



MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

# BEST PRACTICES

## in graduate student advising

Graduate students form a large part of the MIT community, and their involvement can have a significant influence on the Institute. Training graduate students is one of MIT's most important duties.

Expectations on graduate student advising for each advisor and advisee have been defined through the input of faculty and students, setting a high standard of conduct. This standard of conduct is expressed in Institute policy, which is based in our shared values. Additionally, each graduate student bears a responsibility for respect and maturity in their behavior towards all members of the Institute community.

These lists serve as a resource for advisors and their advisees.



Faculty members, staff, and students are encouraged to seek assistance from a variety of MIT resources and offices, compiled in [resources.mit.edu](https://resources.mit.edu). These include:

**DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM GRADUATE OFFICERS**  
[oge.mit.edu/gpp/oversight/officers](https://oge.mit.edu/gpp/oversight/officers)

**DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM HEADS**

**OMBUDS OFFICE**  
Room 10-213  
Phone 617-253-5921  
[ombud.mit.edu](mailto:ombud.mit.edu)

**GRADSUPPORT OFFICE OF GRADUATE EDUCATION (OGE)**  
Room 3-138 (Headquarters), 35-338  
Phone 617-253-4860  
Email [grad-ed@mit.edu](mailto:grad-ed@mit.edu)  
[oge.mit.edu](https://oge.mit.edu)

**RESOURCES FOR EASING FRICTION & STRESS (REFS)**  
[refs.mit.edu](https://refs.mit.edu)

**INSTITUTE DISCRIMINATION & HARASSMENT RESPONSE OFFICE (IDHR)**  
Room W31-223  
Phone 617-324-7526  
Email [idhr@mit.edu](mailto:idhr@mit.edu)  
[idhr.mit.edu](https://idhr.mit.edu)

**OFFICE OF STUDENT CONDUCT AND COMMUNITY STANDARDS**  
Room W20-507  
Phone 617-258-8423  
Email [osccs@mit.edu](mailto:osccs@mit.edu)  
[studentlife.mit.edu/osc](https://studentlife.mit.edu/osc)

**INSTITUTE COMMUNITY & EQUITY OFFICE**  
Room 4-250  
Phone 617-324-7319  
Email [iceo@mit.edu](mailto:iceo@mit.edu)  
[diversity.mit.edu](https://diversity.mit.edu)

**COMMUNITY WELLNESS AT MIT MEDICAL**  
Room E23, 3rd Floor  
Phone 617-253-1316  
Email [wellness@med.mit.edu](mailto:wellness@med.mit.edu)  
[medical.mit.edu/services/community-wellness](https://medical.mit.edu/services/community-wellness)

**MIT MEDICAL**  
Building E23  
Phone 617-253-4481  
[medical.mit.edu](https://medical.mit.edu)

**STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH & COUNSELING @ MIT MEDICAL**  
Building E23, 3rd Floor  
Phone 617-253-2916 weekdays  
617-253-4481 nights/weekends  
[medical.mit.edu/services/mental-health-counseling](https://medical.mit.edu/services/mental-health-counseling)



# COMMON PRINCIPLES

## of the graduate student experience

- Faculty members and graduate students are strongly encouraged to build relationships by establishing common expectations on the major elements of their professional interactions, such as:
  - Requirements for achieving and maintaining an acceptable academic standing as well as graduation requirements for each academic unit;
  - A regular time for meeting;
  - Lead times for feedback on work such as thesis and manuscript drafts;
  - A shared understanding of what constitutes sufficient notice and reasonable scheduling of events the student is expected to attend following a request from their advisor;
  - A shared understanding of academic integrity and responsible conduct of research.
- Faculty and students are strongly encouraged to attempt to resolve conflicts through direct discussion and other informal procedures.
- Graduate students are strongly encouraged to keep their advisor apprised of academic progress and seek their advisor's input on the same subject on a regular basis.
- Graduate students should receive attribution for scholarly assistance to faculty, and vice versa, including contributions to publications and patents.
- Faculty are expected to be supportive of their students' participation in extra-academic activities and to recognize the value of such activities for their intellectual and professional development. Depending on the discipline, these activities might include training in job interviews, information on academic and non-academic career options, and internships.
- A number of resources are available for graduate students who wish to terminate their relationship with their advisor and search for a new research group. These include their departmental or program graduate administrator, program head or departmental graduate officer, a dean in the OGE, or an Institute ombudsperson.
- Graduate students share with the faculty the responsibility for securing, maintaining, and protecting the integrity of grades, scholarship, and research.
- Faculty members have the responsibility to inform graduate students of the source and amount of their financial support and of all expectations associated with any funded position. Faculty members should inform graduate students promptly of matters that affect their funding status.
- Graduate students and faculty have a responsibility to inform each other as soon as they have knowledge of a possible change of their status. Graduate students should provide reasonable notice to their advisor if they intend to leave or change advisors; have a medical or personal issue that interferes with study and research; or are experiencing other academic or life issues that an advisor might reasonably need to know about. When circumstances require leaving a research project, graduate students should provide a summary of their work so that any delay associated with continuation of the project is minimized.
- Beyond the responsibility to provide an evaluation once per term via a thesis research grade, advisors should provide additional periodic feedback of academic progress, performance, and professional potential, preferably in written form.
- Graduate students are protected by a variety of policies and procedures, as summarized in the document "Institute Policy Guiding the Graduate Student Experience." If a student feels that they have been unfairly treated, or treated in a way that is in violation of MIT policies, and attempts at informal solutions were unsuccessful, the student can appeal by means of private Institute complaint resolution procedures.



# INSTITUTE POLICY

## guiding the graduate student experience

- MIT does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, religion, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, or national or ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, employment policies, scholarship and loan programs, and other Institute administered programs and activities; the Institute may, however, favor US citizens or residents in admissions and financial aid. [Full policy](#)
- Institute policies prohibit harassment, discrimination, racist conduct, retaliation, and violence against community members. Graduate students may utilize the complaint resolution process for complaints against faculty and staff. [Full policy](#)
- Faculty, academic instructional staff, principal investigators, and staff supervisors are prohibited from having a sexual or romantic relationship with an MIT graduate student if they have or might reasonably be expected to have any type of authority over that student. [Full policy](#)
- Any graduate student who believes they have been subject to inappropriate conduct is encouraged to resolve the concern through the Institute's complaint resolution procedures. [Full policy](#)
- Pending approval by the Office of Graduate Education, eligible graduate students may have access to childbirth accommodation and/or parental leave. [Full policy](#)
- As with all members of the MIT community, graduate students are to be treated with evenhanded respect for their dignity, individual qualities, and property. [Full policy](#)
- Graduate students have a right to and responsibility to maintain a safe and clean working environment. [Full policy](#)
- Graduate students have the right to conduct research in an environment free from conflicts of interest and the responsibility to maintain their research free of conflicts of interest. [Full policy](#)
- Graduate students are protected from personal exploitation. In the case of full-time research assistants, services required of the graduate student must contribute to the student's research or professional training. [Full policy](#)
- Graduate students in a paid assistantship have a right to paid vacation in accordance with Institute policy. [Full policy](#)
- Graduate students must be notified of the work requirements for each subject, including grading criteria and procedures, at the beginning of each term. [Full policy](#)
- Each academic unit should ensure that students have ready access to the following information.
  - Degree requirements
  - Academic deadlines
  - Time limits for seeking advanced degrees
  - Departmental procedures for general and/or qualifying exams
  - Guidelines for resolving concerns or conflicts within the department
  - Individuals available for consultation regarding student issues and problems
  - Criteria for termination or withdrawal of a graduate student
  - Rules governing teaching assistant and research assistant appointments and fellowships[Full policy](#)
- If a department is considering denying a graduate student further registration, that student should be made aware at an early stage of the reasons for such consideration, and should be notified in writing when formal consideration of denial is initiated. [Full policy](#)