AOSC Graduate Advising

Overview
All students should have an Advisor. In some cases students will have both a Research Advisor and an Academic Advisor. In those cases the latter is a regular member of the Academic faculty. Your relationship with your Advisor(s) shares aspects of the relationship found in an apprentice/employer system. You will likely get involved in their research program. They, in turn, will help you: choose courses, maintain funding if needed, develop a research topic(s), follow the University rules, help with job searches, and in other ways ease/guide your progress.

You can change Advisors anytime if you find that your current Advisor is not working out. If you are contemplating switching Advisors I suggest 1) ensuring continuity of your funding with your new Advisor, and 2) arranging your transition in a way that is minimally disruptive to your current Advisor.

Student support
Students have a variety of different funding mechanisms. Many students in AOSC are funded on Graduate Assistantships (GAs). The rules and expectations for GAs are given here: www.gradschool.umd.edu/funding/assistantship-information. Most GAs are funded by grants or contracts to individual faculty. These grants or contracts may come with obligations and in some cases, for some PIs, this means that they will expect the students funded by the GAs to produce certain kinds of work at a certain minimum rate. I encourage you to have a conversation with your Advisor early in your relationship regarding his/her expectations in order to prevent misunderstandings.

In case of trouble
Your Advisor is the first person you should turn to in case of a significant problem. If your discussion with your Advisor does not resolve the problem you should come and talk with the Graduate Director (currently Dalin Zhang). If the problem is still not resolved you should make an appointment to see the Department Chair (currently Jim Carton). Please follow this order of contact, but please do not leave unresolved problems. We are here to help!

In addition to the Department, the University has an Ombudsperson for graduate studies (gradschool.umd.edu/about-us/ombuds-office). This individual provides 'neutral territory' between the student and the University in order to provide some independent guidance. Typically this office handles about 200 grad student issues a year ranging from advising issues through complaints of harassment, etc. You also have access to the UMD Graduate Legal Aid Office, which provides free legal advice, referrals, and assistance (http://umddepartments.orgsync.com/org/gradlegalaid/home).

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1 This document was created because I could not find a clear statement about graduate advising expectations on the UMD websites. The opinions expressed are my own. -- JAC