Anthropology
Assessment Report
Academic Year 2019-2020

a. Do you have a system of academic advisors concerned with academic progress and professional development in place? Do you have individual advisors for individual students, or one or more faculty (e.g., EO, DEO, DGS) who serve this function for all students? Which do you think is optimal?

For cultural anthropology (our largest subfield) we have an extensive system of academic advisement. First-year students are advised by the EO and by the members of an Advisement Committee comprised of 6 faculty members. Students meet with committee members 2 times per semester and 2 times per semester with the EO. Year 2 students are advised by the EO and the Exam and Curriculum Committee until such time as they select an advisor. We also have a separate professional development sequence in place. We run weekly seminars on various topics, from how to write a first published paper to how to write job letters. One faculty member coordinates professional development each year.

For archaeology, students who apply to the PhD track in archaeology tend to identify a particular faculty member they wish to work with, and so each student is accepted with a provisional faculty advisor in mind. This relationship is not formalized until the student passes the First Exam and moves to Level II status, but very often students will confer with a particular faculty member for guidance. Absent a specific request to be guided by a particular advisor from the outset, Level I students default to having the subfield coordinator as their faculty advisor. This system has generally worked well for archaeology.

For the linguistic anthropology subfield, in the first year, the EO and the subdiscipline coordinator advise the students formally and the subdiscipline’s faculty members advise the students informally. Students normally declare a formal advisor within the subdiscipline after they complete their first exams at the start of the 2nd year. For those students who are new and have not declared their advisor, the subdiscipline coordinator under the leadership of the EO, and with the cooperation of the subdisciplinary division’s faculty and students, serves to advise the students in academic and professional development. The linguistic anthropology subdiscipline is very small, currently with four doctoral faculty and six students, and therefore we have thus far operated more as a subdisciplinary division group in creating and fostering spaces for advising, mentoring, counselling, and professional development.

For biological/physical anthropology, advisement begins with admission into the program, at which point each student is paired with a prospective doctoral supervisor as per the student’s stated preferences in their application and the faculty member’s willingness to supervise the student, subject to majority approval by the faculty as a whole. This supervisor serves as both an academic advisor and mentor to the student and, in most cases, remains as such for the entire PhD process, though occasionally the student switches to a new supervisor after consultation with and approval by all parties concerned. Beyond the formal dissertation supervisor, students
normally also receive advice and mentoring from the subfield coordinator (essentially one of several DEOs).

For all 4 subfields, at some point before the end of the 4th year, each student-supervisor pair convenes a Second Exam committee for the student, and in most cases the members of that committee serve as additional advisors and mentors for the student.

b. Do you have a system of individual mentors for individual students, who can serve as counselors as well as guides for academic and professional development? Are these faculty members or students, or both?

The EO serves as mentor for students; also we have an alumni mentorship program; coordinated by 2 alumni, students are paired with an alumnus who communicates with them at their request. This is available to all students across the 4 subfields.

c. How are faculty/students assigned as mentors/advisors?

Again, each subfield has its own system in place. For advisors, the cultural program has an elaborate system in place to support students as they select an advisor. After the 1st exam, the Exam Committee sends a memo to students with tips on picking an advisor. This committee also advises students until they formally pick an advisor. The EO also meets with students to help them to pick an advisor. Students need the EO’s signature to register each semester until an advisor has been assigned formally (this requires the advisor and student to submit a signed form). The EO helps students to think through their options and does not allow them to register beyond the 4th semester without picking an advisor. If students cannot make arrangements by that point, the EO works with them and with the faculty to find someone suitable to advise the student. For archaeology, linguistic anthropology and bio/physical anthropology, specific faculty advisors are often requested by the students, and even identified during the application process, as discussed above in (a). Formal advisor assignments, however, are not made until the student advances to Level II and begins to constitute a Second Exam Committee, whose Chair is the student’s academic advisor.

d. How often do students meet with their mentors/advisors throughout the semester? Does your program have a policy on this? Do you think the current frequency is optimal?

Although we do not have a formal meeting requirement, students and faculty tend to meet twice per semester and to correspond much more frequently. Students cannot register for coursework without approval from the EO or faculty advisor, and this ensures some degree of regular contact. During moments when regular contact is crucial, such as in the 6 month period prior to the 2nd exam and during the dissertation write-up phase, meetings are more frequent. Each subfield also meets regularly (at least once a year) to discuss student progress; this frequently prompts additional meetings between advisors and advisees.

e. Does advising/mentoring continue when students select a supervisor for their dissertation/capstone/thesis project? Or does the supervisor take on the role of mentor/advisor?
In anthropology, dissertation supervisors are advisors; mentoring and advocacy on behalf of the student is done as well by the EO, APO, 2nd exam and dissertation committee faculty, alumni mentors, and other students.

f. What system do you have in place to ensure that advisors/mentors (and students generally) are aware of what is expected of an advisor/mentor, and of academic requirements and regulations?

The program has a handbook that explains in detail the advisor/advisee relationship, academic requirements, and the path to degree for all students in all four subfields. This is supplemented by regular meetings held by the EO for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year students and for students returning from the field and beginning dissertation write-up. Additional support for students in the program is found in our Commons pages, where students can access best-practices information regarding certain milestones in the program: first exam, 2nd exam, proposal writing, fieldwork, write up, etc.

Also, the faculty meet no fewer than once per academic year to assess student progress. These meetings happen by subfield. The archaeology subfield does not hold these meetings routinely.

g. What system do you have in place to ensure that advisors/mentors (and students generally) are aware of resources and support services?

The APO regularly circulates announcements about resources and support services to our program listserv, which reaches all faculty and students.

h. Do you have systematic procedures in place for student and advisor/mentor reports on student progress?

Yes, we have an annual review procedure (described above) for all students except those in archaeology.

i. Do you have annual (or semester) evaluations of student progress, and how is this administered? By individual mentors/advisors, or a specific tasked committee? How is feedback communicated to students?

Annual review feedback is provided by the EO for students in the cultural subfield and by the subfield coordinators in the other subfields. In addition, faculty advisors also provide more details feedback.

j. Do you have separate teaching mentors? Faculty or students? How are these assigned?

Yes, teaching is integrated into professional development for 3 of the 4 subfields (cultural, ling. anth. and bio/physical) and one faculty member from each subfield acts as teaching mentor each year. Many students also receive teaching mentoring from their advisors and thorough the colleges where they teach.
k. How are your policies on mentoring/advising made available to students and faculty (e.g., are they made available in your student handbook or online)? Are such policies discussed at orientation?

Student handbook plus these issues are discussed in detail during orientation for new students.

Closing the Loop

The Anthropology Program plans to take the following steps to improve the advisement/mentoring system, based on information collected here.

- The Archaeology program will be encouraged to hold annual student progress meetings (May 2020);
- We will create a formal student mentoring program for all students across the 4 subfields (Fall 2020);
- We will encourage more students to participate in the alumni mentoring program (Fall 2020); and
- We will encourage all faculty and students to familiarize themselves with the advisement section of the Program Handbook (Fall 2020).