

**Department of Biostatistics
Mentoring and Advising Best Practices for Faculty, Graduate Students,
and Postdoctoral Fellows**

MASTERS (SM) STUDENTS

Commitments of Advisors

Academic Advisors/Mentors will:

- Provide for every graduate student under their supervision, an environment that is intellectually stimulating, emotionally supportive, equitable, respectful, accessible, safe, and free of harassment.
- Guide the graduate student through the requirements and deadlines of their graduate program, as outlined in program handbooks.
- Work with the graduate student to develop a program of study within the guidelines of their degree program, with attention paid to the strengths, areas for growth, and research interests of the student.
- Meet or communicate one-on-one with the graduate student once (or more) per semester, or as need arises.
- Direct the graduate student to resources within the department or school as needed for support with coursework, study habits, writing, or mental health.
- When applicable for the program, help the graduate student select a thesis committee by recommending appropriate members, and facilitating connections to faculty outside of the department if appropriate and advantageous to the student's research project.
- When applicable for the program, support the graduate student's work with their thesis committee by encouraging and advocating that the committee meets at least once in the final semester leading up to the defense, and in reliable communication outside of that to review the student's progress.
- When applicable for the program, demonstrate commitment to the thesis or culminating experience of the graduate student by setting reasonable and attainable goals, and establishing a timeline for completion of the project.
- When applicable, discuss authorship policies for papers with the graduate student, to ensure that the student's scientific contributions are appropriately acknowledged.

Note: The academic advisor and the thesis mentor (theses are undertaken only in certain degree programs, namely BIO SM60 and CBQG SM80) may ultimately be separate people or the same person, and each will guide the student toward fulfillment of different academic goals while in the department. The guidelines herein are most specific to the Academic Advisor role, but all thesis mentors are also expected to maintain an environment that is intellectually stimulating, emotionally supportive, equitable, respectful, accessible, safe, and free of harassment, per the top bullet point above.

Commitments of Graduate Students

Students will:

- Acknowledge they have the primary responsibility for the successful completion of their degree program.
- Understand and follow the policies and requirements of their graduate program and institution, including policies on academic integrity and adherence to academic program milestones.
- Be good departmental citizens by demonstrating a high level of professionalism, collegiality, self-motivation, engagement, scientific curiosity, and ethical standards when working with fellow students, faculty, postdoctoral fellows and other academic appointees, and staff.
- Meet once (or more) per semester with their advisor(s), or as need arises, and provide them with updates on the progress and results of their activities.
- Acknowledge they have the primary responsibility for evaluating and honing their own research areas of interest, and when/where applicable for the program, take the lead in selecting a thesis committee with their advisor's and/or Degree Program Director(s) guidance.
- When applicable for the program, work with their advisors and committee members to complete a thesis or culminating experience in accordance with the timeline and established deadlines of the program.
- Proactively notify their advisor(s) in advance of any planned absences, and barring emergencies, cancel any appointment they cannot keep.
- Acknowledge that career development following their program is primarily their responsibility. Students should proactively seek guidance from their advisor, committee members, other mentors, career counseling services within the department and school, and any other resources available for career advising.

RESOURCES

Department of Biostatistics Graduate Student Handbook – Master of Science in Biostatistics Programs: https://content.sph.harvard.edu/biostats/publications/bio-sm_handbook/BIO-SM_handbook.pdf

Department of Biostatistics Graduate Student Handbook – Master of Science in Computational Biology: https://content.sph.harvard.edu/biostats/publications/cbqg_handbook/cbqg_handbook.pdf

Department of Biostatistics Graduate Student Handbook – Master of Science in Health Data Science: https://content.sph.harvard.edu/biostats/publications/hds_handbook/hds_handbook.pdf

Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health Student Handbook: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/student-handbook/>

PHD STUDENTS

ADVISING AT ALL DEGREE STAGES

Commitments of Advisors

Advisors will:

- Guide the doctoral student through the requirements and deadlines of their graduate program, as outlined in the GSAS and Department handbooks.
- Provide for every doctoral student under their supervision an environment that is intellectually stimulating, emotionally supportive, equitable, respectful, accessible, safe, and free of harassment.
- Direct the doctoral student to resources within the department, HSPH, or GSAS as needed for support with coursework, study habits, writing, or mental health.
- Review and reaffirm commitments and expectations with advisees at least twice per year.

Commitments of Graduate Students

Students will:

- Acknowledge they have the primary responsibility for the successful completion of their degree program.
- Understand and follow the policies and requirements of their graduate program and institution, including adherence to academic program milestones, as outlined in the GSAS and Department handbooks.
- Complete required training in Responsible Conduct of Research and Reproducibility, and practice those principles when conducting academic research.
- Attend and participate in laboratory meetings, seminars, working groups, and journal clubs that are part of their educational program, to broaden understanding of the field.
- Be good departmental citizens by demonstrating a high level of professionalism, collegiality, self-motivation, engagement, scientific curiosity, and ethical standards when working with fellow students, faculty, postdoctoral fellows and other academic appointees, and staff.
- Review and reaffirm commitments and expectations with advisors at least twice per year.

ADVISING IN THE G1-G2 YEARS

Commitments of Academic Advisors

Academic Advisors will:

- Work with the doctoral student to develop a program of study within the guidelines of their degree program, with attention paid to the strengths, areas for growth, and research interests of the student.
- Meet one-on-one with the doctoral student at least twice per semester.
- Help the doctoral student identify a summer project that is consistent with their research interests, and connect with possible summer project advisor(s).

Commitments of Graduate Students

Students will:

- Meet one-on-one with their advisor(s) at least twice per semester.
- Work with their advisor to identify a summer project and advisor.

ADVISING IN THE G3+ YEARS

Commitments of Dissertation Advisors

Dissertation Advisors will:

- Not require the doctoral student to perform tasks that are unrelated to their training program or professional development.
- Meet one-on-one with the doctoral student at least once per month, in addition to any group or lab meetings.
- Provide or identify financial resources for the doctoral student as appropriate and according to departmental and GSAS guidelines, in order for them to conduct dissertation research.
- Help the doctoral student select a dissertation committee by identifying appropriate members, and facilitating connections to faculty outside of the department if appropriate and advantageous to the student's research project.

- Help plan and direct the doctoral student's dissertation research project by setting reasonable and attainable goals, and establish a timeline for completion of the project.
- Support the research interests of the doctoral student to the greatest extent possible given funding requirements, or if necessary help the student identify alternative funding sources to support the student's biostatistical or bioinformatics research interests.
- Support the doctoral student's work with their dissertation committee by helping to ensure that the committee meets at least every six months (or more frequently, if needed) to review the student's progress.
- Discuss paper authorship policies with the doctoral student, to ensure that the student's scientific contributions are appropriately acknowledged, and that work is published in a timely manner and in accordance with program requirements.
- Discuss intellectual property issues with the doctoral student with regard to disclosure, patent rights, and publishing research discoveries.
- Encourage the doctoral student to attend scientific/professional meetings and make an effort to secure and facilitate funding for such activities.
- Provide career advice and assistance in identifying a position for the doctoral student following their graduation by providing advice and feedback on career goals, and issuing honest letters of recommendation.

Commitments of Doctoral Students

Students will:

- Work with their dissertation advisor to develop a dissertation project with a clear timeline that meets the established deadlines.
- Meet with their research advisor at least once per month, and provide them with updates on the progress and results of their activities.
- Discuss policies on authorship and attendance at professional meetings with their research advisor.
- Work with their advisor to submit manuscripts for publication in a timely manner.
- Proactively notify their advisor and laboratory colleagues in advance of any planned absences, and barring emergencies, cancel any appointment they cannot keep.
- Acknowledge that career development following their program is primarily their responsibility. Doctoral students should proactively seek guidance from their advisor, committee members, other mentors, career counseling services within the department and school, and any other resources available for career advising.

RESOURCES

Department of Biostatistics Graduate Student Handbook – Doctoral Program:

<https://content.sph.harvard.edu/biostats/publications/handbook/greenbook.pdf>

Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) Policies: <https://gsas.harvard.edu/policies>

Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health Student Handbook: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/student-handbook/>

POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS

Commitments of Mentors

Mentors will:

- Provide for every postdoctoral fellow under their supervision an environment that is intellectually stimulating, emotionally supportive, equitable, respectful, accessible, safe, and free of harassment.
- Ensure that mutually understood expectations and goals are in place at the outset of the postdoctoral training period.
- Not require the postdoctoral fellow to perform tasks that are unrelated to their training or professional development.
- Provide or identify financial resources for the postdoctoral fellow according to department and school guidelines.
- Work with the postdoctoral fellow to develop research projects, with attention paid to their strengths, areas for growth, and research interests.
- Meeting one-on-one with the postdoctoral fellow at least once per month, and providing feedback on a regular basis, including a comprehensive annual review.
- Direct the postdoctoral fellow to resources within the department, and school, as needed for support, career services, or mental health.
- Discuss paper authorship policies with the postdoctoral fellow, to ensure their scientific contributions are appropriately acknowledged, and that work is published in a timely manner.
- Discuss intellectual policy issues with the postdoctoral fellow with regard to disclosure, patent rights, and publishing research discoveries.
- Support the postdoctoral fellow's use of the full benefits of his/her employment at Harvard Chan School, including paid time off.
- Encourage the postdoctoral fellow to attend scientific/professional meetings and make an effort to secure and facilitate funding for such activities.
- Provide career advice and assistance in identifying a position for the postdoctoral fellow following their appointment by providing advice and feedback on career goals, and issuing honest letters of recommendation.

Commitments of Postdoctoral Research Fellows

Fellows will:

- Comply with all laboratory and institutional policies and deadlines.
- Be good departmental citizens by demonstrating a high level of professionalism, collegiality, self-motivation, engagement, scientific curiosity, and ethical standards when working with fellow students, faculty, other postdoctoral fellows and other academic appointees, and staff.
- Meet with their mentor at least once per month and provide them with updates on the progress and results of their activities.
- Attend and participate in laboratory meetings, seminars, working groups, and journal clubs that are part of their laboratory to develop a broader understanding of the field.
- Discuss policies on authorship and attendance at professional meetings with my mentor.
- Proactively notify their mentor and laboratory colleagues in advance of any planned absences, and barring emergencies, cancel any appointment they cannot keep.
- Acknowledge that career development following their fellowship is primarily their responsibility. Postdoctoral Fellows should proactively seek guidance from their advisor, other mentors, career counseling services within the department and school, and any other resources available for career advising.

RESOURCES

Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Office of Faculty Affairs – Information for Postdoctoral Fellows: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/faculty-affairs/postdoctoral-research-fellows/>