

# Guidelines for Faculty, Students, and Staff of the Jackson School of Geosciences, UT Austin

**Preamble:** The guidelines below embody the best practices to be used by current faculty, staff, teaching and research assistants. They are intended to provide a heightened awareness of the need to consciously establish effective and productive relationships that start with trust, courtesy, two-way communications, and shared expectations.

Effective research and education programs at the Jackson School of Geosciences (JSG) require a clear understanding of best practices in terms of a range of professional interactions among faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, student advisees, and staff. Effective instruction, learning, advising, and research, and professional career growth requires open communication, ethical professional conduct between all individuals, collegial interactions, proactive mentoring, and a responsive administration to ensure a positive and successful setting across all levels of the educational endeavor.

To ensure a productive JSG setting, all staff, faculty, and students are expected to treat one another respectfully and fairly, and the professors, research advisors, and teaching assistants are expected to serve as role models, upholding the highest ethical and professional standards.

## Faculty-Staff & Peer Interactions

Faculty-Staff and Peer Interactions should:

- promote an environment that is intellectually stimulating and free of harassment;
- be supportive, equitable, accessible, encouraging, and respectful;
- recognize and respect the cultural backgrounds of all fellow faculty and staff;
- be proactive Jackson School citizens, keeping track of the full range of responsibilities of all individuals;
- be as flexible as possible concerning tasks associated with the school mission including research, committee service, and teaching;
- be sensitive to the power imbalance in the tenured full professor–junior professor, tenured and professional faculty, as well as faculty–staff relationships.

## Faculty Advisors & Co-advisors (in addition to above)

Faculty advisors and co-advisors (in addition to above) should:

- be sensitive to the power imbalance in the student–advisor relationship;

- for teaching assistantship positions, provide clear instruction at the start of the semester for particular tasks that require focused effort during key parts of the semester so that time can be allotted; make sure that time will not exceed 20 hrs/week;
- for research assistantships, generate a list of expectations for the semester and agree upon these, making sure that time will not exceed 20 hrs/week, and with the understanding that the tasks assigned will contribute to the professional training of the student and that the tasks will be meaningful to the student's educational experience;
- avoid assigning duties or activities that are outside students' academic/professional responsibilities;
- respect students' needs to allocate their time among competing demands while maintaining timely progress toward their degree;
- advise graduate students on the selection of an appropriate thesis topic and assist them in selecting a thesis committee;
- advise graduate students on timelines and expectations for submitting thesis proposal and committee selection, so that sufficient time is allowed for input from advisor and student peers;
- set clear expectations and goals for students regarding their academic performance and research progress and meet regularly and often in order to provide feedback on progress;
- read and review journal manuscripts or thesis chapters in a timely manner for both students you supervise and those for which you are a committee member;
- discuss policies and expectations for work hours, vacation time, and health contingencies;
- provide students with training and oversight in all relevant aspects of research, including the design of research projects, the development of oral and written communication, grant preparation as appropriate, and the use of rigorous research techniques;
- avoid placing pressure on students to produce results that support particular hypotheses;
- devise effective ways of providing students with guidance and supervision during any prolonged absence;
- provide and discuss clear criteria for authorship at the beginning of all collaborative projects;
- discuss plagiarism with your students who are involved in research—what plagiarism is and how to properly cite the work of others, including copyright and self-plagiarism;
- encourage participation in professional meetings and try to secure funding for such activities;
- provide career advice, offer help with interview and application preparation, and write letters of recommendation in a timely manner;
- acknowledge that some students will pursue careers outside of academia and/or outside their research discipline and assist them in achieving their chosen career goals;
- schedule meetings to discuss topics other than research, such as professional development, career objectives and opportunities, climate, laboratory personnel relations, etc.;
- make provisions for students to graduate if you are leaving the university for another position or retiring—e.g. assist students in finding another advisor if appropriate and assist the students in secure funding to continue;
- be a role model by acting in an ethical, professional, and courteous manner toward other students, staff, and faculty;
- cooperate with any investigation stemming from a complaint, preserve confidentiality to the extent possible, avoid retaliation against whomever complained or was involved in the investigation, and only file complaints in good faith.

## Graduate Students

Graduate Students should:

- recognize that they bear the primary responsibility for the successful completion of their degree;
- exercise the highest ethical standards in all aspects of their research (including but not limited to collection, storage, analysis, and communication of research data);
- complete all tasks assigned by the department and/or Jackson School, including those associated with assistantship positions, such as teaching, grading, and other assistantship responsibilities;
- know the policies governing graduate studies in the department and the graduate school and take responsibility for meeting departmental, School, and graduate school deadlines;
- be proactive about communicating with the advisor and thesis committee, understanding that communication is a two-way endeavor;
- be considerate of other time constraints imposed on faculty and staff, including competing demands;
- take an active role in identifying and pursuing professional development opportunities;
- clearly communicate with their advisor(s) regarding their career preferences;
- be proactive about improving their research skills, including written and oral presentation skills;
- seek mentoring and support resources beyond their faculty or research scientist advisor(s), including other faculty members, peers, and organizations;
- always act in an ethical, professional, and courteous manner toward other students, staff, and faculty;
- raise complaints and concerns through appropriate channels and only in good faith.

## **Department, School & Programs**

Department, School and Programs should:

- provide students with up-to-date information that includes policies, practices, degree requirements, and resources;
- assist students with selection of their advisors as needed and provide students with contacts and resources for potential conflict resolution (e.g., ombuds, graduate advisor, or Department Chair);
- provide pedagogical training and regular assessment of student teaching and other assistantship activities;
- insure the list of courses offered by the department are being taught;
- monitor graduate student progress toward degree and professional development, including mentoring meetings, committee meetings, exam completions, and other benchmarks appropriate to their discipline;
- monitor student completion and time to degree;
- provide and monitor training in the ethical conduct of research for faculty and students;
- provide appropriate infrastructure to allow students to complete their education and research in a timely and productive manner;
- provide opportunities for professional development that will be relevant to students seeking careers outside academia and/or their research discipline;

- establish and communicate policies for emergencies and unplanned situations that may disrupt the work of students and/or faculty;
- incorporate these guidelines and recommendations into their departmental policies or handbooks and actively promote their observance;
- Respond promptly and appropriately to concerns raised by faculty and students.

## **Frequently Asked Questions For Graduate Students**

### **Can my advisor require me take a course?**

Yes, your advisor may require you to take a course. It is their job to ensure that you learn adequate skills as well as identify areas where you may need more experience.

### **I won an award that will fund me for one semester of my choosing. Can my advisor tell me when to use it?**

No, you may choose when to use your award. Often your advisor will recommend that you use it a specific semester for funding purposes, however they may not remove promised funding in retaliation.

### **I wish to change my research topic and advisors, how should I do this?**

First you should talk to your advisor if you feel comfortable doing so. It could be that they could still be your advisor or serve on your committee if there is overlap with the topic. The next step would be to talk to the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) Chair about finding a new advisor. If you have someone in mind, you are free to discuss a possible move with them as well. It is important to note that most funding is tied to an advisor, so there is no guarantee that a new advisor would be able to fund you. If you entered with guaranteed funding, you will continue to be funded for the promised length of time as long as you find a new advisor, but the type of funding may change. Also, you should talk with your current advisor about how to bring closure to the current research project.

### **I am having difficulties with another student, whom should I talk to?**

First you should talk to the other student if you are comfortable and it is appropriate. Many times people are not aware that their actions may be inconveniencing or bothering someone else, and a discussion can quickly resolve the issue. If you are not comfortable, it is not an appropriate situation, or talking doesn't help, the next step would be to view the dispute resolution guidelines below and Contacts to see who might be the best contact for your specific issue.

### **My assigned work in my TA position is going over 20 hours per week, what should I do?**

The first step is to let the instructor know that the assigned work is exceeding the limits. Most of the time this is sufficient; however, if the assigned work continues to exceed 20 hours you should contact the Department Chair (see below) to resolve the issue.

### **My assigned work in my RA position is going over 20 hours per week, what should I do?**

Often RA work and regular student research may overlap making it hard to differentiate between RA time and student time. RA-specific duties are limited to 20 hours a week; however, many

duties commonly associated with RA positions are also part of regular student studies, including learning to perform research, reading papers, presenting at conferences, etc. These are things all students are expected to learn regardless of RA status. If you have concerns, the first step is talk to your research supervisor. Most of the time this is sufficient; however, if the assigned work continues to be excessive you should contact the Department Chair or GSC Chair (see below) to resolve the issue.

## Dispute Resolution Guidelines

As members of the Jackson School of Geosciences, we wish to consciously establish effective and productive relationships that start with trust, courtesy, two-way communications, and shared experiences. To this end, complaints or concerns should be made in good faith with the intent to find equitable resolutions to any issues that may arise.

- If you feel comfortable, talk to the other person about the issue. You might use language such as, “On XXX date, when you engaged in XXX behavior, I felt uncomfortable, and I’d like to talk with you about it.” Most situations can be resolved this way, and if you resolve the issue earlier, it is often easier. If you do not feel comfortable addressing the situation in this way, skip this step.
- You could choose to report your concern within the Jackson School to a resource who may be able to support you in addressing your concern. You can contact your supervisor or manager, the undergraduate or graduate coordinators, human resource representatives in each unit, unit directors or the department chair or other school leadership.
- Additionally, you could choose to contact University resources and/or outside resources. The University has many resources including a conflict management and dispute resolution office. This office works to create a positive path forward for all parties involved in workplace conflict and offers training for the UT community on effective communication, healthy workplace relationships, and conflict resolution skills. Many concerns through this resource are resolved through informal conflict resolution, which includes mediation, facilitated group discussions, supervisory skills coaching, and communication coaching. This office also facilitates the formal staff grievance policy.

## Who To Talk To

### Contacts within Jackson School of Geosciences and University of Texas at Austin

For most concerns or complaints, the first step is usually internal to JSG, but many University-wide resources are available. Below are the general contacts for each type of individual, followed by specific ones for certain types of complaints. In all cases, complaints can be made internally to the appropriate Jackson School contact or to a University contact. ***However, sexual harassment, any form of discrimination (including harassment) and interpersonal violence complaints must be reported by policy to the appropriate University contact.***

**Please note:** if you are worried about any kind of behavior towards you or anyone else, you may contact **BCAL** or call 512-232-5050, 24 hours a day.

## **Undergraduate Students**

**JSG level:** Director of Student Affairs (Tim Weiss), Undergraduate Advisor (Micah Jackman), Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs (Veronica Vasquez), and/or Department Chair (Daniel Stockli).

**University level:** **Dean of Students, Ombuds, UT Counseling and Mental Health Center.** *Note: All three university level offices offer confidential services.*

## **Graduate Students**

**JSG level:** Graduate Coordinators (Philip Guerrero and Tracey Wilson), Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs (Veronica Vasquez), Graduate Advisor/GSC Chair (Richard Ketcham), and/or Department Chair (Daniel Stockli).

**University level:** **Dean of Students, Ombuds, UT Counseling and Mental Health Center.** *Note: All three university level offices offer confidential services.*

## **Faculty**

**JSG level:** Department Chair (Daniel Stockli), Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs (Veronica Vasquez), Dean (Claudia Mora), HR Director (Monica Reed), and/or unit HR Representatives.

**University level:** **Ombuds, Employee Assistance Program, Title IX and/or Division of Investigation and Adjudication, as well as the Compliance & Ethics Hotline.** *Note: The Ombuds and Employee Assistance Program offer confidential services.*

## **Staff**

**JSG level:** Supervisor or Manager, Unit Leader (Mark Shuster, BEG; Demian Saffer, UTIG; Daniel Stockli, EPS), HR Director (Monica Reed), Unit HR Representatives, and/or Dean (Claudia Mora).

**University level:** **Central Human Resources (SWS or Dispute Resolution Office), Employee Assistance Program, Title IX and/or Division of Investigation and Adjudication as well as the Compliance & Ethics Hotline.** *Note: The Central HR and Employee Assistance Program offer confidential services.*

## **Required University Reporting**

**Sexual Harassment:** **Title IX office.**

**Discrimination:** **Division of Investigation and Adjudication or Office of Dean of Students.**

**Interpersonal Violence (including stalking):** **UT Police Department: 512-471-**

***4441 or 911 if emergency; Employee Assistance Program; Student Emergency Services; BCAL or call 512-232-5050, 24 hours a day.***

## **Process for Addressing Complaints/Concerns**

Within the Jackson School, complaints and concerns reported to one of the contacts listed above, will be evaluated and reviewed with appropriate personnel for that person's affiliation (i.e. undergraduate or graduate student, faculty, or staff) and for the type of complaint in an effort to seek resolution. Generally, if the concerns or complaints are ones that can be handled informally, this approach will be tried first. In other cases, a more formal process will be followed, involving the Dean's office and/or appropriate University offices, depending on the type of complaint. This process may include a meeting with both complainant and respondent as well as any other witnesses, reviewing relevant documents, etc.

As needed available University resources may assist with complaint and concern resolution, including mediation. Additionally, concerns or complaints presented directly to a University level office will be managed through the processes in place for that office with full participation from JSG resources.

## **Consequences of Negative Actions**

### **What are some possible consequences for inappropriate conduct in JSG**

It is the intent of the JSG Community to address conduct contrary to the guidelines detailed above for the benefit of the whole JSG Community. Inappropriate conduct may be addressed with corrective action and disciplinary measures up to and including termination.

Specifically, possible scenarios for coaching and/or discipline of faculty for repeated complaints and patterns of behavior or more serious offences include:

- Meetings to discuss issues and patterns of behavior with written and signed documentation of the meeting outcomes. Such meetings are meant to allow faculty and research scientists a chance to present their point of view and to discuss ways to mitigate the issues that have become a pattern. Subsequent complaints will lead to further action.
- Loss of ability to recruit new graduate students or supervise undergraduate students;
- Loss of ability to interact with or supervise graduate and undergraduate students and for faculty, the associated increase in teaching load as a result of decreased supervisory responsibilities;

- Depending on the infraction, negative performance evaluations likely translating into loss of any merit raises that might have otherwise occurred, and/or loss of endowments or discretionary funds (if any held);
- For faculty, unpaid leave for a semester or a year;
- In severe cases, termination.

For staff, [University HR policies and procedures](#) will be followed.