



Communicating with Your Academic & Research Advisors

Graduate Student Workshop
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Presenters

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Reflect on your culture

In your home country:

- What is the appropriate relationship between a student and an advisor? Share one of your past experiences
- More generally, what is the appropriate relationship between professors and students? How do you approach your professors? Do you feel comfortable speaking in class?



Seeking out an advisor

PhD level:

- Usually preassigned, BUT more mentors needed (committee)
- Try making connections through classes/labs

Masters level:

- Two types of advisors- Research advisor and academic advisor (sometimes can be the same person)
- Academic advisors usually assigned, free to change
- You choose your Research advisor as per your area of interest, often not a prerequisite for your degree



An appropriate relationship

- No right answer!
- Be formal at the beginning, more personable later
- See your advisor as a human being - but be professional
- U-M policy banning any relationship between GSI/undergrad student or graduate student and faculty
- Always set an appointment and be prepared for an effective meeting / have an agenda
- Respect their schedule



Communicating with your advisor

PhD level:

- Conferences
- Face-to-face
- Co-writing
- Emails
- No communication (what should I do?)

Masters level:

Research advisor:

- Weekly meeting
- Email appointments
- Career advice (eg: pursuing PhD etc)

Academic advisor:

- Meet for getting job references, advice on course selection, CPT/ OPT document signatures etc.
- Discuss personal issues



Emailing your advisor(s)

Hello Prof Spence,

I am Monica, an International student from India. I am admitted into the MSE in Civil Engineering program this Fall. I would be specializing in Structural Engineering.

I am writing to you as my area of interest lies in your area of expertise, *Structural Optimization*. I also worked on a research project in Deakin University, Australia on *Optimization of Modular structures*.

Having gone through your works, I feel working under you would be a great opportunity for me to expand my research horizons and explore. I wish to know more about your current research works and would be happy to discuss about it.

I would also be happy to send over my undergrad thesis for your review.

Hoping to meet you this Fall.

Best regards,
Monica.



Emailing your advisor(s)

Hey,

Just wanted to make sure you have heard about this conference, organized by and for graduate student at USC Annenberg; it will be held there on October 4 - the topic of the conference this year sounds really interesting and important - challenging existing canons of communication from critical perspectives (which continues the ongoing conversation about why our field is so White). I would love to participate in this thing, but I feel like my work engages in a conversation with other canons, which are also very White but do not necessarily derive from communication studies.. I don't know, I need to think about this. They only request a 300 words abstract, so I might consider putting something together. Regardless, given the work that all of us are doing, I think that other students of yours could also make good use of this conference.

Let me know if you have any thoughts/comments

Yuval



Navigating cultural differences

Be mindful of cultural differences

- Language barriers
- Forms of interaction
- Let your advisor know!



Scenario #1

It has been a year since Josh and Ann joined the PhD program. They met at an annual school event after a long time and decided to grab lunch together. Over an hour, small talk turned into more meaningful conversations.

Ann: "My advisor is great. He lets me run with my own ideas, decide when to do what, and gives great feedback when I am stuck. He is so supportive of everything that I want to do."

Josh: "Wow.. I'm glad it is going so well for you."

Ann: "How has it been for you so far?"

Josh: "Well.. The projects I am working on are all my advisor's ideas. I have very clear tasks and deadlines. It gets stressful at times but I guess I like it that way. Helps me get stuff done."

Ann: "Its good if that works for you. But that would never work for me. Touchwood!"

Days after the lunch, Josh starts spiraling into thoughts of self-pity like he was missing something in life.. "why am I here?"... "what am I doing with my life?"...



What should I do?

- Be proactive. Talk about your challenges sooner rather than later.

- Avoid feelings of isolation
 - Join student clubs or social events
 - Seek peer support: UMCSSA, ISA, etc.
 - Use on-campus resources



Further resources

✓ *IC orientation workshops*

- *Writing Effective Email*
- *Stress Less for Success*
- *Making Friends in the US*
- *Creating your Elevator Pitch*

✓ *How to Get the Mentoring You Want: A Guide for Graduate Students*

<http://www.rackham.umich.edu/downloads/publications/mentoring.pdf>



Further resources

Examples of U-M resources

- ✓ International Center
- ✓ Sweetland Center for Writing
- ✓ English Language Institute (ELI)
- ✓ Office of Student Conflict Resolution / Office of the Ombuds
- ✓ Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
- ✓ Rackham Resolution Office



Workshop Evaluation

Your feedback is valuable to us and will help us to improve the experience of future participants.

Thank you!