Advisees are expected to learn specific skills from research work with their Adviser or a Faculty Researcher (e.g., oral/written skills, grant writing, lab management, Institutional Review Boards, ethics codes, disclosures, copyrights, study design, literature review, hypothesis testing, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, etc.)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Advisees are expected to interact with other team members such as faculty and other students.	
<input type="checkbox"/> If an Advisee is engaged in multiple projects, the adviser and advisee should discuss which project should be prioritized.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Authorship expectations (e.g., criteria for authorship, authorship order and duties, discipline norms) is an important part of the research process. Review together MSU's Guidelines on Authorship , especially "3. Lead Author and Order of Authors" that encourages researchers write an agreement on authorship order prior to starting a project. This resource helps Advisees to articulate clearly who owns the research data and creative work, as a function of who collects the data, analyzes it, employment status of the student , etc.	
<input type="checkbox"/> The Advisee and Adviser should discuss responsibilities in the research process such as reviewing drafts.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Expectations around when and where student research is presented/published should be determined. Specifically, advisers and advisees should discuss the quality of journals versus spam, open-access sites that require authors to pay a publishing fee.	

Milestones and Coursework	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> The Advisee and Adviser should outline the timing of major milestones and other program activities (e.g., practicum experiences, externships, internships, comprehensive exams, proposals, thesis, dissertation, defense, and graduation). It will be useful to create a table of critical dates in line with the specific Graduate Handbook of your program.	
<input type="checkbox"/> If milestones aren't met, discuss the possible outcomes (e.g., funding may not be available). Reminder: In the spring, the adviser and advisee meet to assess progress. This would be a time and space to talk through current and future milestones.	
<input type="checkbox"/> It will also be useful to use the Graduate Handbook of your program to discuss the requirements and preparation for each milestone, especially the practicum and/or comp exam.	
<input type="checkbox"/> On major milestone projects such as the dissertation, the Advisee should share a plan for revisions, outlining when the dissertation committee provides feedback, and the advisee makes suggested edits.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Adviser input into membership on student committees (e.g., thesis committee, comprehensive exam/guidance committee) and non-lab activities (e.g., coursework, practicum, consultation/working with other research/industry groups) should be discussed.	
Funding	
<input type="checkbox"/> Threads on Reddit, Quora, and other sources provide tips on how to have a conversation with one's Adviser about funding sources (fellowships, grants and scholarships) and expenses such as conference/workshop travel, registration, software, etc. (e.g. The Advisee could start with plans for the summer and could request resources to support travel to conferences, courses, rent, etc.)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Advisers should encourage students to talk to their respective department chairs about TA assignments and the benefits (tuition, health benefits, insurance, etc.) that may be attached to those assignments.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Advisees should also talk about funding their research and independent projects.	

Professional Development	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Advisers and advisees should talk about opportunities about professional development based on student interests, such as academic “service” opportunities (i.e., departmental committees and hiring committees), peer-to-peer mentorship (i.e., independent studies, student organization positions), invited talks and workshops, and fellowships and awards, attendance at industry conferences if interested in seeking an industry position. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ To inform current and future research, MSU requires all graduate students to complete Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research (RECR) training. This site provides guidance on RECR requirements. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Advisees should ask about opportunities for professional development beyond the standard program offerings and training. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ MSU and ComArtSci offers Academic Career Preparation: “Getting a job, prepping for the job talk and process, letters of rec., networking, conference presentations, etc.”) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Ethical, legal, and professional standards the student should learn 	



Appendix

Foundational Values

for Graduate Student and Faculty Mentoring Relationships at MSU

Effective mentoring relationships are formed and sustained through principles of reciprocity and mutual responsibility. Mentors and mentees should respect one another both as researchers/scholars/creative practitioners and as individuals. That respect is formed through a shared commitment to scientific, creative and professional excellence, and a recognition of these common values:

- Commitment to respect and care
 - Establishing a relationship based on trust and open communication
 - Engaging in ways that are respectful and culturally responsive
 - Actively promoting an environment of civility
 - Using inclusive and non-discriminatory language

- Commitment to professionalism, ethics, and integrity
 - Communicating regularly about expectations in the graduate degree program in the disciplinary field.
 - Promoting the highest standards of integrity in research, scholarship, and creative activities
 - Engaging in continuing professional development in mentoring skills

- Commitment to the professional and personal growth and independence of the student
 - Talking with students about their interests in a range of career paths
 - Encouraging and supporting career exploration and professional development
 - Supporting mental and physical health

Example of an email Advisees can use to request a meeting with their Adviser to complete the Checklist:

Dear Professor,

May I meet with you virtually or in person to complete the "[Adviser/Advisee Checklist](#)" that I received from our Graduate Studies Director?

The meeting would take at least 30 minutes. Before we review the Checklist, I'd like to learn more about your professional background, specifically:

- Why did you choose the schools you attended?
- How did you become interested in your research area?
- Would you share what you learned from your advisers and mentors while you were a grad student?

Thank you in advance for your time.

Regards,

Grad Student Name



Resources

Kononova, Anastasia (2021). Responsible Conduct of Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities. [Mentor/Trainee Relationships PowerPoint](#) — permission granted to modify presentation from MSU's Graduate School (2010) <http://grad.msu.edu/>

The Graduate School. (2021) [Mentoring](#). Optimizing Research Mentoring Relationships — To Promote Inclusive Excellence in Graduate Education at MSU. Research:

- [Identifying and Aligning Expectations in a Mentoring Relationship \(PDF\)](https://doi-org.proxy1.cl.msu.edu/10.1111/j.1752-8062.2011.00356.x) (from: <https://doi-org.proxy1.cl.msu.edu/10.1111/j.1752-8062.2011.00356.x>)
- [Ten Simple Rules for Developing a Mentor-Mentee Expectations Document \(PDF\)](https://journals.plos.org/ploscompbiol/article?id=10.1371/journal.pcbi.100570) (from: <https://journals.plos.org/ploscompbiol/article?id=10.1371/journal.pcbi.100570>)

