



# **2024-2025**

## **GRADUATE STUDY IN ANTHROPOLOGY**

### **First-Year Advising Guidelines and Calendar**

#### **DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY**

University of Michigan  
101 West Hall  
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1107  
Phone: (734) 764-7274

[Website](#)

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## Introduction

You are reading the University of Michigan Anthropology Department’s guidelines for first-year advising, which work with and enrich the ‘triad’ advising structure Michigan Anthropology introduced with the incoming cohort of 2020. Under this structure, each incoming first-year student is assigned two faculty mentors who meet with their advisees *at least once monthly*. Founded on *a principle of shared accountability* between students and their advisors, the guidelines contained here will strengthen student/advisor relationships during students’ crucial first year in their program. In what follows, we provide an account of our understanding of shared accountability, a month-by-month timeline to structure monthly advising meetings, and an appendix suggesting formats for advisor/student “writing conversations.

The authors of this document belonged to a working group on “Faculty/Graduate Student Mentoring and Advising” that was formed through the Michigan Anthropology Graduate Student Association (MAGS) during the summer of 2020.<sup>1</sup> In preparing this document, the working group collaborated with the Michigan Anthropology Anti-Racism Collective (MAARC) and drew on the results of the 2020 Michigan Anthropology Climate Assessment. We spoke to students throughout their programs about their experiences in the first year, and we incorporated their suggestions into the document you are now reading. These guidelines were finalized in late 2020. Because students arrive in the department with different experiences, goals, and knowledge of graduate education, clear, accountability-based guidelines for first-year mentorship can improve the equity of advising that incoming students receive while reducing the excess labor that some have reported falls to BIPOC and non-male identified faculty. The authors of this document believe the structure it provides can help create the conditions for fruitful, productive, and long-lasting intellectual relationships between faculty and students, relationships that can positively influence the rest of students’ trajectories and careers. In this sense, these guidelines should be viewed as a contribution to the intellectual life of the department and its overall scholarly mission.

## Shared accountability in the mentoring relationship

This proposal is built around the idea that first-year advising is *an intellectual and scholarly process* and *a relationship of support and advocacy*. It can be an opportunity for faculty and students to have *meaningful conversations* about substantive issues in anthropology, and it is one of the central sites where a vibrant departmental community is developed. It also requires shared accountability. Broken down in terms of “mentor” and “student” roles, here is a vision of what this kind of shared accountability can look like:

MENTORS	STUDENTS
establish mutual expectations and boundaries	establish mutual expectations and boundaries
adhere to those mutual expectations and boundaries	adhere to those mutual expectations and boundaries
invite advisees to be full members of the academic enterprise	seek to contribute to the academic enterprise
discuss research ethics and ideas	work actively to develop research along both ethical and intellectual lines
offer timely feedback that focuses on improving students' work	receive feedback and advice seriously and thoughtfully but not blindly
model collaborative, equitable relationships with faculty, staff, and students in ways that include an analysis of power	pursue collaborative, equitable relationships with faculty, staff, and students in ways that include an analysis of power
make mistakes and take accountability for them, including correcting future behavior	make mistakes and take accountability for them, including correcting future behavior
model respect for scholars working in other fields, disciplines, and types of institutions	show respect to scholars working in other fields, disciplines, and types of institutions
<p>render departmental processes more transparent and accessible and help students anticipate and plan for degree requirements</p> <p>offer advice from an insider's point of view but <i>not</i> mean-spirited gossip about colleagues</p> <p>create an environment of support for student research on an individual basis</p> <p>do not encourage or create competition or comparison between student trajectories; do not retaliate against students for scholarly critique or disagreement</p> <p>ensure that joint students are welcomed as full members of the department <i>and</i> the discipline</p>	<p>as early career scholars and embrace the opportunity to learn</p> <p>take responsibility for seeking out meetings and setting agendas with advisors</p>

## Using these Guidelines

This set of guidelines is meant to help create an improved state of advisor/advisee *accountability*. It pursues this goal by offering a *month-by-month timeline* intended to structure monthly advising meetings. Placing each month in the context of first-year students' academic trajectory, the timeline lists necessary and suggested discussion topics for each month. While acknowledging that needs vary, this timeline has been developed to increase equity across advising relationships. We hope the detailed suggestions below will help all students take the reins of their advising experience and become independent scholars rooted in a strong network throughout our department.

## Advisee Responsibilities

It is suggested that advisees compile monthly meeting agendas based on this calendar's meeting outlines, choosing some of the suggested topics for discussion each time. Agendas should be submitted to advisors before meetings. Students are responsible for setting the agenda for each meeting and reaching out to meet each month, beginning in October.

## Advisor Responsibilities

Advisors should know the overall timeline and review submitted agendas before each meeting. While students are expected to take initiative in organizing meetings and pursuing goals, advisors must reach out directly in August and September, the first two months of students' time at UM. Between October and May, advisors are responsible for responding promptly to students' scheduling requests and meeting as scheduled.

## The Triad Structure

Students may meet with their faculty advisors simultaneously or individually each month. Some triads prefer to meet as a group each time, while others prefer individual meetings with each faculty advisor. We suggest holding the May meeting as a triad, with both students and faculty members present for the final discussion of the year. This will also ensure that summer plans are in place and second-year advising is organized.

## General Considerations

Students and faculty have distinct roles in structuring the meeting each month. Students should use these guidelines to formulate an agenda ensuring their needs are met. Faculty, in turn, are responsible for reviewing these guidelines and the agendas students have proposed. See “Using these Guidelines” above.

September setting of shared expectations: During the first official meeting in September, students and advisors should collaborate to establish a set of shared expectations for the advising relationships using the ‘Developing Shared Expectations’ worksheet, which is to be shared with the Graduate Office.

October goal-setting letter: In October, students should prepare brief letters outlining their goals for the academic year and link those goals to a broader vision of academic success. These can be based on the September conversation, the milestones set forth in this calendar and in the relevant doctoral degree checklist, and the student’s individual needs. These goal-setting letters should be discussed and collaboratively finalized during the October meeting, after which they become the basis by which progress is assessed for the “annual review letter” at the end of the year. Students and advisors share accountability for the established goals.

Mid-year reevaluation: The January meeting offers a midpoint to reevaluate goals and mentorship practices. Reevaluated goals may be added as addendums to the goal-setting letter, while adjusted mentorship practices may be documented in the “Developing Shared Expectations” worksheet. Adjustments should be shared with the Graduate Office.

Annual review letters: Annual review letters should be written collaboratively between the advisors. Annual reviews should include a discussion of student progress and what concrete actions both students and advisors will take to build on that progress. This process aims to ensure that students have the resources to succeed collaboratively rather than in a process of judgment. Finished letters will be presented during the faculty meeting slated to discuss annual review letters.

Students or advisors should feel empowered to seek facilitation aid from the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) or the Rackham Resolution Office at any point in the mentorship process.



# First-Year Advising Guidelines and Calendar

August

## The Anthropology Graduate Office

The Anthropology Graduate Office will email all incoming first-year students introducing the triad advising structure, students' advisors, and this set of guidelines. A complimentary email will be sent to all first-year advisors with these guidelines, policies, and instructions to contact their respective advisees.

Early in the semester (August or September), the West Hall Business Office sends out a uniform email to all incoming first-year students providing information about first-semester grant applications that the Business Office administers. The email includes information about eligibility, deadlines, and links to each grant application. It also typically lists upcoming workshops or other resources students may use to prepare their grant applications. Some grant proposals must be routed through the Business Office; others do not. If you are still unsure if your proposal needs to go through the Business Office, check with them at [whboffice@umich.edu](mailto:whboffice@umich.edu).

Among the early opportunities for funding that the Business Office *does not* administer are grants from the National Science Foundation Graduate Fellowship Program (NSF-GRFP), which many U-M Anthropology PhD students have received. See [NSF GRFP](#) for deadlines, which are usually in October and November. Applications for this grant are submitted directly to the [Research.gov](#) website, and if the grant is awarded, it is administered through Rackham.

Students who apply to major national grants during their first semester may have to rely on the recommenders who supported their application to the department since it may be too early for

U-M faculty to have developed sufficient knowledge of the student to write a compelling recommendation letter. Triad advisors are expected to accept responsibility for reviewing their advisee's application materials, as necessary, and one or both of the advisors will be willing to write letters of recommendation for their advisee if necessary.

### **Initial Adviser Contact**

While more substantive meetings will take place in September and October, in August, faculty members should reach out to introduce themselves if they haven't yet done so, and should set up a brief initial conversation with incoming first-year advisees to occur during August. These August conversations are meant primarily as an initial introduction to establish contact to set up September meetings and ensure Fall course registration is in order and students meet subfield requirements for the fall term. Students should prepare a list of Fall courses that interest them, as well as consult their [subfield's Degree Checklists](#) and the doctoral degree requirements, as outlined in the current Graduate Handbook, prior to the first meeting and registering for courses. Advisors should discuss with students whether they will pursue [an MA in Anthropology](#) while meeting [precandidacy requirements](#) and milestones.

This first contact also provides an opportunity to address any concerns that cannot be postponed to September. Such concerns may include early grant applications, especially the NSF GRFP. While these issues will be addressed in greater depth in September, this initial meeting is an opportunity to make sure all incoming students are on equal footing in terms of their introduction to advisors and questions related to September.



## September

In September, first-year students have started their courses and are learning more about the department and graduate school. The September advising meetings this month may take various forms depending on student and faculty interest, but they should focus on establishing the relationship, *clarifying expectations around the advising relationship*, and *planning for the upcoming year*. This will look different by subfield and student. To ensure equitable advising across the cohort, however, we suggest that the following common themes be addressed in students' September meetings with their advisors. The September advising meeting, therefore, may run longer than other months; however, we believe *it is crucial to discuss most of the following topics soon after students arrive in the program*. Note also: the brainstorming from September can inform a more explicit formulation of goals in the October "goal-setting letter."

### Developing Shared Expectations

September meetings are a time to establish shared expectations between students and advisors and to discuss beginning to develop a shared understanding of students' programs as a whole, with particular attention to the first year. The purpose of establishing these expectations and understandings in September is to ensure that students have the necessary support and relationships to have a meaningful and successful first year and to demystify the process of graduate study.

Faculty and students should refer to the Developing Shared Expectations section in the Appendix to establish the norms of advising relationships. Although not all topics are relevant to all subfields of anthropology, this worksheet includes topics like the frequency of contact between mentors and mentees, how and on what timeline students may receive feedback on their work, especially their writing, ideas about conflict resolution, and more.

### Milestones and Degree Checklists

Discussing milestones and [degree checklists](#) will allow students to situate themselves in the context of their first semester and the overall program. Past students have expressed surprise when encountering major program phases, like the significant grant writing phase in the lead-up to fieldwork. An "inside view" of the structure of the student's program that may not be immediately apparent in the Graduate Handbook. Tacit knowledge is critical.

For example, in addition to explaining that students typically begin preliminary fieldwork in their first summers, it may be helpful to start the conversation about how first-year students might begin thinking about developing field sites and research questions over the first year (see below for more on first-year fieldwork). Or, in addition to describing how preliminary exams work in the department and the subfield, it may be helpful to have a conversation about how the intensive reading and writing in the first year provides an opportunity to lay the groundwork for more in-depth engagement in specific fields of scholarship later on.

The discussion should include how students advance to candidacy, including the steps and timeframe. It will also be helpful to consider tentative plans for funding external research by reviewing the department's [Student Support Handbook](#) as a launching point for external funding discussions.

### Initial Research Discussions

In September, first-year students may be in significantly different phases regarding their overall research development. Most students plan to do preliminary fieldwork or research in their first summer. The September advising meetings are a time to begin setting up a timeline to help students create a research plan for the summer months. Note that this *does not* mean that students need to have produced a finalized plan in these first meetings. Similarly, it is essential to underline that some students may be intimidated to present their research if it is in the earlier stages.

For this reason, the emphasis in early conversations on student research should be grounded in the assumption that it is the responsibility of the mentors to help all students develop a meaningful project and that this is a scholarly process rather than a competition. These initial conversations should focus on goals and a timeline over the academic year that will ensure students are prepared to make the most of their preliminary research over the summer. This is also helpful to think about Rackham's new requirement that 12 months of progress be made when students receive summer support from Rackham. These goals can be formulated in the October "goal letter." First-year fieldwork varies widely, but some domains to draw on in thinking about goals and timelines include:

- [IRB applications and approval](#), as necessary.
- Developing research questions, identifying areas of inquiry, selecting field sites, and engaging with secondary literature.
- Establishing initial rapport and relationships in the field.
- Logistics: research plans, travel and housing contingencies, "plan B" alternatives.

### Course Selection

Productive conversations about course selection for the Winter term should consider the student's broader goals, interests, and the construction of knowledge in anthropology, as well as core course requirements and degree milestones, such as the language and subfield requirements. Students should discuss their course selections with their advisors and bring a list of classes to their advising meeting, where faculty can advise them on integrating these ideas into a meaningful set of courses to push forward the student's broader goals or interests. Students should familiarize themselves with their [subfield's degree checklist](#), including core degree requirements and subfield requirements, Rackham's requirements for candidacy, and, if of interest and applicable, the [MA in Anthropology](#), as well as milestones. The current [Graduate Handbook](#) and the [LSA Course Guide](#) will be helpful planning tools.

Helpful questions from the advisor include, “What interests you about the syllabus for this course, and why? How does that intersect with your research interests?”

### **Grant Applications**

Shortly after arriving at Michigan, the student must decide whether to apply for any major predoctoral grants for which they are eligible. The faculty advisor should discuss the application process with students and the pros and cons of applying to major predoctoral grants in their first or second year. If the student decides to apply for a significant predoctoral grant in their first year, their advisor should act as an interlocutor as the student drafts and edits proposals and acquires letters of recommendation. Because students are new to the program, the advisor must write one of each advisee’s letters of recommendation for these major national grants. The faculty member should take the initiative to offer the student a letter. Students should also consult with the Graduate Office and the Director of Graduate Studies to plan how grants will work with their guaranteed funding packages from the Anthropology department.

Helpful questions from the student include, “Do you generally advise that students apply to [grant] in their first or second year? What information would help you write me a strong letter of recommendation for [grant]?”

## October

In October, faculty and students should finalize students' "goal-setting letters" while also checking in about students' adaptation to graduate school and the department in general, including ongoing grant applications and lines of thinking about anthropological inquiry.

### Goal Setting Letters

Based on the September conversation, the milestones outlined in this calendar, the doctoral degree checklists, and student's individual needs and desires, students should prepare brief letters outlining:

- their goals for the academic year, including summer
- how these goals are grounded in their developing academic success and meaningful scholarship.

These goal-setting letters should be discussed and collaboratively finalized during the October meeting. After that, they become the basis for assessing progress for the "annual review letter" at the end of the year. Students, advisors, and the department share accountability for the established goals. **Finalized letters will be submitted to the Graduate Office and retained on file for the Annual Review Letter writing process.**

While we leave notions of academic success and meaningful scholarship to the students and their mentors to envision and discuss, such conversations will probably be connected to discussions about anthropological inquiry. They are, ultimately, about the needs and interests of each particular student.

However, to assist students in thinking about the year, it will be helpful to establish goals for the in the following domains—noting though that this is by no means an exclusive list:

- Coursework for the upcoming Winter term, including further building on research interests and fulfilling core and subfield requirements.
- Future funding plans: Consult with the Grad Office, which can provide a projection spreadsheet with milestones to assist with mapping and allocating between departmental, summer, and external funding sources.
- Research plans for the upcoming summer term, in which the Rackham Graduate School expects 12 months of progress.
- Developing relationships with other faculty for future committees, students, etc.
- Extra-curricular intellectual involvements, community building, and networking (seminars, talks, conferences, et cetera).
  - This will help form future committees and foster interdisciplinary and community engagement.

- Skill and language development, especially for the language milestone, which must be completed prior to advancing to candidacy.

### **Winter Coursework and Beyond**

In October, students should discuss their future Winter coursework and participation in the department's intellectual life. Faculty advisors have the ability to provide helpful support and advice to students as emerging colleagues in anthropology. For example, faculty advisors may provide collegial support by discussing recent work the student has read or that the faculty member would recommend by asking about the student's preparation for their current and future classes and making suggestions for how to read scholarship 'like an anthropologist'; or by discussing recent presentations or reading groups held in the department, and what the faculty advisor and student each found interesting about those events.

Helpful questions from the advisor include, "What did you like most about that reading? Did you find any parts of it unclear?"

Practical questions from the student include, "When you were taking graduate coursework, what strategies did you use to prepare for your classes?"

### **Grant Writing**

Students applying to the NSF GRFP or other grants should discuss grant writing with their advisors. They should also inquire with the Graduate Office about funding planning so that mapping discussions can help students strategize how to maximize departmental and external funding. Departmental funding can be held in abeyance while students are on most external grants, while other grants qualify students for "top-up" support from the Department or Rackham.

### **Anthropological Inquiry**

As students adjust to the program and graduate school, they and their advisors will begin to engage in conversations about core questions in anthropological research, like the styles and ethics of contemporary fieldwork, the history of the discipline and their subfield, substantive research areas related to student's interests, and so on. While these conversations may have logistical or practical dimensions, students' entry into core debates in the field provides an opportunity to begin a significant (and ideally years-long) intellectual exchange with faculty members. It may be helpful to orient these conversations around readings recommended by the advisor or selected by the student or to begin thinking creatively about exercises that might assist students in developing their research questions, areas of focus, or theoretical approach. Helpful questions from the advisor include, "What first drew you to anthropology? How does studying anthropology, rather than studying similar questions in another discipline, influence your research?"

## November

In November, students are approaching the end of their first semester in the program. The November advising conversation should focus on some or all of these subjects: course selection for the Winter semester, getting started on final papers or projects, grant writing, preparing for examinations, and the relationship between the student's research interests and first-semester coursework and anthropology as a four-field discipline.

### Working on Final Papers and Projects

If the student is taking coursework with final papers or projects, November is when they should begin preparing for those assignments. Faculty should advise students on identifying good topics for final projects and developing each initial idea into a finished product. A good advising conversation might discuss ideas for one paper in depth or briefly mention all of the student's papers/projects. **Most students will use one of their first-year papers to submit for their Second Year Review.** It is also best to ask your mentors about your subfield's Second Year Review process so you can begin to plan your final papers for the Fall term and later for the Winter term.

### Preparing for Final Examinations

If the student is taking coursework with final exams, they should also plan their study strategies in November. Faculty should advise students about how to prepare productively for final examinations. A good advising conversation might focus on one exam or discuss study strategies in general. The advisor can ask useful questions, such as, "What study strategies have worked for you in the past? How do you think they will work for [class]?"

### Grant Writing

Students applying to the Ford Foundation Predoctoral Fellowship or other grants should discuss grant writing with their advisor(s) in November. Possible formats for this conversation are in the Appendix ("Writing Conversations"). Students should also contact the Graduate Office to discuss future planning related to internal and external funding and grant administration.

### Anthropology as a Discipline

As students near the end of their first semester, students and faculty should discuss their understanding of anthropology. Such a conversation will help students understand their own research and coursework in the context of our discipline.

## December

In December, students are working on final papers and projects and preparing for examinations. The December advising conversation should focus on some or all of these subjects: finalizing course selection for the upcoming semester, exam preparation, grant writing, or writing final papers and projects. If students are applying to the Ford Foundation Predoctoral Fellowship, they will be finalizing and revising their applications this month and may wish to discuss their work with their advisor.

### Preparing for Final Examinations

If the student is taking coursework with final exams, they may plan their study strategies in December. Faculty should advise students on how to prepare productively for final examinations. A good advising conversation might focus on one exam or discuss study strategies in general. Useful questions from the advisor include, “What study strategies have worked for you in the past? How do you think they will work for [class]?”

### Grant Writing, or Writing Final Papers and Projects

Students writing final papers or projects or applying for external grants should discuss their writing with their advisors, as well as take advantage of on-campus writing resources, such as [the Sweetland Writing Center](#) and [library resources](#). Additionally, the Sweetland Writing Center [offers courses, writing clinics, and advice for students who speak English as a second or foreign language](#). Seeking these resources will help students enhance their writing skills for coursework, the preliminary examination, proposal, and dissertation writing process.

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*\*You did it!*



## January

Welcome Back! January is a time for *reflection* (on what is working and what isn't, both in graduate school broadly and in the mentoring relationship), *reevaluation* (of goals and strategies), and *planning* (for the second semester and the summer's research to follow). January's advising conversation should begin with reflection and reevaluation.

The January discussion should also focus on a summer research plan development, as Rackham's Summer Funding requires degree progress from the start of May to the end of August. Remember to keep in mind that although many external summer funding application deadlines fall in January or February, it's essential for students to also check with the Graduate Office to make sure that external funding will not impact their Rackham Summer Funding due to equity caps established by the Graduate School. External funding through grants and fellowships will enhance a student's CV and have a more significant professional impact (and usually yield larger funding amounts). Still, as the funding source, Rackham *may dictate which funding sources may be combined with their funds*. As a result of these parameters, Anthropology leadership petitioned Rackham to allow Anthropology students to defer their Rackham Summer Funding while on specific external funding. Consulting with your advisors, the Director of Graduate Studies, and the Graduate Office will help you effectively plan for a successful and lucrative upcoming summer and ensure future planning to maximize future summer allotment.

### Reflection and Reevaluation (required)

What worked well last semester? What did the student learn about their work habits/interests/projects/goals? What challenges did you face, both broadly and specifically, in the mentoring relationship? Based on a discussion of these questions, the student and advisors should revisit and discuss the "goal-setting letter" the student wrote in October. If desired, the student and advisors may revisit some of their answers from the Developing Shared Expectations exercise from the Fall and the student's goal-setting letter. **Updates should be shared with the Graduate Office to show the progression of the individual mentoring relationship.** Feedback can help improve the mentoring process for students and future cohorts. In pursuing these conversations, students and professors can seek facilitation aid through the [University of Michigan's Equity, Civil Rights, and Title IX Office](#). They help facilitate and support U-M's efforts to



ensure equal opportunities for all persons regardless of race, color, national origin, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, religion, height, weight, or veteran status in employment, educational programs, and activities and admissions. From mediation services to resolution options, they are a resource for all university community members.

### Plans for summer research and IRB applications

**It is very important to begin thinking about and planning for summer research now, as Summer Funding through Rackham requires a summer plan to be submitted and approved before fund disbursement.** Advisors and students should broadly discuss summer research plans. What does the student want to understand? How can big questions be reframed to fit summer projects? How can these projects extend beyond the summer into wider questions (prelim prep, etc?)

- Establish specific expectations for receiving help and feedback on drafting summer research planning documents. **This will have to coincide with Winter coursework, as plans will be submitted for review by mid-April, and funds will be disbursed in early May.**
- Discuss logistics, resources, and relevant experiences related to IRB applications. Many students will not have applied for IRB approval after, so advisors should be prepared to provide an overview of IRB application resources.
- [The IRB Application](#) is located on the Research and Ethics and Compliance site. Advisors should assist students with this process as soon as a possible.

### Planning for International Travel

The Department of Anthropology collaborated with Global Michigan to create a university-wide [Step-By-Step International Travel Planning Guide](#).

Global Michigan requires all university community members conducting university business, including research (*even if the travel origin is the student's home country*), to [register all international travel](#). Destinations deemed “high risk” or that require vaccinations should be submitted as soon as travel details are known.

- Students are **required to register their travel**. [More information and instructions on how to register are located here](#). Advisors should assist students with preparing their documents for Global Michigan to review.
- As Global Michigan reviews travel for all students (undergraduate, graduate, and professional), faculty, and staff; summer travel and fund disbursement have been delayed due to travel approval.
- Global Michigan commonly returns documents and requests additional clarification; please consider the time for processing and possible revisions and adjustments.

- Questions will vary by destination but may include sleeping arrangements (*nets for insect protection*), transportation details (*for safety considerations*), health (*precautions and vaccines*), and security and evacuation plans (*from natural disasters to man-made*).

## February

February is a crucial month that provides a unique opportunity for students and faculty to delve into their areas of interest and foster research development for future semesters and the upcoming summer. Advisors and students should also address areas of potential theoretical interest before preparing grants in the second and third years.

### Summer Planning

Planning for summer should continue as expectations and timelines are established by creating a solid timeline, crafting detailed research questions, and determining fieldwork methods. Students should discuss their plans to be in contact with their advisors during the summer—during preliminary fieldwork and otherwise—and set up plans to report back with initial data. The 9-month faculty work contract should be balanced with Rackham’s requirements so that students can make progress toward their degrees. Check-ins should be scheduled in a manner that does not interfere with advisors’ professional obligations to conduct their research during the summer, but that still provides the student with guidance, if needed. Discussions should also include considering planning logistics and situating summer research and training within the student’s broader trajectory as a precandidate and beyond.

### IRB (if applicable)

As summer planning continues, many students will not have completed an [IRB](#) review before. The student and their advisors should discuss how IRB approval works in anthropology and at Michigan, and they should discuss ethical considerations of the student’s research both within and beyond the confines of the IRB process. The faculty member should advise the student about creating an ethical research project that will pass IRB review.

### External Summer Funding Applications

External summer funding applications may be due in February. Students should discuss their writing and applications with their advisors. They should also discuss funding planning with the DGS and the Graduate Office in regard to Rackham’s funding policies.

### Coursework and Research Check-in

The student and mentors should comprehensively discuss the student’s evolving intellectual interests to prepare for summer planning and upcoming fall coursework. They should also touch base on the progress of the current semester. Advisors should ask what the student has learned in their courses that interest them, how their research has changed, and whether they are prepared to ask additional questions. Students should inquire about the research development process.

## March

The March advising meeting will cover *critical* upcoming tasks and deadlines. This will include selecting Fall courses for the next academic year and planning funding for the second year. Additionally, advisors and students must make progress on planning summer fieldwork, including logistics and research questions. Final plans for summer are due in mid-April for an early May payment.

### Fall Coursework

Productive conversations about course selection for the Fall term should consider the student's broader goals, interests, and the construction of knowledge in anthropology, as well as core course requirements and degree milestones, such as the language and subfield requirements. Students should discuss their course selections with their advisors and bring a list of classes to their advising meeting, where faculty can advise them on integrating these ideas into a meaningful set of courses to push forward the student's broader goals or interests. Students should familiarize themselves with their [subfield's degree checklist](#), including core degree requirements and subfield requirements, Rackham's requirements for candidacy, and, if of interest and applicable, the [MA in Anthropology](#), as well as milestones. The current [Graduate Handbook](#) and the [LSA Course Guide](#) will be helpful planning tools.

Students should also begin to consider whom they would like to work with as their second-year advisor. Students may have one or two advisors at any given time, but they will always need a *current* advisor on file with the Graduate Office. [This form](#) will update the Graduate Office on the student's second-year advisor(s).

### Funding Plans for Second Year

Advisors and advisees should discuss funding plans for the upcoming year, including Graduate Student Instructor(GSI) positions, FLAS fellowships, RMF funding, and external awards. Advisors should work closely with students to help identify courses of interest (for teaching) and continue to discuss coursework for the beginning of the second year. The Graduate Office will provide students with funding planning charts to help plan their funding trajectory and map out a time to degree with their advisors.

The Graduate Office and DGS are pleased to help students and advisors understand which types of funding currently meet the criteria for internal and external funding. This guidance will enable students to make the most of the available support, both within the university and externally. Some forms of funding may include additional departmental support, while others may require departmental funding to be put on hold. Only certain forms of funding can be combined with Departmental, College, or Rackham funding.

## Fall GSI Applications

The Anthropology Graduate Office will announce Fall funding applications in March. Most second-year students will apply for Graduate Student Instructor (GSI) positions in the Department of Anthropology. Students will submit application materials indicating several course preferences for courses offered during the future fall term in need of GSIs. The course schedule is still in the planning phase, meaning course times and offerings may change from now until final publication. Students tend to select courses based upon several factors, including, but not limited to, research interests, faculty instructor, professionalization needs, subfield offerings, writing or lab components, etc. Advisors are a valuable resource in helping students select course preferences. Some advisors may recommend certain courses as essential for professionalization. This information needs to be communicated to both the DGS and the Graduate Office. Teaching assignments are determined in collaboration with the course instructor and the department's funding committee. Students will receive offer letters for departmental funding in April.

## Pedagogy and Teaching

Most students will transition from their first-year fellowships to GSI positions during their second year in the program; advisors may want to discuss pedagogical methods and teaching best practices. New GSIs will also receive departmental and university training and mentoring before entering the classroom, as well as during their first semester in the classroom and thereafter. Advice from their mentors may be beneficial at this juncture, as they are most familiar with the student at this point and their interests. The workshops and resources on [The Center for Research on Learning and Teaching](#) website can help improve teaching skills and help you find your voice in the classroom, regardless of your experience level.

## Summer Plans, Fieldwork Methods, and Rackham Summer Funding

Advisors and students should continue to discuss plans for summer fieldwork, including ethnographic and other fieldwork methods and research questions. **Finalized summer plans must be submitted by mid-April for Rackham Summer funding disbursement in early May.** Travel considerations and approval and IRB approval should also be making headway. Plans should encompass the months of May until the end of August to fulfill Rackham's 12 months of progress stipulation. Advisors and students should fully consider the 9-month faculty work contract and avoid setting timelines that interfere with advisors' professional research obligations during summer.

## April

In April, students will prepare to finish their second semester. They will write their final papers, which may also be used during their Second-Year Review. April's advising conversation should focus on the following topics: finalizing course selection for the upcoming Fall semester, end-of-semester issues from papers to exams, finalizing and submitting summer research plans, and finalizing mentorship beyond the first year. Advisors should also review policies regarding "incompletes" with students that will impact GSI employment for the Fall term.

### End of Semester: Papers, Presentations, Exams

In April, students and advisors should discuss the student's end-of-semester coursework and progress in the program. Advisors should discuss the student's final papers, any preliminary or course-based exams, and the student's plans for Fall. These papers may be submitted for the Second Year Review.

### Rackham Summer Funding and Research

If it still needs to be completed, students and advisors should be putting the final touches on summer research plans and travel logistics. Conversations around research should cover daily life in the field, establishing connections with informants, and other fieldwork or laboratory methods. Plans are expected to be submitted for review by mid-April, as Rackham will disburse funding for an early May payment.

### Ongoing Mentorship and Advising Plans

Advisors and students should have a conversation about their plans for future advising, such as the possibility of continuing to work together beyond the first year, establishing connections with other professors for mentoring, and forming an initial committee (based on the specific field of study). It's essential for students and advisors to formalize their plans for second-year advising, whether it's with the same individuals, with some adjustments, or with new advisors.

**All advisor changes must be communicated to the Graduate Office before the end of the semester.**

To effectively support students, advisors should ask what type of faculty support—logistical and theoretical—is necessary for them to continue their research. They should also discuss the type of support the students feel they work best with. Furthermore, students should consider the most effective strategies for forming committees during the different stages of graduate school: preparing for the Second-Year Review, the preliminary exam committee, the proposal committee, and the dissertation committee, as well as fostering professional and interdisciplinary networks.

## Summer: May-August

In May, students and advisors should discuss end-of-term examinations and final papers, ensure summer plans are finalized, and discuss the student's overall experience of Michigan in their first academic year.

### “Big Picture” Summative Conversation about the First Year

Students and advisors should discuss the first year as a whole, including learning takeaways, future objectives, experiences within the program, and any possible difficulties that the student might face. This “big picture” conversation should address the student's experiences within the department, their goals—within the degree program and beyond, and next steps.

### Annual Review Process and Second-Year Review

Annual review letters assess success and areas needing work by considering the goals set forth at the start of the year (and adjusted in January) as recorded in the student's “goal-setting letter,” on file with the Graduate Office. In light of that assessment, this is a time to readjust goals for the coming year. Letters should also discuss what concrete actions both students and advisors will take toward those adjusted goals. Advisors should discuss the annual review process with students, including the student's current status within the department, their plans for their second year, and preparations for the subfield-specific Second-Year Review. As noted above, the fundamental aim of the Annual Review is to ensure students have the resources they need to develop as scholars. It should **not** be viewed as a process of judging students as succeeding or failing. Students will receive their Annual Review Letters from the Director of Graduate Studies early in the Summer through the Graduate Office.

Finally, as indicated earlier, if problems arise in the mentoring relationships at any point, students should contact the Graduate Program Coordinator or the Director of Graduate Studies for advice and potential intervention. If more support is needed, advisees or advisors may seek facilitation aid from Rackham Resolution Officers.

### Grades

The Registrar's Office will post grades in mid-May. Grades will be monitored to ensure they will not interfere with upcoming GSI positions, which currently prohibit students with *more than two incompletes* from holding employment positions.

### Rackham Summer Funding and Research

Students and their advisors will be in the field over the summer. Rackham Summer funding will be disbursed monthly, with the first payment in early May. The department and Rackham will require a summary of summer activities. The expectations set by the triad for the student will be followed

as everyone conducts their own research. The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and Graduate Office will continue supporting students during the summer.





## Appendix

### First-Year Advising Guidelines

# Abbreviated Calendar

## Topics for monthly triad meetings

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### August (Advisor-initiated)

Establish contact for introductions; discuss fall course selections with attention to student's broader goals and core course requirements. Students should prepare a list of courses of interest. Meetings should be scheduled for September and the rest of the semester; early grant applications may be discussed if applicable.

### September (Advisor-initiated)

Using the Developing Shared Expectations worksheet in the appendix, the triad should clarify expectations for the advising relationship. The triad should also brainstorm goals and create an initial timeline for the first year, including planning for summer research. Additionally, the discussion should outline program milestones, MA, doctoral and subfield requirements, and the process and timeline for advancing to candidacy. Course selection for Winter should be considered in addition to tentative plans for applying for external grants.

### October (Student-initiated)

Students create "goal-setting letters" to share with their mentors at the October meeting. These letters should consider the student's academic and research goals for the year, including summer, and how these goals are grounded in meaningful scholarship. The letters should be discussed collaborating during the October meeting. Students should also include content related to grant writing and their ideas about preliminary research. Finalized letters will be submitted to the Graduate Office and retained on file for the Annual Review Letter writing process.

### November (Advisor-initiated)

The November advising conversation should focus on some course selection for the Winter semester, final papers, grant writing, the student's research interests, and anthropology as a four-field discipline.

### December (Student-initiated)

As students continue to work on final papers, the December advising conversation should focus on finalizing course selection for the upcoming semester and whether final papers will be applicable contenders for the Second Year Review. Students writing final papers or projects or applying for external grants should discuss their writing with their advisors, as well as take advantage of on-campus writing resources, such as [the Sweetland Writing Center](#) and [library resources](#).

### **January (Student-initiated)**

January's advising conversation should begin with reflection and reevaluation. If desired, the student and advisors may revisit some of their answers from the Developing Shared Expectations worksheet and the student's goal-setting letter. Updates should be shared with the Graduate Office to show the progression of the individual mentoring relationship. The January discussion should also focus on a summer research plan development, as Rackham's Summer Funding requires degree progress from the start of May to the end of August. Remember to keep in mind that although many external summer funding application deadlines fall in January or February, it's essential for students to also check with the Graduate Office to make sure that external funding will not impact their Rackham Summer Funding.

### **February (Student-initiated)**

Planning for summer should continue as expectations and timelines are established by creating a solid timeline, crafting detailed research questions, and determining fieldwork methods. All travel logistics, including the IRB, should begin.

### **March (Student-initiated)**

The March advising meeting will cover *critical* upcoming tasks and deadlines. This will include selecting Fall courses for the next academic year and planning funding for the second year. Additionally, advisors and students must make progress on planning summer fieldwork, including logistics and research questions. Final plans for summer are due in mid-April for an early May payment.

### **April (Student-initiated)**

April's advising conversation should focus on finalizing courses for the upcoming Fall semester, Winter final papers, finalizing and submitting summer research plans, and finalizing mentorship beyond the first year.

### **May (Student-initiated)**

In May, students and advisors should discuss end-of-term examinations and final papers, ensure summer plans are finalized, and discuss the student's overall experience of Michigan in their first academic year.

### **June-August (Summer Research)**

Students and their advisors will be in the field over the summer. Rackham Summer funding will be disbursed monthly, with the first payment in early May. The department and Rackham will require a summary of summer activities. The expectations set by the triad for the student will be followed as everyone conducts their own research. The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and Graduate Office will continue supporting students during the summer.

## Developing Shared Expectations

The following is a worksheet for developing shared expectations and facilitating best practices for first-year mentoring triads composed of a student jointly co-mentored by two faculty members. Note that this worksheet is not meant to be used on its own but should be used as a supplement to the Michigan Anthropology First Year Advising Guidelines, which provide more detailed information about the first-year advising relationship, including suggestions on goal setting in the first semester.

Students and faculty are not expected to commit to memory all details of the graduate program, so please feel free to reach out to the Graduate Program Coordinator or Director of Graduate Studies with questions about technical matters pertaining to funding, degree requirements, Rackham policies, university resources, or other related questions.

This document was created by drawing on the Developing Shared Expectations Worksheets developed by the [Rackham Faculty Committee on Mentoring \(MORE\)](#).

### Roles in the Co-Mentoring Relationship

1. Depending on student interest and faculty strengths or specialties, there may be different roles that each adviser can play for students in their first year. Is there a primary mentor, or do both mentors equally share responsibility for advising? Are there specific areas of advising that each faculty member feels more practiced in or able to perform than others
2. Will advising meetings always feature both faculty advisors and the student simultaneously, or will the student meet individually with each advisor most of the time?
3. We recommend that the the first major goal-setting meetings as well as the final meeting of the student's first year, include all members of the triad.

### Communication and Meetings: Expectations and Timelines

1. When do you plan to hold your monthly meetings, and who will attend each one? Be as specific as you can about scheduling. Will the meetings be scheduled on the same days each month? When will students send their agenda for each meeting? Where will they take place?
2. What is the best way/technology to get a hold of each other? What is the appropriate time frame to expect a response, including when either faculty or graduate students are away from campus? Are they the same for both faculty advisors? If not, please clarify.
3. How are the next steps identified after a meeting? In cases in which students have responsibilities in relation to their adviser (for example, in a lab), or where faculty have responsibilities for students (for example, providing feedback on a grant application) how do you agree on action items so that everyone is on the same page?

4. Discuss expectations regarding vacations and time away from campus and how best to plan for them. What is the time frame for notification regarding anticipated absences?

### **Adviser-Student Collaborations**

1. Describe the student's primary area(s) of responsibility and expectations for literature, in-lab working hours, group meetings, et cetera.
2. If the student will participate in ongoing research group meetings, what will this participation look like? If suitable, we recommend writing down work responsibilities to ensure reasonable expectations and meet the needs of students and advisers.
3. What kind of training should students expect from faculty collaborators or other sources in relation to their shared project? If presentations, papers, or other products will result from the research, what kind of credit can students expect if they meet their obligations (author order, co-authorship, presentation opportunities, etc?)

### **Opportunities and expectations for feedback**

1. Feedback from faculty members can be one of the most useful experiences in graduate school for students, but there is a wide array of ideas about what it can look like. In what form and how often can the student expect to receive feedback regarding their work from their advisers?
2. What are student and faculty member's mutual expectations around the nature of that feedback? It may be useful for students to explain what style, or even to a certain extent tone, of feedback they find helpful or unhelpful. Similarly, it may be helpful for faculty members to explain their general orientation and approach to giving feedback.
3. How much time does the mentor need to provide feedback on written work, such as grant and publication drafts? Is there an order for the student to send work to the various faculty members? How much time is needed by each faculty member to provide feedback?
4. At which stage can the student expect to receive this feedback in drafting, editing, and revising? Does the type of feedback differ depending on the stage of writing? Students and their advisors may wish to discuss the revision of first-year grant drafts and funding applications.
5. How should feedback from co-advisors be coordinated—especially if the readings and reactions contradict each other?
6. Differences in opinion, when handled with respect and care, do not need to be a source of problems in advising relationships--indeed, in some cases, be productive. If the two mentors give conflicting advice, how can the triad think about reconciling the suggestions? If there is a difference of opinion, disagreement, or conflict between the student and their advisers, what is a productive way to handle that disagreement with respect and care? Can conflict be handled in a way that is attentive to possible power differences between students and faculty while at the same time being attentive to the needs of all parties involved?

### **Funding and economic security**

1. Students, advisers, and staff should share the responsibility for ensuring that students are financially secure throughout their time in the program.
2. Discuss the department's funding model and create a plan for the student's future funding during both academic years and summers. (For example, discuss internal and external fellowships, including National Science Foundation, Ford Foundation, FLAS fellowships, summer research funding, RMF funding, training grants; GSI, GSRA, GSSA).
3. Discuss any uncertainty in future sources of funding and contingencies.

## Quick Links: Important Websites

1. [2024-2025 Anthropology Graduate Handbook](#)
  2. [Anthropology Doctoral Degree Checklists by Subfield](#)
  3. [Masters in Anthropology Requirements](#)
  4. [Candidacy Requirements for Anthropology Degree](#)
  5. [Rackham Graduate School Academic Policies](#)
  6. [2024-2025 Anthropology Student Support Handbook](#)
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## Writing Conversations

Students will want to discuss their written work with their advisors during their first year. We suggest the following models as a starting point for approaching these conversations; we have placed our suggestions in this appendix because students may wish to discuss their writing—for example, grant applications or final papers—at many points during their first year, not during any single month.

### Approaching Writing in Graduate School

Some students may be unfamiliar with writing long papers, anthropology's disciplinary conventions, or grant applications. Students may request a foundational discussion about effective strategies for approaching one or more genres.

The advisor should discuss what makes for successful written work in the genre about which the student has asked to learn more. Advisors may describe how they approach their work today, or they may describe how they approached similar pieces of writing in graduate school; they can also refer to papers or applications they have read and discuss the qualities that make some pieces of writing work well, or common challenges in writing in the genre the student has asked to discuss. The advisor should also describe the student's access to on-campus writing resources, including the Sweetland Writing Center and the English Language Institute. These are also opportunities to begin substantive conversations about styles and possibilities of anthropological and research more broadly.

### Revising a Long Section of Draft Writing

If the student sends their advisor a long draft of their work by a deadline the student and advisor agree upon in September—generally between one and three weeks—the advisor may use that month's advising conversation to give verbal feedback to the student on their work. The faculty member should describe at least one strength of the manuscript and highlight one area where revision would improve the student's work.

### Revising a Short Section of Draft Writing

The student may want to bring an excerpt of their writing to an advising conversation and ask their advisor to read and comment on that section during their meeting. The faculty member should describe at least one strength of the manuscript and highlight one area where revision would improve the student's work.





\* Updated during the Summer of 2024 to align with Rackham’s 12-month to degree progress requirements.























