

CL Faculty-Grad Student Advising Guidelines

Status of This Document

This document was drafted on graduate student initiative, through cooperation with the faculty graduate committee. It was last revised in May 2021 and is a living document that should be updated and maintained by CLCWEGSA's faculty representatives in continued cooperation with faculty as times and resources change at UCI.

Overview

The following set of guidelines is written by graduate students for graduate students and is meant to clarify the unstated expectations of advisor-advisee relationships in the UCI Department of Comparative Literature, so that you are as well-positioned as possible to identify and act decisively to address any issues that may arise in those relationships. It is a supplement to the graduate handbook, with which all graduate students should be familiar [[link here](#)].

The advising relationship is highly personal and both advisors and advisees are encouraged to be open about expectations and desired outcomes. Research and writing in comparative literature often necessitate a broad array of faculty connections in order to support student work in fields of inquiry that extend beyond your advisor's expertise. You should not feel that your career depends solely on your ability to work with your advisor. Keep in mind that advising is meant to nurture your individual strengths and interests, while providing you with a broad and deep understanding of your advisor's fields. If you encounter harassment or any other form of abuse from your advisor or committee members, please follow the guidelines listed in the graduate handbook.

Selecting and changing your advisor and committee

All first year students in the Department of Comparative Literature are advised by the DGS so that you have a source to whom you may pose questions while you search for your advisor. You should try to take a variety of classes with different professors during the first year, so that it is easier to choose an advisor and tentative committee by its end. It is possible that this process may lead you to faculty with whom you did not imagine working at the time of your application. This is a good thing and you should continue to revise the fields and subfields of your study up through your exams. In selecting your advisor, it is important to consider advising style along with personal rapport and research interests.

You should always seek feedback, training, and other professionalization from a wide variety of sources that extend beyond the advisorial relationship, including professors in other departments, reading groups, student organizations, and schoolwide bodies such as the Humanities Center. Connections with other graduate students both within the department and outside of it can provide valuable insights and should likewise be cultivated over the course of your time at UCI. As you progress from coursework to your M.A. and qualifying exams, it is normal to change the composition of your committee, including the position of chair. If you end up making these

changes, let your committee know in a timely manner and acknowledge the work that they have contributed to your trajectory. If you are uncomfortable notifying a faculty member of such a change directly, , notify the Graduate Coordinator and ask them to pass on the information. If anyone pressures you to remain with an advisor or committee member, notify the DGS and they will advise you.

Communication

Communication is crucial as you develop your relationship with your advisor and your committee. Be mindful of the work that your faculty mentors contribute to your success and make sure that they are aware of any changes that you may need to make in terms of advisement and your project.

Depending on the stage at which you are in your program, you will have to meet your advisor and/or committee members more or less frequently. While advisors and students should meet regularly, determining the frequency is mostly up to the student. You should not hesitate to ask for meetings as needed. Your advisor should allow equal time to meet with and advise all of their students.

Advisors should always inform students when their travel, research, or sabbatical schedules will impact their ability to communicate and to fulfill their obligations to their students. To the extent that it is possible and appropriate, advisors should also inform students about other changes in their availability, and graduate students should also do the same. Graduate students should always communicate what their future goals and plans are in order to facilitate efficacious program timing and scheduling. The annual Progress Report, which is a documented conversation with the advisor about graduate student goals and activities that takes place toward the end of every academic year, is an important formal avenue for discussing this topic, but advisors and grad students should be in regular communication about the future.

In the various stages of your career as a graduate student at UCI, you may:

- **First year:**
Stay in touch with the DGS while focusing mainly on getting to know a number of faculty members through seminars in order to choose an advisor by the end of the year.
- **Second year:**
Consult with your adviser and other faculty about conceptual and disciplinary directions your work may take. Communicate regularly with your advisor and committee members while drafting the MA paper. Continue building broader faculty connections. As faculty views and preferences on both the MA review and qualifying exams vary, you should communicate with your advisors and committee members about their preferred exam style.

- Third and fourth year:
Meet regularly with faculty to discuss texts, drafts, readings, and exam questions leading up to the qualifying exams.
- Fourth year and beyond:
You will need to enroll in CL299 Dissertation Research with your dissertation advisor once you are past the Qualifying Exams and they will need to assign you a grade of S/U each quarter; you should thus check in at least once a quarter to inform them of your progress. Even if you communicate less frequently with committee members during the dissertation process, you should plan to communicate in more depth due to the larger scale of the writing tasks. When submitting longer written pieces, such as chapter drafts, for feedback, you should bear in mind that faculty may need a longer lead time to provide extensive comments. Committee members should acknowledge receipt of such submissions and, if possible, give some indication of when they expect to return comments.

For more information on the stages of the PhD program, refer to the graduate handbook.

TAs and Teaching at UCI

CL students generally start teaching in their second year through the Composition program, which is run through the English department. However, you should talk to your advisor about teaching opportunities other than Comp in the Department of Comparative Literature or in other departments that make sense for your research interests and professional goals... Professors may know of pertinent TAs but students should also network with other departments to find those opportunities.

At present, students teach Composition on their own with guidance from the Composition program, and are not supervised by a professor. There are some opportunities to create original syllabi, but the Composition program usually furnishes students with pre-written course shells.

Students can TA for other departments in the Humanities, particularly Classics, African American Studies, Academic English, Asian American Studies, Film and Media Studies, Gender and Sexuality, Humanities Core. On less frequent occasions, CL students may have chances to TA for East Asian Studies or European Languages & Studies (language or content courses). You must apply for these positions (usually starting in spring quarter) and are encouraged to do so particularly after having taught composition for at least a year. Usually these courses are more standard TAs, where 1-3 TAs work under one professor. Language courses may also involve team-teaching.

There are a small number of TA positions available through the CL department for large lower division CL courses (usually CL10). This opportunity is generally available to students who have taught in Composition for a few years, and depends on a variety of factors: equity, which professors are teaching, the extent to which course subject-matter overlaps with the research interests of the students, and the overall teaching track record of the student. It is usually worked

out as a compromise between faculty needs for those courses and student needs, i.e. in order to give opportunities to students who might not have had opportunities to TA elsewhere or who are out of guaranteed teaching.

Advanced students can also offer a summer course. Usually Summer Extension will accept two courses from CL per summer (lately the 60A online course and one other CL10 course).

Career Guidance

Your advisor should give you clear guidance regarding career paths in academia. Advisors should not favor students who elect to pursue a tenure track career in academia over those who decide to pursue non-academic careers, and should do their best to provide advice about your interests or point you to people who can give up to date guidance. Toward this end, students and advisors should have a yearly conversation about the student's career goals and professionalization to assess their current needs. This conversation should be documented in the annual Progress Report and submitted to the Graduate Coordinator.

Advisors should assist you in professionalization by making suggestions and offering guidance about things such as: pertinent TAs and teaching credentials, presenting at and organizing conferences, acquiring grant and scholarship money, publishing academic work, and finding jobs (academic or otherwise). This does not mean that advisors can or should simply furnish you with positions or connections, but rather that your advisor should take an active part in conversations about your long-term career goals. This will also require you to ask questions and be informed about the different stages of your program, as well as broader opportunities.