

# Graduate Advising & Mentoring Guidelines for MS Thesis and PhD Students

**Effective graduate student advising and mentoring is the joint responsibility of School of Freshwater Sciences faculty, students, and staff.**

We provide resources and work collaboratively to help you achieve academic and professional goals. The following sections outline responsibilities of the student, advisor, and staff during your academic career.

## Graduate Student responsibilities

- Take initiative, show dedicated effort, and devote a sufficient amount of time and energy to gain the knowledge and skills needed to successfully pursue your research activities and meet your professional goals.
- Demonstrate maturity, civility, integrity, and professionalism in all educational activities and while interacting with other members of the University community.
- Follow disciplinary and scholarly codes of ethics and practice uncompromising honesty and integrity in course work and research.
- Seek regulatory approval for research in the early stages of thesis or dissertation work.
- Learn and adhere to procedures and policies applicable to graduate study including University and program requirements for degree completion.
- Complete all academic documents and forms as appropriate for your degree program.
- Work with your advisor to complete and update a Plan of Study at least once a year.
- Communicate your progress toward degree completion, in a timely manner, to your faculty advisor and advisory committee. While your advisor is required to be reasonably available for consultation, it is your responsibility to keep in touch with your advisor.
- Form an advisory committee that meets University and program requirements.
- Give serious consideration to the advice and criticisms received from your advisor.
- Find a supportive mentor and community through a student group or external organization.
- Attend and present at seminars, workshops, and conferences to enhance your professional development and expand your professional network.

**Prepare to be part of the next generation of scientists, committed to exploring, protecting, and preserving one of our most vital natural resources.**

## Faculty Advisor responsibilities

- Review requirements, policies and procedures of the graduate program.
- Advise students of available resources
- Help students develop a program plan of study, to include course work and research activities.
- Provide regular feedback on student progress toward degree completion, based on completed plan of study, and constructive criticism if progress does not meet expectations.
- Advise students on the selection of a thesis or dissertation topic with realistic prospects for successful completion within an appropriate time frame.
- Help students form an appropriate advisory committee.
- Provide training and oversight in professional integrity, research rigor, and theoretical and technical aspects of research.
- Encourage students to stay abreast of the literature and cutting-edge ideas in the field.
- Share responsibility with Academics Program Office in fostering professional development including establishing professional networks and exploring career options.
- Provide feedback on application materials for fellowship, scholarship, award, internship and job opportunities and write letters of recommendation as appropriate.
- Help students develop professional skills in writing grant proposals and for publication, making professional presentations, and evaluating manuscripts and papers.
- Encourage students to disseminate research results in appropriate scholarly and public forums.



Water sampling on the R/V Neeskay in Lake Michigan

## Advisory Committee responsibilities

- Advise students on course work and research, including identifying academic needs and assisting with developing and selecting a thesis or dissertation topic.
- Provide annual feedback and guidance concerning progress toward the degree.
- Administer exams in a fair and professional manner.
- Review the thesis or dissertation in a timely, constructive and critical manner.

## **SFS Faculty Graduate Representative responsibilities**

- Facilitate selection and/or changes of a faculty advisor.
- Approve PhD milestones through Graduate School online monitoring process

## **SFS Associate Dean for Academics and Administrative Affairs responsibilities**

- Coordinate with faculty curricular committee to ensure required courses are scheduled on a regular basis enabling graduate students to make timely progress in their program.
- Approve independent study course requests.
- Work toward fair resolution of conflicts between graduate students and faculty.
- Conduct exit interviews for all graduated students.

## **SFS Academic Programs Office responsibilities**

- Update and distribute the graduate student handbook.
- Organize orientation sessions for incoming graduate students.
- Share responsibility with faculty advisors in fostering the professional and career development of graduate students.
- Provide general student support services for prospective and current students.
- Communicate internship and job opportunities.
- Maintain student files and related academic forms and graduation documents.

## **Contact Information**

### **Faculty Graduate Representative**

Dr. Harvey Bootsma  
hbootsma@uwm.edu

### **Academic Programs Office Staff**

Assistant Dean of Academics & Student Services  
Margret Petrie  
petriem@uwm.edu

Academic Affairs Manager  
Mallory Kaul  
malkaul@uwm.edu

## Checklist for MS Thesis and PhD Students

I have met and discussed with my major advisor:

- Potential or actual thesis/dissertation topic
- Funding
- Assistantship requirements and expectations
- Applying for scholarships and awards
- Availability of work space
- Expected hours of work
- Timelines and major milestones including anticipated completion time
- When and how an advisory committee will be chosen
- Nature of guidance
- Frequency and style of meetings
- Who arranges formal meetings
- Methods of informal communication
- Turnaround time for major questions, drafts of chapters, publications, and presentations
- Authorship on publications and conference presentations
- Research compliance including Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)
- Industry involvement and patents
- Academic requirements
  - Required courses
  - Electives and special courses
  - Seminar attendance
  - Preliminary exams
  - Proposal defense (PhD)
  - Thesis / dissertation defense

## Additional Resources

University of Michigan: How To Get the Mentoring You Want: A Guide for Graduate Students:

<http://www.rackham.umich.edu/downloads/publications/mentoring.pdf>

Chronicle of Higher Ed: What I Learned About Surviving Graduate School

<http://chronicle.com/article/What-I-Learned-About-Surviving/131247/>