

Department of Psychology Mentoring Framework

The Department of Psychology at the University of Chicago is dedicated to providing every Ph.D. student with the mentorship needed to excel in research, teaching, and professional skills. This document outlines the roles of faculty, staff, and students in creating a strong mentoring environment throughout the graduate program. While individual mentoring approaches may vary, these guidelines establish a clear framework to help students succeed in the Ph.D. program.

Academic and research excellence are central to students' success, and this is a key focus of faculty advising. However, professional development and career planning are also essential components of mentorship. Our framework emphasizes the importance of both academic guidance and career preparation. Additionally, our Mentored Teaching Experiences (MTEs) are designed to help students grow as both teachers and mentors. Students are also directed to resources beyond faculty advising, such as UChicago Grad for career support and the Chicago Center for Teaching.

This mentoring plan will be accessible to all members of the Department. It will be available on the Department's website and provided to students at Orientation. The plan will be reviewed annually during a spring faculty meeting, but changes can be proposed and approved by departmental leadership at any time throughout the academic year. The Graduate Student Affairs and Curriculum Committee (GSAC) will gather feedback from faculty and students and recommend any necessary updates.

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Section I: Roles and Responsibilities of Faculty and Staff

Faculty Advisor

Faculty advisors play a critical role in supporting graduate students in various areas, including research, teaching, and professional development, especially career advising. Advisors serve not only as mentors but also as role models. Students benefit from observing how faculty conduct research, mentor students, secure research funding, and teach undergraduate courses. Additionally, faculty demonstrate good citizenship by actively participating in departmental and university activities, such as attending colloquia, workshops, and serving on committees.

Advisors are instrumental in helping students overcome challenges or frustrations they may encounter during their graduate studies. Through regular mentoring, advisors help students acquire the skills necessary to succeed in academia, industry, and other professional fields.

Key Responsibilities:

Constructive Feedback: A critical aspect of mentoring is providing detailed and constructive feedback on students' performance and progress. Regular feedback helps students recognize their strengths and address weaknesses. Advisors should periodically discuss whether students' mentoring needs are being met and how to improve the mentoring process.

Regular Meetings: Advisors should schedule regular one-on-one meetings with their students and be open to more frequent meetings upon request. These meetings typically focus on research design, progress, and preparing findings for publication. However, they also serve as opportunities to discuss professional development, conference presentations, authorship of papers, and career goals. Career discussions, especially as students' goals evolve during graduate school, should happen at least annually.

Frequency of Meetings: The frequency of meetings between students and advisors can vary based on individual needs and preferences, the phase of research, and the stage of the graduate program. While weekly or bi-weekly meetings are common, some students may need more frequent contact based on their research experience or specific needs. It's important that students and advisors work together to determine the appropriate meeting frequency, particularly for students from underrepresented minority groups or first-generation students, who may benefit from additional one-on-one meetings.

Group and Lab Meetings: Advisors often hold small group meetings to discuss collaborative research projects and lab meetings to review ongoing research. These meetings provide opportunities for feedback, research discussion, and practice presentations. If a student wants to attend lab meetings with a faculty member other than their advisor, they should discuss it with both their advisor and the faculty member in question. Cross-lab collaboration is encouraged.

Managing Lab Size: The Department strives to maintain balanced lab sizes, ensuring no lab is over- or under-staffed. Priority in recruiting new students is given to faculty with fewer graduate students and junior faculty members who are building their labs. Since lab cultures and research expectations vary, it is essential that both advisors and current lab members clearly communicate lab culture and expectations to incoming students. This helps new students understand the time and effort required for success in the lab.

Advisory Committee

In addition to their primary advisor, each student will have an Advisory Committee throughout their graduate studies. This committee includes the faculty advisor and two other faculty members, at least two of the three members must be from the Department of Psychology. Students should form their advisory committee by the end of the spring quarter in their first year.

Key Responsibilities:

Role of the Committee: The advisory committee's primary role is to provide guidance on research. Additionally, committee members support students in professional development, career planning, and addressing any challenges encountered during graduate school.

Committee Composition: The composition of the committee may change as students' research interests evolve. The advisory committee also serves as the committee for evaluating the Trial Research Project (Year 2), the Dissertation Proposal (Year 4), and the Dissertation Defense (Year 5).

Annual Meetings: Advisory committees are required to meet with students at least once a year for an evaluation and feedback session. This meeting may coincide with the preparation of the Student Activities Report, but it can take place at any time based on the student's progress. In addition to research progress, students should discuss coursework, teaching experiences, professional development, and any challenges they face. This meeting is also a formal opportunity for students to provide feedback on the quality of the mentoring they receive and discuss potential improvements.

Ongoing Support: Advisory committee members are available to meet with students individually, upon request. Students are encouraged to schedule meetings with their committee members as needed.

Student Affairs Administrator

The Student Affairs Administrator is a key resource for graduate students who need information about courses, degree requirements, or academic progress. The Administrator also assists students in resolving problems by providing guidance or directing them to the appropriate resources.

Key Responsibilities:

Administrative Support: The Administrator processes student petitions, handles formal requirements, and keeps track of students' progress toward degree requirements.

Collaboration: They work closely with faculty, including the Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Chair, and serve as a liaison with the Dean of Students office to ensure students receive the support they need.

Director of Graduate Studies (DGS)

The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) is a central resource for graduate students, providing support and guidance throughout their time in the program. The DGS oversees students' academic progress, reviews petitions, manages admissions, and helps ensure that students are on track to meet program milestones. Additionally, the DGS acts as a mediator when students face challenges with advisors, lab dynamics, or research progress. The DGS also plays a crucial role in career development, offering guidance for both academic and non-academic career paths. The DGS is accessible to all graduate students for individual meetings and plays an active role in addressing student concerns at both the individual and departmental levels.

Key Responsibilities:

Academic Oversight and Progress Monitoring: The DGS monitors students' progress through the program, ensuring that they meet key milestones such as coursework completion, trial research, and the dissertation process. The DGS works closely with students and faculty to address any issues or opportunities that may arise.

Petition Review and GSAC Leadership: As head of the GSAC, the DGS reviews petitions related to program requirements, such as course substitutions or extensions. The DGS ensures that student progress is reviewed annually and that feedback from advisors is constructive and actionable.

Student Engagement and Advocacy: The DGS holds regular meetings with student leadership and peer mentors to discuss concerns and opportunities for program improvement. Students are encouraged to meet with the DGS individually to seek advice on academic or professional matters.

Department Chair

The Department Chair plays a key role in supporting both faculty and students within the Department of Psychology. They are available to answer questions, provide guidance, and assist graduate students with concerns or grievances. The Chair serves as a resource for students, especially when issues cannot be resolved at the advisor or committee level. The Department Chair values feedback from students about their experiences with mentoring and teaching. Graduate students are encouraged to share positive feedback or constructive suggestions regarding their mentors, advisors, and instructors, as the Department prioritizes excellent mentoring.

Key Responsibilities:

Student Support: The Chair is available to offer guidance and support to graduate students regarding concerns or grievances, providing assistance when issues cannot be resolved through the advisory committee or the DGS.

Mentorship Oversight: The Chair is responsible for encouraging faculty members to fulfill their mentoring responsibilities, maintaining high standards of student support and professional development.

Student Engagement: The Chair will facilitate meetings with student organizations, such as the PGSO, to maintain communication and gather feedback to improve the graduate experience.

Area Heads

The Area Heads oversee the academic programs within the Department of Psychology (Cognition, Computational Cognitive Neuroscience, Developmental, Integrative Neuroscience, and Social). They serve as the primary academic advisors within their respective areas and play a critical role in shaping the curriculum, supporting student progress, and ensuring program integrity. Area Heads work closely with students to guide them through program requirements, research opportunities, and professional development. They also act as intermediaries when students face challenges, helping to resolve conflicts related to coursework, labs, or advisor relationships.

Key Responsibilities:

Academic and Professional Advising: Area Heads provide personalized academic guidance to students, assisting with course selection, research direction, and career development within their program areas.

Oversight of Program Curriculum and Administration: They manage the curriculum for their areas, ensuring that course offerings are up-to-date and aligned with program goals, while also coordinating faculty assignments and resources.

Conflict Resolution and Progress Monitoring: Area Heads assist in resolving academic or advisor-related conflicts and contribute to the annual review of student progress, working on the Graduate Student Affairs Committee (GSAC) to provide feedback and ensure students meet program milestones.

Section II: Expectations for Students and Faculty Mentors

Success in the Department of Psychology Ph.D. program requires active engagement from both graduate students and faculty. Students are expected to actively communicate concerns and faculty are expected to respond to the concerns in a timely manner. Below are the key responsibilities for both groups:

Graduate Students' Responsibilities

Graduate students are expected to successfully complete their coursework and develop a research program that leads to the completion of a dissertation. This involves generating research ideas, conducting studies, analyzing data, and writing up results in a timely manner. Students should take initiative in seeking guidance from their advisors and advisory committees and maintain regular communication about their progress and challenges.

Faculty Advisors' Responsibilities

Faculty advisors are responsible for monitoring student progress and setting clear expectations. They should meet regularly with their students, providing timely feedback and support. Faculty should also be flexible in scheduling additional meetings if students request them. Advisors are expected to guide students in research and professional development, including opportunities like presenting at conferences, publishing papers, and exploring career options.

Collaborative Relationships

Students and faculty should work to develop working relationships based on mutual respect and trust. Students are also encouraged to build relationships with faculty beyond their primary advisor and advisory committee. These interactions, whether through coursework, mentored teaching experiences (MTEs), workshops, or lab meetings, help expand students' academic networks and foster research collaborations. Such interactions also enrich students' understanding of their fields and enhance their professional development.

Mentored Teaching Experiences (MTEs)

Faculty are expected to provide graduate students with structured opportunities to develop their teaching skills through the Mentored Teaching Experiences (MTE) program. These experiences are essential for professional growth, preparing students for teaching roles in academia or other fields. Graduate students are required to complete five MTEs as part of their Ph.D. program. MTEs offer students the opportunity to develop a range of teaching skills, such as leading discussions, delivering lectures, developing syllabi, and grading assignments. These experiences allow students to gain valuable insights into teaching methodologies while honing their ability to effectively communicate complex topics.

Annual Student Activities Report

Each spring, students will complete a Student Activities Report that begins with a self-evaluation. Advisors will provide constructive feedback on student progress and identify areas for improvement. Advisory committee members will also offer feedback and sign the report after an annual meeting with the student. This meeting ensures alignment on the student's research, coursework, teaching experiences, and professional development, and provides an opportunity for students to give feedback on their

mentoring experiences. It is strongly suggested that students meet with their advisory committee more than once a year to develop a working relationship and ensure that each committee member is familiar with the students' research.

Active Department Citizenship

Both students and faculty are expected to actively participate in departmental activities, such as attending colloquia, workshops, and brown bag seminars. Graduate students are encouraged to take on leadership roles, such as joining the PGSO, to contribute to the academic and social community of the department. For students, being an active departmental citizen means taking initiative—reaching out to faculty, collaborators, and departmental leadership with any questions, concerns, or opportunities for growth. For faculty, active citizenship involves effective lab management, clear communication of expectations, timely responses to student inquiries, and a flexible approach to advising when possible.

Section III: Resources for Students Experiencing Difficulties

Addressing Difficulties with Advisors

If a student encounters difficulties in graduate school, including challenges with their advisor or mentoring relationship, they are encouraged to first address the issue directly with their advisor. If this approach is unsuccessful or not feasible, the student has multiple resources within the department. These include their advisory committee, the Director of Graduate Studies, their area head, or the Department Chair. Additionally, all faculty members in the department are available to support students in resolving concerns.

Switching Advisors

When students and their advisors are unable to resolve conflicts, students have the option to leave the lab and seek a new advisor. Historically, the department has demonstrated flexibility in helping students transition to new labs and continue their academic and professional growth. However, students should be aware that switching advisors may require flexibility in their research focus to align with the new lab's resources and goals, as well as the expertise of the new faculty advisor.

Confidentiality and Limitations

If a student requests confidentiality when seeking advice, it will be respected. However, it is important to note that confidentiality can limit the ability of other faculty members to address the issue effectively. Without being able to discuss specific concerns with the advisor, faculty may be unable to take corrective action. In such cases, students might consider requesting a meeting with their advisor and additional faculty, such as members of their Advisory Committee, the DGS, or the Department Chair, to mediate the conversation and establish a resolution.

External Resources

In some instances, students may feel more comfortable seeking assistance outside the department. In such cases, the Dean of Students office is a valuable resource for addressing broader concerns or obtaining further support.

Section IV: Major Milestones for Ph.D. Students

The Department has established a set of curricular requirements that include core requirements for all students as well as requirements that vary depending on the particular program the student is in (Cognition, Computational Cognitive Neuroscience, Developmental, Integrative Neuroscience, Social). These requirements are detailed on the Department's webpage and in the requirements that the Student Affairs Administrator shares with each incoming cohort of students. The most current requirements are maintained by the Student Affairs Administrator. There is some flexibility in these requirements in order to meet students' particular academic goals, and students can petition the GSAC with requests for course substitutions. Most students complete their course requirements during the 2nd or 3rd year of graduate school.

As detailed below, each year, the student completes a Student Activities Report form, which includes a self-evaluation and a mechanism through which faculty advisors are expected to provide students with constructive feedback on their progress. Students and their faculty advisor will review and discuss these evaluations, which will inform and sharpen the student's goals for the following year. The Student Activities Report and the student's CV will be included in the annual review of each PhD student's progress by the advisory committee and the GSAC.

Curricular Requirements

The Department has specific curricular requirements for each program area (Cognition, Computational Cognitive Neuroscience, Developmental, Integrative Neuroscience, Social). These are available on the Department website and are shared with students by the Student Affairs Administrator. While there is some flexibility, most students complete the coursework by their second or third year. Requests for course substitutions can be submitted to the Graduate Student Affairs Committee for review.

Key Milestones

This section lays out key milestones in the PhD program, including annual program requirements as well as evaluation and feedback processes. These milestones are intended to provide a general framework so that both students and faculty have the same general set of expectations about their respective roles as students and advisors.

Year 1

Coursework:

- In the fall, all students take the Proseminar, introducing them to the research of faculty in the Department. This course includes writing a proposal for the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship or a similar application.
- In the spring, students enroll in the Trial Research Seminar, which supports their progress on their research project while helping to enhance communication skills. The seminar also covers the role of advisory committees and offers strategies for effectively engaging with committee members to maximize the benefits of their guidance.
- Students typically take Statistics in Year 1 and Experimental Design in Year 1 or 2, providing essential research tools.

Advisory Committee: By the end of the spring quarter of the first year, students must form their advisory committee. This committee, composed of the student's primary advisor and two

additional faculty members, provides guidance on research, professional growth, and career development. Meetings with committee members occur at least once a year to review progress, provide feedback, and address any challenges or mentoring concerns.

Evaluation: In the spring, students submit their Student Activities Report, including a self-evaluation. This report is signed by the advisor and two committee members. Feedback includes recognition of strengths and candid assessment of areas for improvement, ensuring the student is on track for the following year.

Year 2

Coursework: Students continue required courses and other relevant classes. Most students complete their coursework by the end of Year 2, although some may finish in Year 3.

Trial Research: By early fall, students should begin discussions on their trial research project with their advisory committee. By the end of the fall quarter, students should present their research proposal and timeline to the members of their advisory committee. The final written Trial Research Paper is due by the end of the spring quarter, followed by a defense with the advisory committee. Successful completion of this project and coursework makes the student eligible for a Master's Degree.

Evaluation: Students complete a self-evaluation in May, discussing their progress and goals with their advisor and advisory committee. Completion of the Trial Research Project and coursework marks an important milestone. At the time, the committee will also evaluate each student's progress and capacity to complete a dissertation. Students who are not making satisfactory progress or desire a career change may leave the program with a Master's Degree at this stage.

Year 3

Mentored Teaching Experiences (MTEs): Most students begin fulfilling the required five MTEs in Year 3, although some may start earlier. Students request their preferred MTEs, typically involving required undergraduate courses for psychology majors or elective courses. While fulfilling MTEs is not required before entering dissertation candidacy, most students will have completed the majority of these experiences before defending their dissertation proposal.

Evaluation: Students complete another self-evaluation, receiving feedback from their advisor and advisory committee. The evaluation will assess the student's research progress and productivity, ensuring alignment with career goals.

Planning: During Year 3, students transition to more independent learning, focusing on creating knowledge rather than just consuming it. Strong time management and deeper research engagement become critical, and students are expected to refine their overall research program with close guidance from their advisor.

Year 4

Committee: Students are expected to meet with their advisory committee by the end of the Spring quarter of their 4th year to discuss the committee's role and expectations regarding the

dissertation proposal and dissertation. From this point, the advisory committee typically remains unchanged through the completion of the student's graduate program.

Dissertation Proposal: By the end of the spring quarter, students submit a written dissertation proposal and defend it before their committee. Upon approval, and after completing all coursework, the student will be admitted to candidacy.

Evaluation: The evaluation process remains consistent with previous years, with a focus on ensuring students are on track for successful completion of their dissertation.

Year 5

Resources: In addition to meeting the Departmental requirements specified below (and on the website), the UChicago Library has detailed requirements for the formatting of dissertations and the online submission of dissertations. For deadlines and specifications, consult the Dissertation Office's webpage at www.lib.uchicago.edu. The Student Affairs Administrator is also a helpful resource for students preparing to fulfill their dissertation requirements.

Dissertation Defense: The completed dissertation document must be submitted to all three committee members. When the student's advisor agrees, the student may schedule an oral defense of the dissertation. The oral exam is administered by four members of the University community: the three members of the dissertation committee and an outside reader. The outside reader may be a faculty member at the University of Chicago, or a scientist with a PhD at another institution. The outside reader must be approved by the primary advisor. If, after the oral defense, all committee members approve the dissertation document and the defense, the student has met the Psychology Department's requirements for the Ph.D. degree.

Petition for Year 6 funding: Students requiring an additional year of funding to complete their dissertation must petition the GSAC by a date set each year to obtain funding for a 6th year of enrollment. Essential to the success of this petition is a plan to complete the dissertation by the end of Year 6, and support for this plan by the students' advisor and committee.

Evaluation: Prior to submitting the petition for Year 6 funding, students must complete a self-evaluation, which includes a detailed timeline for dissertation completion and defense.

Academic Probation and Dismissal

Graduate students are expected to meet the academic standards and degree milestones outlined by the Department of Psychology. If at any point a student fails to meet these expectations, the department may determine that the student is not in good academic standing. Depending on the nature of the unmet requirements, the program may place the student on academic probation or, in more severe cases, dismiss the student from the program.

If a student is placed on academic probation, they will receive a written notification detailing the specific expectations required to regain good academic standing. This notification will include clear goals, required accomplishments, and a timeline for completion. Failure to meet the terms of the probation may result in dismissal from the University.

Those with questions or concerns about academic probation or dismissal are encouraged to consult with the DGS or the Dean of Students for additional guidance.

Appendix A: Department of Psychology, Mentored Teaching Experience Requirement

Purpose

Students in the Department of Psychology will be required to complete five mentored teaching experiences (MTEs), with the possibility of additional teaching experiences for those students seeking advanced pedagogical experiences. These experiences may include being a Course TA and/or an Instructor of a stand-alone course (when applicable). This mentored teaching requirement achieves several pedagogical purposes. First, MTEs ensure that students are well prepared to teach (e.g., how to develop a lecture, lead a discussion, develop a syllabus, give feedback, test development, advise students on paper topics, etc.). Second, MTEs enhance a PhD student's knowledge of the field. Through the process of teaching, student instructors gain a deeper understanding of the research literature and methodologies in the field. Third, MTEs are a critical mechanism for building professional development skills, including communication, organization, and leadership, which are valuable for students who pursue academic as well as non-academic career paths.

Any student with questions or concerns about their ability to complete their Mentored Teaching Experiences should speak with the Director of Graduate Studies as early in their graduate career as possible.

The Department's Student Affairs Administrator will keep track of student MTE assignments, and will work closely with students and faculty in running the MTE program. To achieve the goals of the MTE requirement, the Department has adopted the following requirements for MTEs:

Eligible Courses for MTEs

Courses with psychology content that are taught by psychology faculty and staff are eligible as an MTE. Students will need to petition to count other courses as fulfilling an MTE. Petitions need to include an explanation of how the course is related to the PhD student's course of study in Psychology. These petitions should be submitted directly to the Student Affairs Administrator, who will forward them to the Department's Graduate Student Affairs and Curriculum Committee (GSAC) for deliberation.

MTE Point System

Students will earn 1 MTE for each quarter they TA in a Psychology course. Lectureships that students may obtain in more advanced years of graduate school also can count as 1 MTE (Mentored Instructor), provided there is a plan for mentorship.

Breadth Requirement

Breadth of teaching experience is important in students' mentored teaching portfolio. Thus, our mentored teaching experiences provide students with a variety of experiences and opportunities to gain teaching skills with guidance and modeling from skilled faculty. To achieve breadth, students may complete no more than 3 MTE with the same class/instructor.

Typical Sequence

Students may start their MTE requirement as early as Year 2, but the timing of these experiences will vary depending on individual circumstances (e.g., students' schedules, availability of relevant MTE in the Department). Typically, students will complete some TA ships prior to becoming a lecture of a course (e.g., Dewey).

MTE Assignment

Prior to MTE assignment, students submit their course preferences to the Department's Student Affairs Administrator. The Student Affairs Administrator, in consultation with faculty teaching courses, and the DGS, will coordinate assignments based on student preferences and Department needs (e.g., the Department may prioritize MTE assignments for courses with large undergraduate enrollments and well-established mentoring outcomes).

Other MTE Requirements

In addition to completing 5 MTE, students are encouraged to utilize the resources of the Chicago Center for Teaching and Learning (CCTL). Prior to starting their MTEs, students must attend the annual teaching orientation sponsored by CCTL. In addition, the CCTL offers ad hoc workshops and programs that can help students improve their teaching (e.g., Inclusive Pedagogy Workshop), and students are encouraged to take advantage of these resources.

Additional Teaching Assignments

Students interested in accepting teaching assignments beyond the five required by the Psychology Department or those not counting towards the department's teaching requirements should follow these steps:

1. *Advisor Approval:* Discuss the additional teaching opportunity with your advisor(s) and obtain their approval.
2. *Department Notification:* Email the Student Affairs Administrator with details of the teaching opportunity. Ensure that the email confirms you have received your advisor's approval.
3. *Department Review:* The department will verify that you are in good academic standing and have met all program milestones appropriate for your stage before forwarding your request to the Dean of Students for further review.

Approval Limits and Exceptions: The Department of Psychology and the Dean of Students will approve up to three additional teaching assignments per year that do not fulfill academic and funding requirements. For non-standard teaching opportunities, such as a single-weekend workshop, students may petition the Dean of Students for exceptions to this three-assignment limit.