

Div III Best Practices for Faculty

Meet soon after the filing deadline to clarify roles and level of engagement of chair and member, set meeting times for the semester, and help the student focus their proposal ideas and shape the scope of project into something doable within two semesters.

Make clear what you will expect to see by the end of the first semester to be able to confirm satisfactory progress: typically the outline and goals of the project, and a significant piece of work such as draft of a chapter or equivalent creative writing, film footage, programming code, studio artwork, or documented research for theater production.

Emphasize the importance of making and keeping to a schedule for handing in work, working backwards from due dates, and turn-around windows that allow for faculty review. Specify the format you would like to receive work in, and how many days before the next scheduled meeting you will need to receive it.

Keeping in mind that students have not engaged in a year-long independent project before and that students differ in the level and kind of support they need, you might ask students what they think might be difficult aspects for them and where they anticipate needing help.

Insist that your students work with a research librarian on gathering relevant sources. Encourage students to seek help from the Writing Center, with someone in the Wellness or Counseling Centers for stress and anxiety concerns, or with the Director of Accessibility about access, accommodations and support.

Encourage students to ask for clarification and support with any aspect of the Division III process: how to locate materials; clarification of concepts or processes; or needing help when stuck or discouraged, unsure about how to proceed with next steps or feeling they've lost sight of the project as a whole. Frequent offers of help from faculty can help normalize these concerns as typical places people get stuck when working on a big project, and help prevent students from falling out of communication (or worse, completely disappearing) when they don't know what to do next.

If it becomes apparent that a student may not be able to finish by the intended completion date, be sure to share your concern with the student and contact CASA as soon as possible. Often a meeting in CASA with the student and committee can help clarify problem areas and get the project moving forward again.

The goal of Division III is to allow each student to design and carry out a project they are capable of. The level of acceptable work is variable so it may be helpful to consult with colleagues in similar areas, or speak with the Division III dean in CASA.