

Guidelines for Faculty Advisors

Please review the guidelines below and refer to the [PiN Student Handbook](#) on our website for more information. Don't hesitate to reach out to us anytime with questions or concerns; we're here to support our faculty as well as our students!

Rotations & Joining a Lab

Rotations are generally 8-12 weeks long. The start date is determined by you and your student, but generally students do rotations in the fall (Sep-Dec), the winter (Jan - Mar), the spring (Apr-Jun), or the summer (Jun-Aug). PiN requires students to complete at least two rotations before joining a lab and encourages students to explore new research areas and techniques. **The purpose of rotations is not to produce data; it's to allow the student and the lab to get to know each other in order to determine if they are a good fit.**

We understand that planning rotations can be a complicated process with multiple moving parts for both faculty and students, and **we encourage you to engage in open, honest communication throughout the process so that our students can make empowered, informed decisions as they plan rotations and choose a lab for their thesis work.** In particular, please let students know upfront, before agreeing on a rotation, if you may be accepting more rotation students than you have places available for dissertation students in your lab.

At the end of each rotation, **you must complete a rotation evaluation form in [my.harvard](#), and you should conduct an exit interview. Please be honest with students about whether or not they have an offer to join your lab, and if they don't have an offer, please discuss why you've reached that decision.**

PiN requires students to finalize their lab decision and submit a dissertation advisor declaration (DAD) form in [my.harvard](#) by **July 1**, at the end of their G1 year, or within two weeks of completing their final rotation if they finish rotating early. If a student rotates in your lab in the fall, winter, or spring, you must notify them by June 1 at the latest if they have an offer to join. If you offer a student a position in your lab, please do not expect them to decide immediately - most need time to consider - and please keep the offer open until you know whether they have decided to accept your offer or join a different lab.

PQE

PiN students are required to complete their Preliminary Qualifying Exam by March 31 of their second year (G2). You can review PQE requirements and procedures on the PiN website [here](#). The PiN PQE comprises a written proposal **based on the thesis work planned** and an oral exam focused on the written proposal. As such, **you can and should discuss the project**

in depth with your student. You can and should plan to discuss who should be on the committee, read the proposal, and listen to the presentation. You can be present as a silent participant at the PQE. Please note **preliminary data are NOT required.**

DAC Meetings

Once your student has passed the PQE, they are required to form a Dissertation Advisory Committee (DAC) and to **meet with their DAC every 9 months through the end of their G5 year and every 6 months thereafter**, unless the committee recommends meeting more frequently. You do not have the authority to extend the deadline for any DAC meeting; extensions may be granted only by the DAC chair or by the PiN faculty directors. **Not having enough data is not a reason for postponing a meeting.**

Final DAC Meeting & Permission to Write

You may have heard the phrase “getting your box checked.” When the DAC determines that a student has completed enough work for a dissertation, they check a box on the DAC report indicating that the student has permission to start writing up their results. Effective January 1, 2025, the **DAC should determine whether or not to check the box at a final DAC meeting, with all committee members and the PI present, during which the student presents their results organized into figures and outlines the logic they plan to follow in the main data chapter of their thesis.** The figures do not have to be completely polished for the meeting but should nonetheless provide a clear, logical exposition for how the data will be presented in the thesis. The DAC should check the box only if they determine **the results are ready to be written up for a peer-reviewed journal, including all essential controls, as if the student were writing up a bioRxiv manuscript.**

Dissertation & Defense

DMS requires students to defend within 6 months of getting their box checked. **PiN does not require students to publish a paper before graduation, but the work presented in the thesis should be *publishable*.** Please refer to the [DMS Dissertation & Defense](#) resources for more information regarding procedures and timelines.

Advising

PiN students are assigned to a member of the Student Advisory Committee when they matriculate. Their SAC advisor helps them plan rotations, choose a thesis lab, prepare for the PQE (administratively), and plan elective courses. SAC advisors are not scientific advisors; they may not serve on their advisees’ DAC or exam committees. SAC advisors meet with their students three times in the first year, twice in the second year, and at least once every year from the third year through defense to discuss IDPs and any other issues of concern to their students.

Elective Courses

PiN students are required to complete a minimum of four quarters of elective courses (equivalent to two full-semester courses), including one advanced quantitative quarter course. Students are required to complete only two quarters by the end of the G2 year, and therefore it is the expectation that many students will continue to take coursework beyond the G2 year. The electives requirement was designed in recognition of the fact that students can benefit from coursework taken throughout graduate school, as their dissertation project

and scientific interests mature and/or go in new directions. We ask that you be accommodating to students as they fulfill their electives requirement and supportive when students identify coursework beyond the stated requirement that would be in their interest to complete.

Teaching & Outside Activities

PiN strongly encourages students to pursue professional development opportunities beyond lab work throughout their enrollment in the program. This includes serving as a teaching fellow (TF) in Harvard courses. **PiN does not have a formal teaching requirement for graduate students; however, we require that PIs allow students to TF as long as they are in good academic standing and have passed their PQE.** There is never a “good” or “bad” time in a student’s project to engage in professional development, so we ask that you allow students flexibility to engage in activities outside lab that are critical to their career training.

Internships

PiN considers internships to be an integral part of a student’s educational experience and career development and encourages students to make the most of our internship program. PiN students are governed by the [DMS internship guidelines](#). In addition, PiN requires students who have planned an internship to schedule a special meeting with their DAC before their internship begins to outline a clear plan for completing their thesis work after they return (which they should include as an addendum to the [DMS Internship Approval Form](#) before their DAC chair and the program director sign the form).

Vacation Policy

Student workers shall not be required to work on University holidays or during University recess and are entitled to an additional 1 personal day per semester and 10 vacation days per year. Please see Articles 26 & 27 of the current [HGSU-UAW contract](#) with the University for details.

Scientific Presentations, Meetings & Publications

It is important that students be given the opportunity to present their work. We ask that you ensure your PiN students regularly present their data at local events such as lab meetings, departmental seminars, etc. In addition, it is important to enable your students to attend and present at national meetings. While PiN does not require students to publish in order to defend, we expect most students will publish at least one paper, and we encourage all students to submit at least one manuscript to BioRxiv before they graduate.

Mental Health, Workplace Conduct & Other Issues

Graduate students may experience a variety of mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, insomnia, etc, that could result in inappropriate behavior in the lab, not showing up regularly for work, or failing to make adequate progress. Harvard has a full range of resources available to help students and their advisors. If you notice your PiN student struggling, please reach out to us. We can help you and your student find the right resources at Harvard.

Individual Development Plans (IDPs)

In accordance with NIH guidelines, PiN requires students to complete an IDP every year. The IDP is designed to help students start thinking about career development early in graduate school, and to become aware of their strengths and weaknesses as scientists. PiN does not ask the student to discuss the IDP with their thesis advisor; rather, the student's SAC advisor goes through the IDP with the student each year in the summer.

Professional Conduct of Faculty Members

Harvard University is committed to maintaining an environment free from abusive and/or intimidating behavior, defined as: harmful mistreatment by words or actions that humiliate, degrade, demean, intimidate, and/or threaten an individual or group. PIs are expected to display professional conduct and civil behavior with all colleagues, and especially in their interactions with graduate students and other trainees. Behavior that violates the University's professional conduct policy may include, but is not limited to:

- Abusive expression (including spoken, written, recorded, visual, digital, or nonverbal) directed at another person in the workplace, such as derogatory remarks or epithets that are outside the range of commonly accepted expressions of disagreement, disapproval, or critique in an academic culture and professional setting that respects free expression
- Unwarranted physical contact or intimidating gestures
- Conspicuous and unwarranted exclusion or isolation having the effect of harming another person's reputation in the workplace and hindering another person's work
- Sabotaging or threatening to sabotage another person's work or career advancement
- Abuse of authority, such as using inappropriate threats or retaliation in the exercise of authority, supervision, or guidance, or impeding or attempting to impede another person from exercising rights under any of Harvard's policies or procedures

Additional information on policies and guidelines can be found at <https://hms.harvard.edu/departments/ombuds-office/policies-guidelines> (HMS affiliates) and through your home institutions.