

# Department of Art History and Archaeology Guidelines for Graduate Student Mentoring Spring 2023

## I. Key Values

### **Respect**

The mentor-mentee relationship is built on a foundation of mutual respect—for one another's work (including challenges as well as successes) and for one another's humanity. Mentors recognize and value the professional and personal experiences that mentees bring into their graduate education, and provide space for mentees to express new and diverse ideas.

### **Support of long-term success**

Mentors concern themselves not only with the academic success of their advisees but also with their professional wellbeing overall. Mentors support students in considering options and limitations, helping them launch into a rewarding professional life on their chosen path.

### **Professionalism**

Mentors model professional comportment and active engagement in the department, in the field, and in the world at large. They support students in cultivating and adopting these traits.

### **Good Communication**

Mentors communicate honestly, clearly, and kindly. The mentor and mentee establish and revisit expectations about how, when, and how much to communicate about various aspects of the graduate career.

### **Equity and Inclusion**

Mentors are committed to equity and inclusion and provide a model for mentees to consider their own professional work through this lens and their role within the department.

## II. Overview

In the Department of Art History and Archaeology, there are different levels or types of advising. The Graduate Coordinator and the Director of Graduate studies are available to help all students understand how to fulfill program requirements; the DGS also organizes general pre-professional training. Each student also has an individual advisor. These graduate advisors are committed not only to academic advising (consulting on the steps of the graduate program, giving formal feedback, etc.) but also to mentoring, which includes cultivating the overall professional success of graduate students. Good mentoring requires holistic attention to each student's strengths and weaknesses, intellectual style, and modes of inquiry. Guidance is tailored to the student's needs. Mentorship includes helping students navigate departmental, university, and academic culture as well as actively assisting them in the transition into professional life. A mentor has a two-way relationship with the student: they discuss and debate questions and ideas that are meaningful to

both of them. The mentor offers encouragement but also provides guardrails in professional decision-making. They guide the student toward ethical scholarly behavior and, we hope, provide a role model for the student as they become an independent figure in the scholarly world. A mentoring relationship is, importantly, one of mutual respect. While each graduate student's advisor is also their mentor, graduate students should also seek and receive mentoring from other faculty members in the department and beyond.

Graduate students enter the program to work with a specific mentor, but they may also formally switch advisors, or be co-advised by another professor, in consultation with both parties. If the student feels uncomfortable about this, they should ask the Director of Graduate Studies to mediate the transition.

### **III. Guidelines for Faculty Mentors**

#### **Setting up routes of communication**

Mentors, in consultation with their students, establish expectations for communication—what modes of communication are appropriate, and when? How do expectations change when the mentor of the student is traveling? Mentors will be open and approachable within the boundaries they establish. Before the student advances to candidacy, a meeting – in person or virtual – should be scheduled every month. Thereafter, meetings should be held at the beginning and end of each semester.

Additional meetings may be necessary if the student has specific questions, either about the dissertation or about professional development. It is up to the student to contact their mentor in such circumstances; it is up to the mentor to make themselves available.

#### **Seeing a student's potential and helping them move toward it**

Mentors look beyond the basic trajectory of the student's degree goal to assess the kinds of things they are interested in, their strengths (as a teacher, as a researcher, as an advocate, as an organizer, as a future mentor) and their weaknesses. Rather than imposing a structure on them, mentors understand what aspects worry students and where they feel their own weaknesses lie. Do they struggle to learn languages? Do they read slowly? Is their ability to travel overseas limited by personal factors? Conversely, are they a remarkably gifted writer? A trained performer? All sorts of things feed into their pathways and mentors help them see that.

#### **Explaining the educational/intellectual enterprise of the department and the discipline**

A student coming straight from an undergraduate program will not automatically understand the very different expectations of graduate school. Mentors help them understand their place in a professional structure which they are preparing to move through. Consider what kinds of behavior that were fine as an undergraduate might be inappropriate now.

#### **Pointing students toward opportunities**

Students may not understand that even early decisions can affect their career trajectories. Mentors help them see why certain dissertation topics are more likely to win research funding or to lead to job offers in academia, museums, or archives. Mentors discuss their own research projects and experiences as a model, pointing out ways in which the student's interests and goals will demand different choices for them. What choices and priorities helped you; which led you

down dead ends? At what point is it appropriate to look for publication venues, to present work at conferences, to apply for internal and external summer funding? What is a good use of summer break: language study? Technical workshops? Polishing a paper for publication? Mentors use their own enthusiasm and commitment to inspire students.

If a student comes across such an opportunity themselves, they should consult with their advisor before pursuing it. Not every grant or journal or conference is appropriate at every stage of their career.

### **Supporting networking and collaboration with others at different levels in the field**

Authority and collegiality are some of the trickiest things for students to work out. For some, this seems natural; for others it is completely alien. They may need to discuss, in an informal and supportive way, how to interact with other graduate students, with professors in a classroom and with those who they TA for, with faculty from other departments and from other universities when they start attending conferences. They need help understanding what opportunities but also what pitfalls they may encounter in different situations. Eventually, they need to understand how to project their own authority.

### **Enabling students to achieve the life/work balance that is right for them**

Is the student's life outside of school particularly complex; does it involve family obligations, travel, etc.? Without prying, listen to their priorities and potential conflicts, and suggest ways they might negotiate those things. If your own graduate life had similar complexity, say so. Or, put them in touch with faculty or older students who share their life needs.

### **Responding directly and concretely to student work**

Mentors' constructive criticism is mixed with encouragement. Especially early in their graduate career, but also while writing the dissertation, students may experience "imposter syndrome." Mentors offer support without being unrealistic about the quality of their work. Mentors read drafts; especially for short but crucial things, like grant proposals, multiple readings may be necessary.

Students should be aware that mentors have many demands on their time and can't always read a grant proposal or article draft at the moment it's finished, especially if that is shortly before it is due. Ask your mentor how long in advance they need a given item, specifying how long you expect it to be. Also ask whether they want to see multiple drafts, to see sections of chapters before a whole chapter, etc.

### **Guiding first-generation students and students from underrepresented groups**

All of the issues above may be magnified if a student comes from a family in which higher education is not normal or supported. Such students can miss social cues from peers and may feel out of place in a seminar setting. They need recognition of the oddity of some of our norms, and explicit guidance on how to negotiate them. Mentors sympathetically guide them on normative professional behavior in the classroom and the discipline, including when to comment and on what, and even—within reason—the basics of appropriate dress. Students whose ethnic group or nationality is not well represented in the department can feel particularly isolated and may find it hard to take active part in classroom discussion and also in social events. Mentors help them identify sources of community on campus, and support them in feeling at home.

### **End of Degree Steps**

The mentor will clarify the process of how the dissertation is shared with its other readers, and how the defense will be conducted. They will also discuss with the student the current shape of different areas of the job market and advise on how best to request letters of recommendation, and from whom, for different positions. They may offer to read letters of application as well.

## **IV. Formal Mentoring Structures in the History of Art Department**

### **Peer Mentoring**

Each incoming student is assigned to a current student, usually in or near their field of study, who introduces them to the department culture, expectations, and strategies for success from a student point of view. Peer mentors also familiarize first-year students with resources on and off campus.

### **Professional Development Workshops, Presentations**

In the course “Teaching Art History,” the department offers workshops throughout the year in professional development. These include crafting a CV, grant proposal writing, the job market in academic and museum settings, and interviews at different levels. The department also offers opportunities for graduate students to present their current research to a supportive audience for constructive feedback.

### **Graduate Assistantships**

Students will very often be working as a GA or an RA for a faculty member who is not their advisor. This can be an opportunity for the student to build their mentoring network. The student and their supervisor will jointly fill out a [Statement of Mutual Expectations for Graduate Assistants and Supervisors](#) at the start of each semester.

## **V. Advising problems**

If a student feels that their mentor is not meeting these guidelines, they should speak to the Director of Graduate Studies. If their mentor is the DGS, they should speak to the department chair.

## **VI. Resources**

[Optional UMD Statement of Mutual Expectations](#) (fillable form)  
[University of Michigan Graduate Mentoring Guide](#).