

Guidelines for academic advising in the Philosophy PhD Program at Yale

Different academic advising relationships work in very different ways, and the department is open to a variety of different approaches. In some cases, a student works very closely with their advisor and only checks in occasionally with the other dissertation committee members, while in others, the other dissertation committee members play almost as large a role as the advisor. In some cases, an advisor may take a relatively hands-off approach, while in others, advisors may even co-author papers with their students. The best way to get a sense for what a particular faculty member is likely to do as an advisor is probably to talk with other students who have worked with that faculty member and to talk to the faculty member themselves.

Although the department encourages this diversity of different approaches, there are certain broad guidelines that apply to all advising relationships. The remainder of this document summarizes those broad guidelines.

1. Administrative and academic advisors

The Director of Graduate Studies serves as an administrative advisor for all graduate students throughout their entire time in the program. In addition, graduate students have an academic advisor. The academic advisor is called the mentor until the student officially forms the dissertation committee; after that, the head of the dissertation committee serves in this role. Academic advisors must be ladder faculty in the department.

1.1. Selection of academic advisors

Mentors are selected by the Chair and the Director of Graduate Studies before graduate students begin their studies. The selection is not based on the student's interests. The head and other members of the dissertation committee are selected by the graduate student at the beginning of their fifth semester.

Graduate students can change their academic advisor at any time. The change requires prior consent from the new advisor. It is a good idea to discuss the plan to change advisors with the Director of Graduate Studies in advance.

1.2. Temporary transfer of advising roles

It is not expected that a faculty member who is the mentor of a graduate student not yet advanced to candidacy will continue in that role while on leave, though it is certainly permissible. A faculty member who decides not to continue must, after consultation with the student and with the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies, transfer their role to another ladder faculty member. The original mentor will then resume that role when they return from leave. **As the Faculty Handbook specifies (chapter xvii, section A, part 3, ordinarily, dissertation advisors are expected to continue supervising dissertations while on leave.)** A dissertation advisor who **who is unable** to continue must, after consultation with the student and with the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies, transfer their role to another ladder

faculty member, who will normally be another member of the dissertation committee. The original advisor will then resume the role of dissertation advisor when they return from leave. Graduate students should be notified of a change in mentor or advisor no less than a month before the beginning of the leave.

Expectations concerning summer advising vary. Advisors should confer with their advisees about their availability during the summer, and discuss ways in which the advising needs of their advisees can be met.

1.3. Meetings with advisors

Graduate students can schedule meetings with their administrative or academic advisors at any time. In addition, there are four kinds of required meetings:

- (a) mentors meet their advisees at the beginning of each semester to discuss course selections;
- (b) mentors meet their advisees at the end of their fourth semester to discuss their plans for the fifth semester;
- (c) heads of dissertation committees meet their advisees regularly and at least once a month during the academic year;
- (d) dissertation committees meet their advisees at the end of each academic year to discuss progress on the dissertation.

1.4. Annual evaluations

The faculty holds two meetings every year where the work of graduate students is discussed. The fall meetings are devoted to students who have already defended their prospectus; at the spring meeting we talk about students who have not yet reached that stage. After these meetings, the academic advisors reach out to their advisees and inform them about the faculty's assessment of their progress.

2. Timeline of academic advising

The following time-line is based on that of the Philosophy PhD program. For students in combined programs the time-line can be different.

2.1. The first four semesters

During this period, graduate students are expected to complete their course requirements (except for the skills requirement). The primary role of the mentor during this period is to help students plan the way they do this. Mentors know which classes are regularly offered, and they have an approximate sense of the pattern of faculty leaves – students should rely on this. Students are especially encouraged to discuss setbacks (e.g. temporary incompletes) and seek advice about term papers (e.g. whether they might be suitable for development to a qualifying paper). At the end of the fourth semester there is a special meeting devoted to plans about the fifth semester tutorial and the qualifying papers.

The Graduate School maintains a webpage of resources and support for graduate students at <https://gsas.yale.edu/resources-students>. Mentors should be broadly familiar with these resources, and be prepared to discuss them if their advisees wish to.

2.2. The fifth and sixth semesters

In the fifth semester, graduate students are expected to work with a faculty member towards their prospectus in the context of a tutorial. This faculty member is chosen with the expectation that they become a member of the dissertation committee. Accordingly, this faculty member takes over some of the academic advising from the mentor. Nonetheless, the formal role of the mentor does not end until the dissertation committee is officially formed (usually at the end of the fifth semester). At this time, the head of the committee takes over the role of academic advising. Normally the prospectus is defended in the sixth semester. At the end of the sixth semester, the dissertation committee advises the student about how to start working on the thesis.

2.3. After the prospectus

At this stage, graduate students are expected to fulfill their skills requirement and focus on teaching and the dissertation. Students should discuss their plans for publication, conference participation, and plans to enter the job market with the entire dissertation committee, not just the academic advisor.

3. Responsibilities in advising

In general, so that all participants can be prepared, meetings of advisees and committee members should be scheduled in advance of the day of the meeting, with last minute changes acceptable only in exceptional circumstances.

If a meeting of an advisee and committee members is to involve discussion of a particular work by the advisee, all committee members should read the work in advance of the meeting.

Advisees may approach members of the faculty not on the dissertation committee for feedback on work. While it is not a formal responsibility of these faculty to read and comment on material in the thesis, it is a general expectation that they will do so.

3.1. Responsibilities of Dissertation Advisors

It is the responsibility of the dissertation advisor and the advisee to meet together on a mutually agreed upon and regular schedule. Generally, these meetings will occur either weekly, biweekly, or monthly, with at least one meeting occurring each month. The dissertation advisor should see to it that this schedule is established shortly after the advisee selects the dissertation advisor. If any of these regularly scheduled meetings unexpectedly fails to occur, the dissertation advisor should contact the advisee and, if appropriate, other committee members.

Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the dissertation advisor to maintain regular email contact with the advisee (no less than once a month) to check on the advisee's progress. The dissertation advisor should address the advisee's queries promptly (responding within a week and providing explicit feedback within two weeks) and be especially available for queries about career plans. The dissertation advisor should provide timely, appropriate, and thorough written or oral comments on work sent by the advisee for consideration.

3.2. Responsibilities of Other Dissertation Committee Members

It is the responsibility of each of the other dissertation committee members to provide timely, appropriate, and thorough written or oral comments on work sent by the advisee for consideration, and to respond within two weeks to the advisee's queries. The entire committee should meet with the advisee at least once a year (with one meeting occurring at the end of the academic year), and these conversations should also concern employment prospects. Committee members should be especially available for queries about the academic job market or nonacademic job opportunities.

Both dissertation committee members and advisors should advise students about the process of publication. Advisors and committee members should submit any letters of recommendation they agree to write by the announced deadlines.

3.3. Responsibilities of Advisees

It is the responsibility of the advisee to promptly respond to committee members' queries and to contact the dissertation advisor or other committee members (either directly or through the Department Registrar) if any of the meetings specified above unexpectedly does not occur. Advisees should meet with the entire committee at least once per year (once at the end of the academic year) to discuss the dissertation and preparation for the academic or nonacademic job markets.

4. Careers and professional development

The below recommendations apply to all career goals, including, but not limited to, academic ones.

- The expectation is that students will discuss their career plans and professional development with members of their dissertation committee. However, if a student does not wish to do so they can discuss these plans with their administrative advisor (the DGS) or the Chair instead. In this case the DGS or Chair will keep their plans confidential.
- The following resources are available for students' professional development. When consulted, the dissertation committee and/or the DGS/chair should be open to students making use of:
 - the auditing or teaching of courses, possibly outside of the philosophy department, that are relevant to the student's career goals.

- the use of summers and winters for internships and temporary jobs relevant to career goals.
 - taking a year of personal leave to gain more experience in a field.
 - the exploration of possible career pathways via connections with alumni of the graduate program.
 - any resources available through the careers service and graduate school, including graduate professional fellowships:
 - <https://ocs.yale.edu/channels/phds-postdocs/>
 - <https://gsas.yale.edu/resources-students/finances-fellowships/professional-development-opportunities>
- Faculty should not assume that graduate students will only want to pursue a career in academia.
 - In their teaching and academic advising roles, faculty should not discriminate against students who have non-academic career goals.