



EARTH & SPACE SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

College of the Environment

Advisor – Student Guidelines and Dispute Resolution

Your faculty advisor will have a meaningful impact on your graduate education be it through guiding your research, assisting with finding an internship, or suggesting which courses will provide you with the skills to pursue your goals. Both student and advisor have responsibilities to each other, and this guide is to provide a basis of expectations, and what to do if a conflict does arise.

Expectations

Your advisor's role is to help you pursue your objectives by providing guidance, identifying your strengths and weaknesses, and helping you plan for post-graduation. Students are expected to make satisfactory progress towards their degree, conduct themselves respectfully, and be part of the department. Every advisor – student relationship is unique, however here are some common responsibilities.

Advisor

- Provide guidance on research or internships, including direction in choosing and designing a thesis/internship topic, researching the background information, planning and conducting field/laboratory analysis, writing/revising proposals, abstracts and manuscripts and giving professional presentations.
- Write letters of recommendation
- Provide guidance on course selection, taking care to ensure that all graduation requirements are met
- Assist students in preparing for exams (Prelim, General, Master's, etc.), including expectations, timeframe, and making yourself available for both consultation and to attend the exam
- Provide unbiased feedback on student progress to both the student, and the faculty or staff as appropriate
- Respect student's privacy and confidentiality. This means not sharing protected information (anything not found publically) with other students, and only with other faculty or staff as necessary. For example, a rocket scientist asking a seismologist to review their student's unpublished or course paper to make sure the seismology instruments could work as described is acceptable. Sharing the same paper because you think they would find it interesting is not, unless you first get student permission.

Student

- Conduct themselves according to UW guidelines including the Student Handbook and Academic Honesty Guidelines
- Make satisfactory academic progress towards their degree including maintaining a strong GPA, taking needed courses, establishing committees and completing exams in a timely manner.
- Participate in the department including attending seminars, serving on student committees, and participating in conferences
- Working and consulting with their advisor on a regular basis

Both

- Acknowledge each other's work as appropriate on any papers, presentations, or research
- Work with others regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or national origin
- Conduct themselves in a professional manner

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Can my advisor require me take a course?** Yes, your advisor may require you to take a course. It is their job to ensure that you learn adequate skills as well as identify areas where you may need more experience.
- **I won an award that will fund me for one quarter of my choosing. Can my advisor tell me when to use it?** No, you may choose when to use your award. Often your advisor will recommend that you use it a specific quarter for funding purposes, however they may not remove promised funding in retaliation.
- **I wish to change my research topic and advisors, how should I do this?** First you should talk to your advisor if you feel comfortable. It could be that they could still be your advisor or serve on your committee if there is overlap. The next step would be to talk to the GPC (see below) about finding a new advisor. If you have someone in mind you are free to discuss a possible move with them as well. It is important to note that most funding is tied to an advisor, so there is no guarantee that a new advisor would be able to fund you. Also, you should talk with your current advisor about how to bring closure to the research project you are currently involved with.
- **I am having difficulties with another student, whom should I talk to?** First you should talk to the other student if you are comfortable and it is appropriate. Many times people are not aware that their actions may be inconveniencing or bothering someone else, and can quickly resolve the issue amongst themselves. If you are not comfortable, it is not an appropriate situation, or talking doesn't help, the next step would be to view the resources below to see who might be the best contact for your specific issue.
- **My assigned work in my TA position is going over 20 hours per week, what should I do?** The first step is to let the instructor know that the assigned work is exceeding the limits. Most of the time this is sufficient; however if the assigned work continues to exceed 20 hours you should contact the Chair (see below) to resolve the issue. We recommend first attempting to resolve the issue in-house however; your union (UAW 4121) can initiate a grievance procedure. There is a strict time limit of 21 days for grievances to be filed with the University, see UAW 4121 section below.
- **My assigned work in my RA position is going over 20 hours per week, what should I do?** Often RA work and regular student studies overlap making it hard to differentiate between RA time and student time. RA specific duties are limited to 20 hours a week; however many duties commonly associated with RA positions are also part of regular student studies, including learning to perform research, reading papers, presenting at conferences, etc. These are things all students are expected to learn regardless of RA status. If you have concerns, the first step is talk to your research supervisor. Most of the time this is sufficient; however if the assigned work continues to be excessive you should contact the Chair or GPC (see below) to resolve the issue. We recommend first attempting to resolve the issue in-house however; your union (UAW 4121) can initiate a grievance procedure. There is a strict time limit of 21 days for grievances to be filed with the University, see UAW 4121 section below.

Dispute Resolution

Certain inappropriate actions are easy to identify: sexual harassment, LGBT discrimination, ethnic slurs, verbal abuse are obvious examples. However, there are certain "gray" areas that are difficult to categorize: Suppose you are female and have woman's health related issues that require you to take some time off, but your adviser is male, and does not understand? Alternatively, suppose you have a loved one that has just passed away, but your adviser does not understand the role a non-family member has in your life (a father or mother figure) and doesn't think that you require a leave of absence?

Our hope is that these issues never arise for any of you. But in the event they do, there are some guidelines and resources for you.

Guidelines:

1. If you feel comfortable, talk to the other person. Most situations can be resolved this way and if you resolve the issue earlier, it is often easier.
2. Document everything; emails, conversations, and dates of events. You are not building a legal case, but certain events are difficult to prove. In addition, if you have witnesses, make sure you document who witnessed the event, as well as get them to record it if possible. It is important to do this sooner rather than later to ensure accuracy. Remember to keep everything to the facts; it is acceptable to record tone if it is relevant (ie “He sarcastically said it was the best paper he has ever seen”) but don’t try to guess motivation (ie “She has never liked me”) or record rumors/exaggerate (i.e., “He gives all the girls lower grades”).
3. If the issue is still unresolved, it is time to determine whether you have an actionable issue, and if so, which campus resources can help. The resource list below outlines which organization addresses which issues. If you are unsure who can assist with your issue you should ask the Student Services Director (see below) for guidance. Some common un-actionable issues are:
 - Minor shared office complaints
 - i. Un-actionable: keeps desk messy, in and out frequently
 - ii. Actionable: leaving door open when not there
 - Non-offensive and non-harassing emails
 - i. Un-actionable: too many emails on the grad list, non-response of emails
 - ii. Actionable: cannot get ahold of advisor at all
 - Personality conflicts, unless they escalate to unprofessional behavior
 - i. Un-actionable: being short with someone, not being friendly, etc
 - ii. Actionable: slammed door in face ,mocking, harassing

If your issue is not actionable or you are unsure, talk with the Student Services Director for help resolving the problem.

Resources:

- Student Services Director (SSD) – the SSD primarily assists with departmental issues or directs students to the appropriate resource, as well as assists with course issues including grading, TA concerns, and instructor concerns. The SSD’s primary duty is to be a student advocate and is not a faculty member so remains relatively independent and unbiased. The SSD is also great for simply hearing issues or concerns and suggestion possible remedies if someone isn’t sure what the next step is or if they even want to take a step.
- Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC) - the GPC primarily assists with advisor – student issues as well as assisting in changing advisors. The GPC is a faculty member, but also is a student advocate and is responsible to oversee student progress towards their degree. In addition to assisting with advisor changes, they can also assist with progress concerns, lack of advisor support, and mediate disputes with other faculty members.
- Chair – the Chair of the department primarily assists with ASE, building, or funding concerns, as well as mediates student – student or faculty – student issues. The Chair is a faculty member, but is also responsible for ensure the department operates smoothly and follows all published guidelines including those on conduct, as well as dealing with any issues relating to funding (ASE or otherwise). The Chair is also typically the first contact to make a formal complaint.
- UAW Local 4121 (the Union) – The Union deals exclusively with ASE issues; including disputes over assignment, pay rate, working conditions, or hours (i.e. going over 220 hours per quarter). While many issues can be resolved in-house, if you are unsatisfied with the department’s solution, don’t wish to go through the department, or if the issue continues the Union can assist. The Union and University contract restricts the time for when grievances can be filed to 21 days from the time the student first becomes aware of the issue. They also assist with ASE issues outside of departmental control such as amount owed after the

appointment or if the issue affects multiple units. Students can contact the Union directly or any Region 4 Stewards (who oversee ESS).

- University Ombudsman – the Ombudsman is appointed to protect the rights and interests of individuals, including students, against arbitrary or capricious action or lack of action within the University. The Ombudsman is a neutral third party and tries to achieve a fair solution through informal action.
- UWPD– an issue may arise that cannot be resolved within the University such as stalking or theft of personal property. At these times you may need to seek outside assistance, and any of the resources listed above can provide assistance to the best of their abilities (assigning a new unlisted office, asking UWPD to attend class, etc).

Contacts:

Student Services Director – Noell Bernard-Kingsley, JHN 067, noelleon@uw.edu, 206-616-8511

Graduate Program Coordinator – Ken Creager, ATG 222, kcc@ess.washington.edu, 206-685-2803

Chair – Bruce Nelson, JHN 070J, bnelson@uw.edu , 206-685-8160

Union - Current ESS Region 4 Stewards ([list of UAW4121 leadership](#)):

Adam Campbell* - campbead@uw.edu - 206-543-0162

Regina Carns – rcarns@uw.edu - 206-543-0162

*trained grievance handler

<http://www.uaw4121.org>, uaw4121@uaw4121.org, 206-633-6080

UAW Local 4121

2633 Eastlake Ave E.

Suite 200

Seattle, WA 98102

Ombudsman – Susan Neff, 206 Condon Hall, sneff@uw.edu, 206-543-6028

UWPD – uwpolice@uw.edu 911 (Emergency), 206-685-8973 (Non-Emergency)

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