

Department of Forest Ecosystems and Society Policy for Faculty Engagement with Students, Graduate Employees, Graduate Fellows, Post-doctoral Scholars, Faculty Research Assistants, and Research Associates

1. Purpose

This policy outlines the basic expectations and responsibilities of faculty members in the Department of Forest Ecosystems and Society (FES) regarding the various forms of engagement—including advising, mentoring, supervising, and teaching relationships—with undergraduate students, graduate student employees, graduate fellows, post-doctoral scholars, faculty research assistants, and research associates. This policy ensures a professional, supportive, and educational environment that fosters academic growth while addressing and preventing conflicts.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all faculty members who advise, mentor, supervise, or teach undergraduate students, graduate student employees, graduate fellows, post-doctoral scholars, faculty research assistants, and research associates within FES. The policy aims to promote excellence in mentoring while addressing any behavioral or conduct concerns.

3. Essential Functions and Behaviors of a Faculty Member in Various Engagement Roles

- a. **Advising:** A multi-faceted educational partnership where the faculty advisor provides guidance and support to advisees in their academic community and careers.
 - i. **Responsibilities:** Faculty should provide academic advice, develop plans with advisees, provide necessary resources, and adhere to boundaries (per [OSU academic advising guidelines](#)).
 - ii. **Behaviors and Expectations:** Advisors are expected to be accessible, responsive, and effective communicators, offering timely feedback and creating a supportive environment that allows advisees to clarify their goals and plans. Advisees are expected to partner actively with their advisors, be prepared, take responsibility, and follow through on plans (per [OSU advisor-advisee responsibilities](#)).
- b. **Mentoring:** A developmental relationship wherein a faculty mentor supports a mentee's growth throughout various stages of their academic and professional career.
 - i. **Responsibilities:** Faculty should offer guidance, encouragement, connections to other mentors, and professional networks while setting appropriate boundaries. While these responsibilities associated with a

mentor-mentee relationship have been established as [Grad School mentoring guidelines](#), these responsibilities could also be applied to faculty engagement with undergraduate students, post-doctoral scholars, FRAs, and RAs.

- ii. **Behaviors and Expectations:** Mentors should display empathy, dedication, patience, and flexibility while creating an environment where mentees feel valued and supported. Mentees should articulate their needs, take responsibility for their professional growth, and set career goals to work toward. Again, while these behaviors and expectations have been outlined in the [OSU Grad School Mentor/Mentee Guides](#), these could also be applied to faculty engagement with undergraduate students, post-doctoral scholars, FRAs, and RAs.
- c. **Supervising:** A professional agreement where the faculty supervisor oversees an employee performing specific tasks.
 - i. **Responsibilities:** Faculty supervisors should provide training, manage performance, set goals, and uphold professional standards (following [OSU HR policies](#)).
 - ii. **Behaviors and Expectations:** Supervisors are expected to communicate effectively, encourage teamwork, and support employee development. Employees should exhibit professionalism, time management, and a positive attitude.
- d. **Teaching:** The formation of a respectful and trust-based student-teacher relationship in a classroom environment.
 - i. **Responsibilities:** Faculty should provide meaningful learning experiences, respect students' privacy, and uphold boundaries (as outlined in [OSU Statement of Faculty Responsibilities](#)).
 - ii. **Behaviors and Expectations:** Faculty should use effective teaching strategies, support diverse student needs, and assess learning outcomes. Students are expected to be prepared, follow classroom guidelines, and engage responsibly (per [OSU student code of conduct](#)).

4. Professional Development

Faculty are strongly encouraged to engage in professional development to enhance their advising, supervising, mentoring, and teaching skills. This professional development includes the following options:

- **Official Mentorship Training:** All newly hired OSU faculty mentors of graduate students are required to complete [Entering Mentoring](#) training, which is based on work done by the Center for the Improvement of Mentored Experiences in Research (CIMER). Faculty members are encouraged to periodically refresh their training in the *Entering Mentoring* program or an equivalent recognized

mentoring training program, particularly those who are new to advising or have had conflicts with advisees.

- **Continuous Learning:** Faculty should regularly participate in workshops, seminars, training, or independent reading that enhance their advising, mentoring, supervising, and teaching skills. This can include attending workshops on conflict resolution, equity in advising, or dialogue skills.
 - The OSU Graduate School recommends reviewing the [University of Michigan Graduate Student Mentoring Guide](#) as a resource to learn more about roles, expectations, and conflict resolution.
- **Encouraging Mentee Development:** Faculty are encouraged to guide their advisees or supervisees toward professional development opportunities, such as attending university or college-level orientation, workshops offered by the [Graduate School](#), the [Center for Teaching and Learning \(CTL\)](#), and the Ombuds Office. Additionally, faculty should highlight relevant GRAD courses (e.g., GRAD 513, GRAD 599) that can support mentees in their development. Providing this guidance can help foster a healthy and collaborative mentoring relationship.

5. Conflict Management and Resolution

In the event of conflicts, faculty and advisees/supervisees should address them directly and respectfully. If informal resolution fails, conflicts must be escalated immediately through the following channels:

- **Departmental Mediation:** Faculty and/or advisees/supervisees must seek mediation through the Graduate Program Director, Graduate Program Coordinator, Department Head, or an appointed departmental mediator. The department will facilitate constructive dialogue between the involved parties.
- **University Resources:** For more serious or unresolved issues after departmental mediation, either party may use university resources, such as the [Office of Equal Opportunity and Access \(EOA\)](#), [Employee and Labor Relations \(ELR\)](#), [University Ombuds Office \(UOO\)](#), [Office of Institutional Diversity \(OID\)](#), or the [Graduate School](#) for further assistance and formal conflict resolution.
 - Any of the offices (EOA, ELR, UOO, OID, or the Graduate School) can support you and direct you to the appropriate resource. So, if you are unsure who to reach out to, start with whatever office you are most comfortable contacting (See Appendix A for a comparison of services between UOO, OHR/ELR, EOA, and OID).
 - What's important is that you seek help! These offices regularly collaborate and will ensure that you are directed to the most appropriate office.
- **Documentation:** All conflicts that require mediation must be documented, and any repeated offenses or patterns of behavior will be taken into account in the annual review process. Documentation should be created to capture the details

of the discussion including any expectations set or action items agreed upon. This documentation may take different forms including, but not limited to:

- An email sent to all parties detailing the expectations discussed.
- A recap of the mediation for the supervisor's personnel records.

Email is the preferred way to document any discussions around conflicts as it allows everyone to review what the expectations were and respond if they feel something is incorrect or misrepresented. However, it may be appropriate for some conversations for the supervisor to simply make a record of the meeting for their personnel records so it can be tracked for annual reviews.

All documentation should be maintained by the supervisor for future reference. Repeated offenses or patterns of behavior documented through these efforts will be taken into account during the annual review process.

- Faculty who have recurring or repeated conflicts or complaints (i.e., repeat offenders) and/or fail to uphold expected standards of conduct in advising (see "Essential Functions and Behaviors of a Faculty Member in Various Engagement Roles" above) will be required to take additional measures, including, but not limited to:
 - **Co-Advising Requirement:** Faculty will be assigned a co-advisor for advisees/supervisees to gain experience in advising, mentoring, or supervising and ensure a supportive environment for their advisees/supervisees.
 - **Training and Remediation:** Faculty will be required to undergo additional advising or mentoring training or mediation sessions.

6. Annual Reviews

For graduate students, advisors are required to complete the annual *FES Assessment of Graduate Student Satisfactory Academic Progress* for each advisee to assess their:

- Academic and research progress.
- Plans for upcoming year(s).
- Areas for improvement.
- Professional development and service opportunities.

In addition, supervisors are required to complete the annual *FES Graduate Assistant Evaluation* for any graduate students reporting to them for employment (e.g., GTA, GRA), which provides an overall evaluation and assessment of expectations related

to job knowledge/technical competence, quality of work, working relationship and communication, interest and initiative, and judgement. This evaluation also provides an opportunity to establish goals for the next evaluation period. While it is important that these evaluations be complete, they can be succinct and should not require a substantial time commitment from faculty to complete them annually.

These reviews must be documented and submitted to the department for review. Completing these assessments provides important and timely feedback that can strengthen the mentor/mentee relationship and support the student's growth throughout their program.

For post-doctoral scholars, an [individual development plan \(IDP\)](#) and annual report should be completed following university guidelines, with attention to career progression and development.

For FRAs and RAs, faculty should complete an annual review following the guidelines provided in the [Periodic Review of Faculty](#).

7. Enforcement and Accountability

The FES Department reserves the right to enforce these policies and take corrective actions when necessary. Faculty who fail to comply with the expectations outlined in this policy may face:

- Documentation of concerns in annual performance reviews, which may affect professional development plans and future assignments.
- Additional mandatory training.
- Referral to university-level disciplinary processes in severe or recurring cases.
- Loss of advising privileges.

8. Conclusion

Advising, mentoring, supervising, and teaching undergraduate students, graduate student employees, graduate fellows, post-doctoral scholars, faculty research assistants, and research associates is a key responsibility of faculty in the department and college. By adhering to the expectations and procedures outlined in this policy, we aim to cultivate a supportive and professional environment that encourages academic and professional growth for all.

Appendix A – Flow chart and comparisons of department services

