

AAAL Ethics Guidelines

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1. Overview

The American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL) Ethics Guidelines are intended as a frame of reference endorsed by AAAL to provide guidance on ethical practice toward and among graduate students as they prepare for professional and academic careers. Building on AAAL's 2016 *Recommendations on Good Practice in Applied Linguistics* report and while also acknowledging that undergraduate students conduct research, we focus specifically on graduate students (emerging scholars), who inhabit an acutely vulnerable space because they are often faced with challenges and constraints in the multiple, and sometimes competing, roles of students, teachers, assistants, and researchers. In addition, it is important that we recognize that graduate students have many insights to share, have a stake in the wellbeing of their academic institutions and the field more broadly, and bring a fresh, often critical, perspective to the work of more seasoned applied linguists.

One dimension that warrants ethical attention is the process by which graduate students are socialized into the academic community, which requires designing, conducting, writing-up, and disseminating research, often in close collaboration with a faculty member. Another dimension is teaching, and a third dimension is service work that often entails making contributions to academic institutions, the field of applied linguistics, and the wider community. In all three aspects, the mentor-student relationship is sustained over a significant period of time, particularly in the case of PhD students. How the relationship unfolds between a faculty member and graduate student can be mutually beneficial in many cases and tenuous in others. Thus, while acknowledging that, institutionally, the faculty-student relationship is an inherently unequal one, AAAL “strive(s) for reciprocal relations” (CCCC, 2015), and has created a set of guidelines that aims to facilitate ethical, constructive, and transparent relations among faculty and students. To facilitate such relations, our proposed guidelines suggest how ethical practices can be enacted in the areas of research, teaching, and service when working with graduate students. We also affirm that students must be respected regardless of their race, ethnicity, culture, national

origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, religion, language(s), physical (dis)ability, health conditions, and socioeconomic status.

The first aim of this document is to present an understanding of what constitutes ethical conduct when collaborating on research projects with graduate students. We consider measures that can be undertaken as faculty and students move through the design, data collection and analysis, and dissemination phases of research.

Our second aim is to establish ethical criteria with respect to graduate education. We offer suggestions for the planning and implementation of formal and informal instruction and the establishment of transparent policies regarding opportunities for teaching by graduate students, and how they are distributed or determined. We also underline the significance of engaging in socially inclusive pedagogical practices in our work with the next generation of teacher-scholars.

Our third aim is to create a document that encourages graduate students to serve their institutions, their peers, the field of applied linguistics, and the greater intellectual and social community (i.e., the public). Fostering this spirit of service also entails creating opportunities for students to take up volunteer positions to address real world problems both within our own academic institutions and beyond.

We want to emphasize that the present guidelines are strictly advisory and, given the evolving nature of ethical practices in applied linguistics, require continual updates and modifications. Furthermore, because what constitutes ethical practices differs across countries, institutions, cultures, and communities (De Costa, 2016), we recommend that members contextualize and interpret our recommendations in relation to their own professional contexts.

Finally, we recognize that the best way to put these guidelines into practice is for members of AAAL to model these recommended practices in their daily professional lives to observe and emulate in their current and future careers as faculty researchers, mentors, administrators, and teachers who carry out key responsibilities within and outside the classroom.

Research

2a. Ethics in Research

- Faculty researchers should recognize that mentoring graduate students to be ethical researchers is an important component of graduate student advising and should not rely solely on the ethical education received via IRB certification, a few lessons in a research methods course, or through informal interactions (Sterling, Winke, & Gass, 2015).
- Researchers should maintain an open mind about approaches to applied linguistics that may differ from their own (Davies, 2008).
- Researchers should provide direction to graduate students; they should respect their students' scholarly interests and should not exploit students for their own personal or professional ends (MLA, 1992).
- Researchers should at no time coerce their students (or others) into participating as research subjects in any studies they are carrying out.
- Researchers should, at all times, carefully manage actual and perceived conflicts of interest, particularly in regard to their graduate students and research participants.
- Researchers should recognize that because the academic socialization process may continue well after the submission of the dissertation/thesis, former students should be provided with ongoing supported if needed.
- To avoid disagreements about which authors/co-researchers should get credit and in what order their names should be listed in co-authored publications, researchers should talk about credit for authorship and the distribution of responsibilities at the beginning of a working relationship, in keeping with conventional institutional standards (Smith, 2003).
- Researchers should consult publishing guidelines provided by Institutional [Ethical] Review Board (IRB) protocols, the American Psychological Association (2010), journals such as *TESOL Quarterly* (Mahboob et al., 2016), and local/national research boards (e.g. the Swedish Research Council) that provide useful guidelines on authorship.

- Researchers should inform graduate students with whom they co-author that a designated “author” on a publication has legal privileges (e.g., copyright and possible royalties) and ethical obligations regarding the acceptable conduct, representation, and/or dissemination of findings from a study (CCCC, 2015) depending on the laws of the country governing the publisher.
- Researchers should include graduate students who contribute substantively to the conceptualization, design, execution, analysis, interpretation, and editing/writing of any reported research as co-authors. However, advisors should not expect automatic co-authorship on their students' work. (Smith, 2003)
- Researchers should be aware that data collected by a graduate student in the course of their own research should not be used by their advisors in subsequent presentations and publications without the student’s permission.

2b. Summary

This section addressed the ethical conduct of faculty researchers when mentoring and collaborating on research projects with students and other emerging scholars (e.g., postdocs). Researchers should be cognizant of needs, values, and cultures, and well informed about macro-level institutional ethical considerations and standards upheld by the broader applied linguistics profession. This knowledge should facilitate the design, data collection and analysis, and dissemination phases of research. We believe that the relationship between a researcher and an emerging scholar can grow and develop in mutually rewarding ways.

Teaching

3a. Ethics in Teaching

- Teachers should evaluate their students fairly (AERA, 2011; LSA, 2009).
- Teachers should create clear evaluation criteria, create relevant and transparent assessments, and provide students with sufficient and timely feedback on course assignments and larger projects such as graduating papers, MA theses, and PhD dissertations. Likewise, students should aim to make timely progress toward completion of program requirements (BAAL, 2016).
- Teachers should learn about how unintended bias and discrimination can influence their interactions with students and carefully work to avoid them (BAAL, 2016).
- Teachers should learn about and demonstrate respect for the cultural and linguistic practices of the students whom they teach, while also helping them gain control over academic practices valued in their new discourse communities.
- Teachers should develop a range of teaching and evaluation practices in order to accommodate various learning styles and diverse student backgrounds (BAAL, 2016).
- Teachers should be aware of procedures for ethically managing conflict in classrooms or cases of perceived or real academic misconduct, such as plagiarism.
- Teachers should teach within the boundaries of their competence and work to update and improve their knowledge (AERA, 2011).
- Teachers should practice intellectual honesty and acknowledge sources used in classroom teaching, following the same guidelines that they expect their students to adhere to (AAUP, 2009; AERA, 2011).
- Teachers should protect the confidentiality of student records and personal information, within the guidelines of their institution (AAUP, 2009; AERA, 2011).

- Teachers/mentors should be familiar with institutional Conflict of Interest policies that pertain to and generally preclude supervising or assessing the work of someone with whom they have a romantic, sexual, familial, or other close personal relationship, and should seek ways of managing any perceived or real conflicts (AERA, 2011; LSA, 2009).
- Teachers/mentors should take care to not exploit their students for their own personal or professional advantage and should work to avoid any potential conflict of interest (AERA, 2011; LSA, 2009).
- Teachers should respect students' privacy and take care to protect students from adverse effects when conducting research involving their students (AERA, 2011).
- Teachers/mentors should not allow intellectual or epistemological differences or personal conflicts with colleagues to impede their students' overall academic progress by interfering with students' access to and communications with these colleagues (AERA, 2011).
- Teachers/mentors have a special obligation to be available to advisees as they advance in their degrees, as they work on a thesis or dissertation, and enter the job market.
- Teachers/mentors should create opportunities for students to provide feedback on their teaching and mentoring in addition to regular course evaluations required by their institutions.
- Teachers/mentors should model and teach their students about the ethical dimensions of teaching (as well as research and service) and in performing a variety of academy-related activities; they should also provide guidance on addressing unethical behavior (AERA, 2011; LSA, 2009).
- Teachers should, to the extent possible, seek to prepare advanced research students well to teach, conduct research, provide service, and take on positions of leadership in the applied linguistics profession.
- Teachers/mentors and program administrators should be conscientious in delegating responsibilities and opportunities to their students and mentees, basing their decisions on what their students can reasonably be expected to

perform given their training and/or experience and existing commitments and time constraints (AERA, 2011).

- Teachers/mentors should promote collegiality and collaboration, on the one hand, and autonomy and independence, on the other hand, as students progress towards their degree and prepare to become applied linguistics professionals and scholars (Brown & Kraeger, 1985; Weidman et al., 2001).

3b. Summary

This section addressed the role of applied linguists as teachers and mentors in graduate programs. We believe that teachers should strive to treat all of their students impartially and with respect, and that graduate students should do the same with their peers and professors. They should model ethical teaching practices such as avoiding any appearance of (or actual) academic misconduct or conflicts of interest themselves and addressing situations according to institutional procedures when standards are breached. Further, we believe that in their roles as mentors, teachers should take responsibility for providing sufficient guidance to their student mentees while also directing these students to take on ever greater challenges in order to develop independent professional identities and abilities.

Service

4a. Ethics in Service

- Program administrators and faculty members should encourage graduate students to serve on program-, department-, and university-based committees (e.g., serving on an organizing committee for a graduate student symposium, a curriculum review committee, and a faculty search committee). Experienced members, for their part, should model participation, procedures, and policies as a form of professional socialization for junior colleagues and students (AAAL, 2015).
- AAAL, similarly, should strive to include graduate students on its committees as a form of mentoring and (reciprocal) knowledge sharing and mobilization
- Departments should develop policies that enable and reward students' participation on such committees.
- Academic units and programs should consider creating graduate student service awards or other recognition events or media dispatches (in newsletters or social media) to promote and recognize exemplary service contributions to the unit, university, and wider community (AAAL, 2015).
- Departments should also demonstrate an ethic of fairness in distributing key service opportunities to a cross-section of students.
- Mentors should create opportunities for capable and willing graduate students to assume leadership roles (e.g., becoming a lead Teaching Assistant, graduate student conference organizer, peer mentor) so that they can serve as mentors for their own peers.
- Universities and graduate programs should include students in efforts to openly engage the community.
- Mentors should demonstrate how resources and events can be created for the local community and involve students in designing and implementing outreach programs (AAAL, 2015).

- Mentors should create opportunities for graduate students to serve in roles as editorial assistants in publication projects and as conference proposal and journal article reviewers as well as advise them of the mechanisms of such review processes (AAAL, 2015).
- Mentors should prepare graduates to engage in public fora in order to educate and protect the wider community against mistruths and misconceptions about linguistic issues affecting society.
- Mentors and departments should not exploit students' engagements in service activities or create an imbalance between service and (other) academic activities, and should also model balanced participation in the typical trio of research, teaching, and service in their own careers.
- Mentors should model good (ethical) citizenship in terms of service contributions
- Students should be compensated for major service activities (in terms of academic credits or honoraria) in addition to being recognized for their work (BAAL, 2016).

4b. Summary

This section addressed the collective responsibilities that mentors, universities, and professional organizations have in developing citizen scholars. We believe that these scholars will ultimately be able to better serve their respective academic institutions, communities and the field of applied linguistics if opportunities are created for them to assume leadership roles in the aforementioned spheres. To recognize their professional service, we also believe that students should be duly compensated and recognized for their contributions.

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