

Graduate Assistant Mentoring Guide

School of Criminal Justice
College of Social Sciences
Michigan State University
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The School of Criminal Justice (SCJ) at Michigan State University (MSU) is committed to providing high-quality mentorship to our doctoral students. We mentor our students by providing research, teaching, service, and professional development opportunities and by helping them navigate and complete all degree requirements. This mentoring guide has three primary purposes: (1) establish mentoring relationship expectations between students and faculty, (2) help ensure compliance with MSU policies, and (3) outline annual progress review requirements.

Contents:

- 1) *Graduate Assistant – Faculty Supervisor Start of the Semester Meeting Form* (and [link](#) to the College’s TA – Faculty Supervisor Start of the Semester Meeting Form)
- 2) *Graduate Assistant – Supervisor Meeting Checklist*
- 3) *Annual Progress Review Process and Form*

Quick To-Do List (outline of steps discussed below):

- 1) At the beginning of each academic year, graduate assistants (GAs) should meet with their faculty supervisor/chair to discuss work expectations (or when a new GA is assigned to a faculty member).
- 2) During this meeting, the student and faculty member should complete the “Graduate Assistant – Faculty Supervisor Start of the Semester Meeting” form (hereafter “GA Form”) and email it to the School of Criminal Justice’s Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC). This is voluntary but highly encouraged.
 - a. The College of Social Science (CSS) has an online form that must be completed *each semester* for T-designated GAs (i.e., students teaching their own course OR assigned for teaching assistant [TA] duties ([link to form HERE](#))). This form should be completed for all graduate assistants that are T-designated (i.e., this is required and not voluntary for T-designated GAs). The form described above (GA form) should also be completed if a GA is appointed to both research (R) and teaching (T) duties.
- 3) Also, during this meeting, the student and faculty member should complete the “Graduate Assistant – Supervisor Meeting Checklist” form (hereafter, “Checklist”). A signed copy may be emailed to the GPC along with the GA form described above. This is voluntary but highly encouraged.
- 4) Lastly, during the meeting, faculty and their students should discuss the annual progress review process and associated form.

Detailed Description of Mentoring Meeting Steps

1) Graduate Assistant – Faculty Supervisor Start of the Semester Meeting

Consistent with the Graduate Employees Union (GEU) [collective bargaining contract](#), MSU graduate students designated as “Teaching (T)” are part of the GEU and are entitled to a meeting with their teaching mentor/supervisor prior to the beginning of *each semester* to discuss workload expectations. The SCJ uses the “T” designation when our graduate students are assigned to teach their own course, and we assign a faculty member to serve as their teaching mentor. The SCJ also uses the “T” designation for GAs who will be performing teaching assistant-related work for their faculty supervisor (e.g., grading, course preparation, guest lectures, office hours, proctoring, etc.). Prior to each semester a student is teaching their own course or working on teaching assistant-related duties, SCJ faculty are required to complete the “TA – Faculty Supervisor Start of the Semester Meeting” form (hereafter, TA form) that is included at this [LINK](#). This form should be completed during a meeting between the graduate student and their teaching mentor/supervisor. This is required by MSU.

SCJ faculty are committed to providing the best mentorship possible to our doctoral students. Although the collective bargaining contract only applies to “T” designated students, our faculty are also encouraged to complete the “Graduate Assistant – Faculty Supervisor Start of the Semester Meeting” form (included with these documents) for our graduate assistants who are designated as “Research (R).” To start each academic year, graduate assistants and their assigned faculty supervisor should meet and discuss expectations regarding workload. The form is used to guide the conversation and can be signed by both the student and supervisor. The completed form can be emailed to the SCJ’s GPC for record keeping.

Sometimes faculty will want their GA to work on both research- and teaching-related activities. Such faculty members should work with the SCJ’s GPC to appropriately allocate the GA’s contract. In this situation, the faculty member and student should complete both the “GA form” and/or the “TA form.”

2) Graduate Assistant – Supervisor Meeting Checklist

A “Graduate Assistant – Supervisor Meeting Checklist” also is included with these documents to further assist faculty and students in setting expectations for their graduate assistantships and mentoring relationships. MSU’s [Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) entitles graduate assistants to high-quality mentorship and this checklist is intended to help set expectations for both students and faculty. This Checklist may be completed at the beginning of each academic year along with the “GA form” and/or the “TA form.” The signed form may be sent to the SCJ’s GPC for record keeping.

3) Annual Progress Review Process and Form

Providing regular feedback to graduate students is an essential component to effective mentorship. The last section of this mentoring guide outlines the SCJ’s annual progress review process. Consistent with MSU’s [Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities](#), the Graduate School requires annual reviews of graduate students. The SCJ has a multipronged strategy for providing annual progress reports to our doctoral students. During each spring semester, students are required to meet with the chair of their guidance/dissertation committee to complete the annual

progress report found at this [LINK](#). Students complete pages 1 and 2 of this form and write a professional goal statement. Page 3 of the report is completed by the student's guidance/dissertation chair. The student and chair meet to discuss the report and the student's progress in the program. They both sign the report and send a copy to the PhD Program Director. The report is reviewed and signed by the PhD Program Director, and the student uploads the signed document into their GradPlan (this is required by the Graduate School). The PhD Program Director also completes an annual review memorandum that reminds students of the years of graduate assistant support they have remaining and relevant MSU timelines and policies. Additionally, the memorandum provides an overview of the milestones the student has completed (or that still need to be completed) and summarizes the information provided by the student and their chair in the progress report. The annual review memorandum can be uploaded to GradPlan along with the required annual progress report form.