Advising and Mentoring Program

Academic Faculty Advisors

Every first-year student is assigned to an academic faculty advisor, with whom he or she meets regularly to discuss courses, general progress, and to review the Department and University requirements. During the Spring quarter every student completes with her/his faculty advisor the first Annual Activities Report. The academic advisor also provides advice on how to make contact with research groups.

The faculty member maintains this role until the student is well established with a research advisor. The entire doctoral supervisory committee takes up this mentoring role for advance students, particularly the research advisor and the research mentor.

Peer Mentoring Program

The department has an evolving peer mentoring program. First-year students are paired with student mentors, typically second-year or a more advanced student, who have volunteered to do this. These peer mentors are in regular contact with the first-year students throughout the year and aim to ease the transition to graduate school by sharing their experiences and provide support and advice. There is usually one social “tea” each quarter to which all peer mentors and mentees are invited. In addition, mentors meet individually with their mentees once or twice each quarter during the first year. Details can be found on the Departmental Advising and Mentoring Program web site.

Faculty mentors for advanced graduate students

Advanced Graduate students are advised and mentored by their Research Advisor and their Faculty Mentor. Students forming their Supervisory Committees must designate one of the members, other than the Chair, as a Faculty Mentor.

The difference between advising and mentoring can be summarized as follows (drawn from graduate school documents): advising “focuses on the activities, requirements, and attainment of satisfactory progress through the steps needed to achieve a graduate degree,” whereas mentoring “focuses on the human relationships, commitments, and resources that help graduate students find success and fulfillment in the academic and professional pursuits.” Research Advisors certainly play an important mentoring as well as advising role, but the department considers it important, as a minimum, to have another faculty member who explicitly takes on a mentoring role. In addition, all students are encouraged to seek, as needed, further mentoring from others in the department (fellow students, postdoctoral researchers, staff) and the broader UW community.

The Mentor on your Committee should agree to take on some responsibility to look out for your overall professional health during your time here doing research. There are no hard and fast rules about mentoring, but it might involve the faculty member seeking you out proactively on an occasional (but regular) basis to discuss your progress and needs. He or she would also be available as a friendly and supportive sounding board, offering constructive criticism, suggesting contacts as needed, and helping you think about future career options.
Useful Documents (All PDFs)

For Mentees

- Mentee Checklist First Meeting
- Mentee Expectations Worksheet
- Preparing for Your First Meeting
- Getting to Know Your Mentor
- CWD Mentee Communication Supplement
- CWD Mentee Guide
- Slides from Mentee Forum
- UW Graduate School Mentoring Guide

For Mentors

- Mentor Checklist First Meeting
- Mentor Expectations Worksheet
- Mentor Preparing for Your First Meeting
- Getting to Know Your Mentee
- Common Issues and Concerns
- CWD Mentor Communication Supplement
- CWD Mentor Guide
- Slides From Mentor Forum
- UW Graduate School Faculty Mentoring Guide

Department of Physics
University of Washington
Physics-Astronomy Building, Rm. C121
Box 351560
Seattle, WA 98195-1560

Phone: (206) 543-2770
Fax: (206) 685-0635
physrecp@uw.edu

Source URL: https://phys.washington.edu/advising-and-mentoring-program