

Assessing Research Advising: Pilot Subject Evaluation Initiative

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2015-2016 GSC President

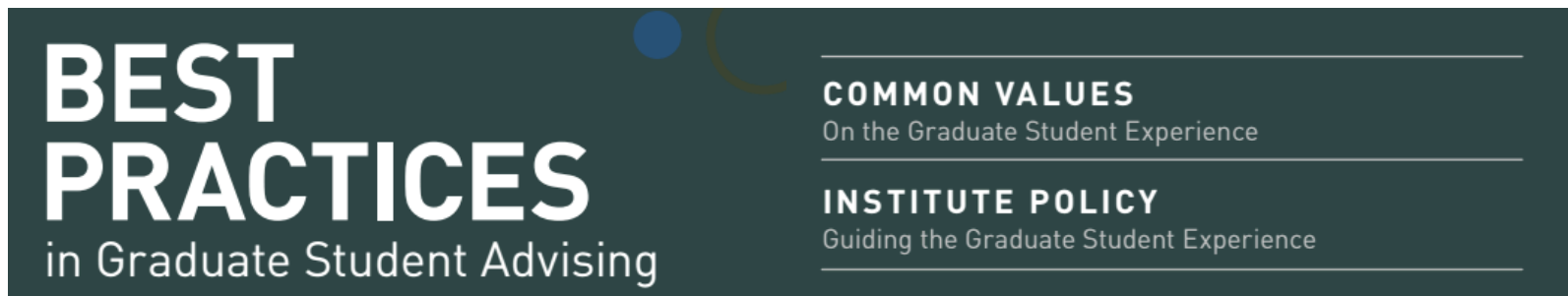
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Last Year: 2015-2016 CJAC

- CJAC: Corporation Joint Advisory Committee on Institute-Wide Affairs
- 3 grad students
 - Michael McClellan (PhD, Atmospheric Science)
 - Boris Braverman (PhD, Physics)
 - Erhardt Graeff (PhD, Media Lab)

Grad Student CJAC Topic: Advising

- *Briefly* considered creating “best practices in advising” guidelines
 - Similar resource created by ODGE
 - gsc.mit.edu/advising



- Every department has a different culture

Subject Evaluations and Research

- Grad students enroll in research “subject”
 - 2.ThG or similar (“X.ThG”)
 - 6.960, 12.980, and similar (pre-quals research)
- All subjects have an end-of-term anonymous evaluation

...why not research “placeholder” subjects?

How to Assess Research Advising?

- The Subject Evaluation platform already addresses many issues:
 - Who will run these evaluations?
 - How can we keep the responses anonymous?
 - How can we reach all grad students?
- Boris analyzed the text of all archived citations for the **Perkins Award for Excellence in Graduate Advising**

Perkins Award Citations

- Several main clusters of attributes:
 - Availability and time investment
 - Academic and career
 - Supportive while encouraging independence
 - Enthusiastic, curious, and inspiring
 - Connects students to resources & opportunities
 - Knowledgeable, patient, effective teacher
 - Makes students feel valued and respected
 - Personal
 - Community-building (usually within group)
 - Kindness & compassion; willing to listen to concerns
 - Advocacy on behalf of students

Creating a Set of Questions

- There is an institute-wide set of questions that must be included at the top...
 - The pace of this class (content and assignments)...
- 14 question maximum
- Multiple choice, free-response, or Likert (agree-disagree) scale

Section Header

START HERE. The above questions are universal in subject evaluations but do not pertain to this particular evaluation. All questions should be answered regarding the current thesis research you are conducting (not TA experience, etc.).

In order to protect the anonymity of your responses, the subject evaluations for this department will be decoupled from your identity and login credentials; at no time in the administration of this evaluation will your responses be linked to your name or your advisor's name.

Please do not provide personally identifying information (your name, your advisor's name, etc.) in the free response section.

Questions

1. Multiple Choice

Q: For how many more academic terms (fall or spring semesters, do not count summer or IAP) do you anticipate enrolling before receiving your degree?

- a. This is my final academic term
- b. 1 term
- c. 2 terms (one more year)
- d. 3 terms
- e. 4 terms (two more years)
- f. 5 or more terms

Questions

2. Multiple Choice

Q: What is your degree goal?

- a. Doctoral Degree (PhD, ScD)
- b. Master's Degree (SM, MEng), continuing to Doctoral
- c. Master's Degree (SM, MEng), not continuing to Doctoral
- d. Master's Degree (SM, MEng), unsure about continuing
- e. Other

Questions

3. Multiple Choice

Q: On average over the past semester, how frequently did you interact one-on-one with your primary research advisor regarding your research (in-person meetings, Skype, phone calls, etc.)?

- a. Daily
- b. At least weekly
- c. At least monthly
- d. At least once this semester
- e. Not one-on-one; only in group settings/meetings
- f. Never; did not interact

Questions

Likert 7-Point (Agree-Disagree) Scale (with N/A)

My primary research advisor...

4. ...provides me with useful guidance for my research project(s).

5. ...gives me useful guidance for my career/future career.

6. ...encourages my independent thinking and exploration.

Questions

Likert 7-Point (Agree-Disagree) Scale (with N/A)

My primary research advisor...

7. ...is supportive of my research direction.

8. ...gives me fair credit (in group meetings, publications, conference presentations, etc.) for my contributions to the research efforts of my research group.

Questions

Likert 7-Point (Agree-Disagree) Scale (with N/A)

9. When my primary research advisor and I disagree on aspects of my research, we are able to resolve our conflict in a productive manner.

10. My relationship with my primary research advisor is based on mutual respect.

11. I find great value in my research relationship with my primary research advisor.

Questions

Likert 7-Point (Agree-Disagree) Scale (with N/A)

12. I am excited by my research topic(s).

13. I am able to balance my research work with my extracurricular activities and personal life.

Questions

Free-Response Text (with N/A)

14. Do you have any general feedback for the department regarding how the experience as a graduate student researcher can be improved? Would you like to see some aspect of your research group or lab improve? Do you have any additional comments?

Spring 2016 Pilot

- There was very little time between completion of the questions and the Spring 2016 Subject Evaluation deadline
- Two (large!) departments joined the pilot:
 - MechE, 2.ThG
 - EECS, 6.ThG and 6.960
- Results are at <http://web.mit.edu/subjectevaluation/results.html>

Results from Spring 2016 Pilot

- Participation rate was ~35%
- Free-text responses yielded great insight
 - Can only be seen by Graduate Officer or other survey administrators
- New programs initiated by EECS Graduate Officer Leslie Kolodziejewski

Fall 2016 Expanded Pilot

- Departments must enable Subject Evaluation on research subjects by Wednesday 11/16
- Email to Department Heads, Graduate Officers, Graduate Admins, School Deans, Chancellor, Provost, Interim Dean for Graduate Education

Fall 2016 Expanded Pilot

- Administration is very decentralized
- Departmental student governments, REFS, etc. can discuss with Graduate Office/Administrators
 - <http://odge.mit.edu/gpp/oversight/officers/>
- Graduate Student Council can help!
 - Officers and Executive Committee
 - Academics, Research, and Careers Committee (ARC)

Questions?

- Expansion of the pilot depends on your departmental leadership and YOU!
- Additional questions can be sent to me (for now) at thg-survey@mit.edu