

## **Roles and Responsibilities in the Harvard Sociology Graduate Program**

### **June 2020**

This document does not set policy; it is intended as a resource. We hope it will be a living document, updated as additional questions arise. If you have suggestions for additions or revisions to the FAQs, please tell the DGS!

#### Academic Advisor

A student's academic advisor has primary oversight of the student's academic development. (Some students appoint co-advisors. For simplicity, we refer to "the advisor" throughout.) Advisors are also typically the first point of contact for questions related to professional development and other questions and concerns related to the student's professional goals and experience at Harvard. Advisors provide guidance on course selection, feedback on research ideas, and support as students apply for fellowships or seek employment. Advisors at all stages of the program are expected to meet with their advisees periodically throughout the year.

The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) solicits advisor preferences from incoming G1 students. When an incoming student's most-preferred advisor is not available, the DGS will approach the 2<sup>nd</sup>-most-preferred advisor, and so on. G1 students should feel free to approach their advisor with questions.

The G1 advisor may or may not become the student's longer-term advisor. All students declare a longer-term academic advisor in advance of the start of the G2 year, even if they wish to continue with their G1 advisor. Some students remain with the G2 advisor for the rest of their time in graduate school, while others change advisors. Neither option is better or worse. Students who wish to change advisors can do so by filing a simple [form](#).

In G3 and beyond, a student's advisor is typically the chair or co-chair of the Supervising Committee for the QP and/or dissertation and in that capacity ordinarily reads drafts of the QP, prospectus, and dissertation chapters before other committee members.

#### Director of Graduate Studies

The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) has general oversight of the graduate program, including receiving suggestions concerning the PhD program, responding to student concerns, chairing the Committee on Higher Degrees (CHD), serving on the Curriculum Committee, and monitoring student progress. When General Exam reading lists are to be revised, the DGS typically convenes the faculty working group. The DGS often takes a leadership role in planning professional development events. Questions about degree requirements or milestone deadlines should be brought to the DGS.

The DGS is a supplementary academic advisor for all G1 students and typically meets with each G1 student before the start of each semester. G1 students are welcome and encouraged to come to the DGS (in addition to their G1 advisor) with any advising questions.

The DGS is also often a sounding board for concerns students do not wish to discuss with their advisors. If needed, the DGS can liaise with GSAS or other relevant units on students' behalf. Students witnessing or experiencing harassment, discrimination, or unprofessional conduct in the department may bring their concerns to the DGS.

### Supervising Committee Members

Faculty members who provide support as students develop their research projects are ordinarily Supervising Committee members for QPs and dissertations. Committee members perform many of the same functions as advisors, including providing feedback on research and guidance as students navigate the program, but their involvement is ordinarily substantially less than the advisor's.

Once a student has a Supervising Committee, it is ordinarily not appropriate to ask faculty who aren't members of the Supervising Committee for feedback on written work. Students who believe they would benefit from additional advice may wish to consider expanding or revising their Supervising Committee.

### Committee on Higher Degrees

The Committee on Higher Degrees (CHD) is responsible for implementing the PhD program's academic requirements, including approving student petitions, nominating students for Harvard fellowships, and maintaining the CHD Handbook. The CHD may also lead discussions among the faculty about program goals and milestones, including suggestions for revisions to the curriculum or other program requirements.

The CHD is chaired by the DGS and includes two or more other faculty, the Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC), and two graduate students elected by fellow students. Student members are voting members but do not participate in the discussion of any individual fellow students. The GPC is a non-voting member.

### Graduate Program Coordinator

Broadly, the role of the Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC) is to manage graduate records, coordinate admissions, liaise with the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) offices of student affairs and financial aid, liaise with the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) Registrar's Office, manage internal processes for fellowships, track and communicate degree progress, coordinate with affiliated degree program staff and/or faculty, and support the Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) in the Teaching Fellow matching and appointment process.

The GPC is a non-voting member of the CHD. In that capacity, the GPC receives student petitions and fellowship applications to be forwarded to faculty CHD members.

### Department Chair

The Chair has overall responsibility for the administration of Departmental activities in the domains of teaching and service. The chair also holds responsibility for allocating the department's modest discretionary budget, which may include small expenses related to the graduate program. The Chair chairs (or designates a chair, currently the ADUS) the Curriculum Committee, which determines course offerings each year. The Chair oversees faculty searches and reviews, advocates for the department with the Deans of the FAS and the Division of Social Science, oversees faculty committee membership and activities on the department calendar, and is responsible for space planning. The Chair typically serves as de facto DGS for any students whose advisor is the DGS.

The Chair has general oversight of the department and its climate. Concerns about harassment, discrimination, or unprofessional conduct in the department can be [reported](#) to the Chair or to offices outside the department, e.g. [GSAS Office of Student Services](#). The Chair coordinates follow-up responses to concerns they receive, which may include communicating directly with involved members of the department and/or liaising with other units at Harvard.

### Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

Policies related to teaching guarantees, stipends, financial aid, health care, parental leave and support, non-resident status, and other benefits are set by the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS). GSAS determines the procedures for requesting G-Year adjustments, sets some academic requirements, and manages some fellowships, including the Dissertation Completion Fellowship (DCF).

GSAS provides a wide range of services to doctoral students, including professional development opportunities, advice on external fellowships, and support navigating graduate school. The GSAS Program Officer for Title IX and Professional Conduct is also available to students. Contact information for GSAS staff can be found [here](#).

### Director of Undergraduate Studies

From the perspective of the graduate program, the most salient role of the Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) is to oversee the process of matching graduate students to available departmental graduate teaching positions, including Teaching Fellow positions.

## FAQs about Roles and Resources

Harvard is a complex place, and it takes time to learn which offices, faculty, and staff manage what roles and responsibilities. We hope this list of FAQs will help students navigate that complexity. In cases where multiple answers follow a question, we suggest following the answers sequentially.

If you are a Social Policy or Organizational Behavior program, please consult your program for appropriate points of contact.

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### Academic Requirements and Intellectual Trajectory

Q: How do I decide what courses to take?

A1: Consult with your advisor.

A2: Consult the DGS.

Q: How do I learn about program requirements?

A1: Read the [CHD Handbook](#).

A2: Ask the DGS.

Q: I think my prior training in statistics covers substantially the same material as 2202. Who should I talk to about waiving the 2202 requirement?

A: Speak with the DGS. The DGS will consult with the 2202 instructor to reach a decision.

Q: What if I want to petition for other exceptions to the program requirements?

A: Talk to the DGS.

Q: How do I track my completion of requirements?

A1: Save any CHD forms and all communications from the DGS about petitions.

A2: Consult the GPC.

Q: What should I do if I think I might miss a departmental milestone deadline (e.g., QP or prospectus approval)?

A1: Speak to your advisor and the DGS.

A2: It may also be helpful to consult the [GSAS Office of Student Services](#).

Q: How do I find RA opportunities?

A1: Consult your advisor.

A2: Email other faculty you are interested in working with.

A3: Look for emails sent to the soc-gs list about research opportunities.

A4: Talk to the DGS.

Q: How do I know what my prospectus should look like and how long it should be?

A1: Start by consulting the [CHD Handbook](#) for an overview.

A2: Ask your advisor what they would like to see in your prospectus.

A3: Consult the other committee members about their expectations.

A4: The department does not have authority to share prior students' prospectuses. However, you can ask students whether they would be willing to share their prospectus with you.

Q: What resources can help me prepare for the job market?

A1: Attend departmental and GSAS professional development events targeted to applying for jobs.

A2: Consult your advisor.

A3: Identify people who have jobs like the one you want and ask them how they got it. You may find it useful to learn about the jobs of [alums of our program](#).

A4: Deliver one or more practice job talks. [Department workshops](#) are one possible venue.

Q: What do I do if I want help navigating my relationship with my advisor?

A1: Consult the DGS.

A2: The [GSAS Office of Student Services](#) can also provide support in navigating challenging discussions with advisors.

A3: You may also find valuable resources at [The Advising Project](#).

## Teaching Fellowships

Q: How do I learn about teaching in the department?

A1: As a rising G3, go to the spring meeting about teaching.

A2: If you have additional questions, consult the DUS, the ADUS, or the Bok Pedagogy Fellow.

Q: How do I decide which courses to list on my TF application?

A1: As a rising G3, go to the spring meeting about teaching.

A2: Consult your advisor about how different courses may fit your substantive and/or methodological interests and support your intellectual and career goals.

A3: The DUS may also be able to provide overview information on different teaching opportunities.

A4: Talk to the instructor(s) of the course(s) that pique your interest.

Q: Who determines TF appointments?

A: The Office of Undergraduate Education (OUE) determines how many TF positions are allocated to our department each semester. Upon receiving its preliminary allocation, the department invites graduate students to submit their course preferences through an on-line matching tool. This typically occurs in early May. Faculty are also asked to rank the students who are interested in their course and are required to rank priority students ahead of non-priority students. The on-line matching tool then finds the best fit between faculty and student interests. Please note: instructors see a list of the students who have expressed interest in their course, but instructors do not see how students ranked their course. The DUS oversees this matching process. Consult the DUS for additional information on how teaching positions are allocated. Note that Gen Ed TF appointments are not controlled by the department.

Q: How do I become a Senior Thesis Advisor/Grader?

A1: Respond to the annual solicitation from the Undergraduate Advising and Program Administrator. Appointment as Sociology Senior Thesis Advisor is dependent upon completion and/or expected completion of QP prior to appointment start date.

A2: Contact staff in non-Sociology departments in which you may wish to advise.

Q: Who should I talk to if I have a question or concern about the TF position to which I was assigned?

A1: Consult the DUS.

Q: Who should I talk to if my TF position is requiring more hours than specified by my appointment, or I am being asked to take on work outside the scope of my appointment?

A1: If you feel comfortable doing so, speak with the course instructor.

A2: If you prefer not to speak with the course instructor or speaking with the instructor does not resolve the issue, consult the DUS.

A3: The DGS may also be able to advocate for you to the instructor or be a sounding board for concerns.

### Finances and Funding

Q: Where do I go for help with payroll logistics?

A1: For TF positions, as a rising G3, go to the spring meeting about teaching to learn about the payroll process.

A2: If you have additional questions about payroll logistics related to teaching positions in the department, consult the GPC.

A3: For RA positions, consult the faculty member hiring you.

A4: Consult the Financial Associate.

Q: How do I find funding opportunities?

A1: Consult the [Departmental web site](#).

A2: Consult the [CARAT database](#).

A3: Be alert to emails circulated by the GPC, DGS, or others.

A4: Consult the GSAS [Fellowships Office](#).

A5: Attend GSAS meetings on funding.

A6: Consult your advisor.

A7: Consult with other Gs.

Q: Who can help me develop my grant or fellowship proposal?

A1: Your advisor.

A2: The [GSAS Fellowships Office](#).

Q: Who can give me information about the details of my financial aid package?

A: Your [GSAS Financial Aid](#) Officer.

Q: If I have alternative funding in my G3/G4 years, how can I reserve my guaranteed teaching commitment?

A: Speak with your [GSAS Financial Aid](#) Officer.

Q: How much can I work if I'm on a fellowship? Who can grant me permission to work more than 20 hours per week?

A: Consult with your [GSAS Financial Aid](#) Officer.

Q: Where can I get information about my eligibility for and the requirements of the Dissertation Completion Fellowship?

A1: Basic information is available [online](#).

A2: Consult with the [GSAS Fellowships Office](#).

Q: Who should I contact if I have a financial emergency?

A1: GSAS has some funding available to support one-time student financial needs, such as unanticipated medical expenses or unexpected travel for a family emergency. You may also be eligible for a loan. You can find information and an application form [here](#).

A2: Contact your [GSAS Financial Aid Officer](#) and/or the [GSAS Office of Student Services](#).

A3: The DGS or your advisor may also be able to help advocate for you to GSAS, if needed.

Q: Where do I go with concerns about the costs of graduate student health insurance and tuition, the number of years in the standard funding package, or size of graduate student stipends?

A1: GSAS sets the terms of the standard graduate student funding package, including the costs of health insurance and the amount of stipends, in addition to the number of years of stipend and tuition and health insurance support. You can raise your concerns with GSAS staff, including your Financial Aid Officer, the Director of Student Services, the Dean for Admissions and Financial Aid, the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, or the Dean for Student Affairs.

A2: You may also wish to convey your concerns to [Sociology's representatives](#) to the Graduate Student Council (GSC).

A3: You may find it helpful to share your concerns with your advisor. Your advisor may be able to suggest additional sources of support (including RA positions). Understanding these concerns may also help your advisor provide more informed advice about your timeline to degree.

Q: How can I find information about becoming a proctor, resident tutor, or non-resident tutor?

A: Consult the [Dean of Students Office](#).

Q: Where can I find information about additional funding sources?

A: GSAS provides an “[Other Sources of Funding](#)” list.

### Health and Accommodations

Q: How can I request accommodations, such as time extension for exams or ergonomic furniture?

A: Contact the [Accessible Education Office](#) (AEO).

Q: What are my options if I’m experiencing a disruption due to health or family concerns?

A: Contact the [Accessible Education Office](#) (AEO), [GSAS Office of Student Services](#), [GSAS Office of Student Affairs](#), DGS, or your advisor. Typically, several of these contact points will work together to arrange an accommodation, and you can contact them in whatever order you prefer.

Q: How can I get support for my mental health?

A1: Call [Counseling and Mental Health Services](#) (CAMHS): 617-495-2042 or 617-495-5711.

A2: You may also find it useful to work with the [GSAS Office of Student Services](#) to identify appropriate academic support and accommodations.

A3: Your advisor and the DGS can also assist with academic support and accommodations.

Q: How can I receive support as a student parent?

A1: Contact the [GSAS Office of Student Services](#). You can also read about Harvard’s [Parental Accommodation and Financial Support](#) (PAFS) program.

A2: Your advisor and the DGS can also help ensure you receive appropriate support and accommodation.

### Miscellaneous

Q: How are student offices assigned?

A: Tenured faculty have assigned student office space and choose which students to offer desks to in this space. As space is available, tenure-track faculty can apply for shared research space for students and select which students receive desks in this space. Students who are not assigned space in faculty-controlled offices are assigned a desk in a department-controlled student office. Students who are not in residence are typically not assigned office space.

Q: Who should I contact if I want to request financial support for an event?

A: Consult the Chair.

Q: Who should I talk to about my visa and other issues specific to international students?

A: Consult the [Harvard International Office](#) (HIO).

Q: Where can I find that form I need to get signed?

A1: Start by consulting the [CHD Handbook](#) and the departmental [website](#).

A2: If you can't find it, ask the GPC.

### Raising Suggestions

Q: Where do I go with suggestions about new course offerings?

A: Tell the DGS, ideally by January for next-academic-year courses.

Q: Where do I go with other suggestions about the graduate program?

A: Discuss with the DGS.

### Harassment, Discrimination, and Unprofessional Behavior

Q: What should I do if I witness or experience sexual or gender-based harassment?

A1: Consult the resources listed on the [departmental webpage](#) and by the [Title IX Office](#) to find support and reporting options.

A2: The DGS and/or your advisor can also provide support and liaise with GSAS or other relevant units on your behalf.

Q: What should I do if I experience other forms of harassment, discrimination, or unprofessional behavior?

A1: Consult the resources listed on the [departmental webpage](#) to find support and reporting options.

A2: The DGS and/or your advisor can also provide support and liaise with GSAS or other relevant units on your behalf.