

UMD Spanish Department Mentoring Policy Statement of Expectations for Graduate Student Mentoring

The Faculty of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese (SPAP) is committed to excellence in teaching and mentoring, along with the production of new knowledge that is the hallmark of a strong department. It is expected that our Ph.D. and M.A. students will be mentored, first, by our faculty as they engage in substantive research projects, and benefit from rigorous training in the teaching skills required by the profession. Second, it is also expected that our students develop a mentoring network (please see reference below to our “Buddy System”), as well as academic and intellectual connections with faculty outside SPAP. Examples of these connections are our students’ involvement in interdisciplinary research activities and interdepartmental graduate certificates such as ARHU’s Digital Studies in Arts and Humanities, and Latin American Studies Graduate Certificate. As a result of this comprehensive efforts, our students graduate prepared to meet the demands of highly competitive academic positions in the United States, Europe, and Latin America.

All graduate students participate in the department’s comprehensive mentoring program and rigorous academic advising.

- Academic advising for SPAP Ph.D. and M.A. students is provided by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). Currently, Professor Laura Demaría is acting as DGS. HAL M.A. students will also be in close contact with Professor Lacorte or Professor Gironzetti, depending on the semester, to receive specific academic advising related to Hispanic Applied Linguistics. In general, academic advising deals with the program requirements, course registrations, comprehensive exams, departmental and university deadlines and graduate policy. Two mandatory advising meetings are scheduled at the beginning and end of each semester.
- Mentoring is a more comprehensive process; it will guide the graduate student in a more holistic way throughout the program. Mentoring is provided by the advisor in the field the student has chosen to specialize in. Ph.D. students are required to choose a mentor in their field of study to navigate the demands in the field. MA students, however, are required to choose a mentor in the second semester of their first year. HAL MA students will choose a mentor in their field of specialization also during the second semester of their first year.

Mentoring

The department believes that mentoring is a continuous dialogue and a relationship that takes place in different contexts. The department has identified three areas in which this relationship should be cultivated and encouraged: research, teaching, and professional development. We also believe that mentoring should not be limited exclusively to the advisor in the chosen field of specialization. We encourage our students to explore other

alternatives too. Thus, the DGS is very involved in the program while we have implemented the “Second Reader” role (see below) as a central part of the Dissertation Committee, and a Teaching mentoring course and class observations for first year Teaching Assistants. Last, but not least, the Department has implemented a Buddy system (peer to peer mentorship) to help our students navigate the different facets of graduate life. We are convinced that no single mentor can fulfill all the demands our students need to address to fully participate in academic life.

1- Faculty Mentoring: Research and Teaching

- M.A. Program: SPAP M.A. students will choose a faculty mentor during the second semester of their arrival. This faculty member will act as your mentor. You should meet with your mentor at least once a semester. If you decide to write a MA Thesis, this faculty mentor will be your Thesis Director.
- M.A. Program: HAL M.A. students will choose a HAL faculty mentor during the second semester of their arrival. This faculty member will act as your mentor. You should meet with your mentor at least once a semester. If you decide to write a HAL MA Thesis, this faculty mentor will be your Thesis Director.
- Ph.D. Program: As a SPAP Ph.D. Student, you will choose a faculty mentor on arrival in the field you want to specialize in. You should meet with your mentor at least three times throughout the semester to foster an academic relationship. In general, your original mentor will play a central role in the preparation of your Comprehensive Exams once your coursework has been completed. Also, she/he will later become the chair of your Dissertation committee. Your mentor will help you design your dissertation committee (three departmental faculty and one member from another UMD department who will act as Dean’s Representative).

The purpose of these regular meetings during each semester will not be a discussion of your progress in the fulfillment of the program requirements (for which you should continue to meet with the DGS); rather, the purpose will be to discuss your intellectual experience and progress in the program relevant to your particular field(s) of interest, your participation in the department’s intellectual life as relevant to your field(s) of interest, as well as your professional plans for the remainder of the program and beyond. The faculty mentor will be available to discuss any questions or concerns with regard to your professional and intellectual development. Feedback from faculty mentors about research, dissertations, and/or teaching is provided following three essential criteria: (1) Feedback must be clear and constructive so students can appropriately identify and assess the specific limitations in their work, and revise them to higher standards; (2) Feedback must be consistent in terms of quantity and depth; and (3) Feedback has to be given in a timely manner according to the specific characteristics of the activity – research project, course assignments, dissertation, etc.

Research Mentoring

During Comprehensive Ph.D., MA, and Qualifying Exams, mentors play an important role in each one of these exams. Mentors are required to establish the reading lists tailored to the student's fields of study (two in the main area and one in the secondary area). These lists are tailored to students' fields and theoretical approach; so, in order to develop them, a systematic dialogue with the student is needed. At least three meetings with faculty are expected in order to establish the different reading lists. There are also follow-ups with the DGS who receives the final lists and administers the exams.

Second Reader Mentorship: The 2nd reader should be named at the proposal defense in consultation with the student and should be involved with the dissertation from the start. Students are expected to engage in a close dialogue with the second reader throughout the writing of the dissertation.

Dissertation Committee: Your mentor will become the chair of your Dissertation committee and will help you design your dissertation committee (three departmental faculty and one member from another UMD department who will act as Dean's Representative). An active role is expected from your mentor during the writing of your dissertation. He/she will also advise you on fellowships and grants and during your job search process.

Detailed information is available in *The SPAP Graduate Program Handbook*
https://sllc.umd.edu/sites/default/files/2022-02/SPAP_Handbook_GraduatePrograms.pdf

Pedagogical/Teaching Mentoring

If you have a funding package that includes teaching, you will also be assigned a pedagogical mentor and course coordinator during those semesters when you are teaching. During your first semester, as you begin teaching Spanish at UMD, you will take SPAN 605 (1 credit) or SLLC 601.

The goal of this seminar is to provide you with (1) an understanding of the teaching methods used in the Spanish language courses at UMD, (2) a forum for discussing teaching related questions and bridge theory and classroom practice, and (3) an opportunity to reflect on your own teaching, including your attitudes towards language learning and teaching. This hands-on seminar links the theory of our Spanish language program to its in class practice. A key component of SPAN 605 and your continuous professional development is to observe others' classes regularly. Seeing and reflecting on how other instructors organize the classroom, review old material, present new material, use the board or audio-visual resources, engage students in a variety of communicative activities, and allocate time for all of the above, will help you gain the knowledge and self-assurance essential for leading your own class. Observing other teachers' classes also gives you the opportunity to take a detached, observational stance and reflect on why certain practices seemed to work better than others did.

In addition to taking this course, during your first year at UMD, you will have at least three meetings to discuss classroom management challenges and strategies, assessment options (instruments, rubrics, etc.), and any other relevant issue pertaining to the courses you are teaching. Last, you will also be mentored by means of scheduled class observations once per semester by the LPD. The LPD will observe your class and take notes, and then, you will meet again to debrief, focusing on challenges and strategies to improve. Also, the LPD will write and share with you and the Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUG) and Department Head a summary of the observations offer recommendations.

Detailed information is available in *The Teaching Handbook*

https://slc.umd.edu/sites/default/files/2022-02/SPAP_Handbook_TAs_Lecturers.pdf

2- Peer System/Buddy to Buddy Mentorship: Academic Life Mentoring

Before arriving on campus, the DGS, in consultation with the student body, chooses a buddy close to the area of study of the new student. The majority of our graduate students are international students and they need extra help to familiarize themselves not only with the American academic system but also with life in the US in general. This Buddy system has proven to be an excellent tool.

3- DGS Mentoring and Academic Advising

DGS is very involved throughout the process. Graduate students know that DGS has an open-door policy. Beside regular office hours, they also know they can contact DGS to her home phone, cell, or arrange meetings through Zoom/WhatsApp. We have used all means of communication to have an open and direct dialogue. Students should expect to receive a response to their questions or queries from the DGS – and/or any other SPAP official if needed – within 48 hours.

- at least 2 regular meetings during each semester to discuss progress and selection of courses
- meetings with students after each benchmark exam (Qualifying, MA, PhD comps); Feedback and discussions about exam/program status-progress. DGS gives feedback based on the written report provided by the two evaluators/readers for each exam.
- Meetings with student representatives to talk about the graduate students' needs and concerns. (at least one per semester)
- Professionalization workshops: “Tricks of the Trade” conducted by the DGS on a variety of skills that are needed and are part of the professionalization process of our graduate students (job search, cover letter and CV, publications, MLA style, fellowships).

DGS also organizes faculty yearly evaluations of students at the end of each academic year. We usually use the last departmental meeting to talk about each student. DGS provides feedback to students later on during regular meetings.

Mentoring general guidelines

Basic Expectations for Student Mentees

As students, you are expected to meet with your mentor on a regular basis throughout the semester. This is a shared responsibility, that is, you should arrange a meeting schedule with your mentor – in person or via email – at the beginning of the semester. Do not wait for your mentor to contact you. Be proactive.

It is also your responsibility to know the requirements and general guidelines of the program. We recommend consulting the *Handbook of Graduate Studies* constantly to familiarize yourself with the Departmental Policies. It is also a good idea to understand your program's plan of study and to be aware of timelines, deadlines, and expectations. Handbook can be accessed here: https://slc.umd.edu/sites/default/files/2022-02/SPAP_Handbook_GraduatePrograms.pdf

Respond to feedback in a constructive manner. It is essential that students recognize that mentors provide constructive criticism to improve their work. Students should welcome such feedback with an open mind.

If you have difficulties making contact with your mentor, please contact the DGS.

Basic Expectations for Faculty Mentors

Mentoring is an important aspect of being a graduate faculty. Mentors play a significant and important role in the professional development of their mentees. An open communication should be the norm to foster a healthy relationship.

A good faculty mentor will take an active interest in all aspects of the professional life of their mentees: conference participation, fellowships applications, articles and book reviews publications, and eventually job search process.

Faculty mentors should meet at least three times per semester with students to discuss the student's goals, to share information about the field of study and opportunities.

Provide clear and precise feedback on their papers, presentations, exams, and dissertation chapters and proposal.

To have some systematic procedure across the board, Faculty have voted for the following maximum timeframes for feedback to graduate students: 15 days for exams, and 1 month for a dissertation chapter. Be respectful of these timeframes as your students are eager to receive constructive criticism to move forward on their dissertations.

Questions or Concerns about the Mentoring Process

You may find that the faculty member initially assigned to you or chosen by you may not end up being the best for advising or chairing your research project. If this turns out to be the case, please contact the DGS in order to discuss the situation and/ or to change your mentor.