

Note on Ph.D. advising

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I am happy to advise students who demonstrate seriousness and commitment to research in areas in which I am qualified to advise them. Although the meaning of that sentence may be clear, it is very likely that it is worth emphasizing what I expect, concretely, of Ph.D. students who I advise.

1. I am happy to advise students whose research is in public economics. This categorization is, of course, rather limiting. There may be students whose official fields are different (e.g. industrial organization, labor) who work on topics very much related to those of my interest and expertise. The takeaway is that I will prioritize students whose research will most benefit from my advice.
2. Set up an appointment during my office hours using the scheduling link on my website. Depending on whether I am a formal advisor of yours or not and depending on your research area, I will allocate more or less time to our meeting and I will accept to meet more or less frequently. The more prepared you come to our meetings (see point 3), the more productive our meetings will be.
3. Come prepared to meetings. The best approach is to write up a page or two on the ideas you would like to discuss. The notes need not be exhaustive, but they often help to keep the meeting focused. Have these notes printed out (if we meet in person) or sent over email in advance.
4. Work hard between meetings. If I make a concrete suggestion, then I expect you to follow that suggestion, or at least attempt to do so (I understand that not all of my suggestions will be feasible), before requesting another meeting. At the beginning of the following meeting, remind me what my suggestion was and how implementing it went.
5. If you think that you may want me to be a formal advisor of yours – i.e. to be on your dissertation committee or write letters for recommendation for you, take the Ph.D. classes in public economics. Similarly, if you want me to be your formal advisor, attend the Public Economics Workshop and the Applications Seminar. If you are doing research in public, you should be attending these seminars and workshops on a regular basis. You should also be a regular attendee of other seminars relevant to your research. During these seminars and workshops, you learn where the frontier is in your field and how to communicate research effectively.
6. Be judicious in asking me to read drafts of your papers as reading drafts is time-consuming. It is part of the responsibility of a formal advisor to read drafts of the job market paper but I ask that you be respectful of my time. I will not be enthusiastic about reading a paper that a student has clearly put little time into, or the third or fourth draft of a paper that has only changed marginally since the last time I read it.

These notes are not to discourage you from requesting to meet me. It is just that I find advising relationships are more successful when the expectations are established at the outset. I look forward to hearing about your research!

¹This note is a slight adaptation of the helpful note from Eric Verhoogen.