

Tips for a good mentoring relationship

Think intentionally about what you want from your degree

You will find it helpful to think through why you are here, what you want to achieve, and how your advisor and other individuals and sources can help you achieve your educational and professional goals.

Have open and direct communication

Begin your graduate career with open and direct communication with your advisor and thesis/dissertation committee (once established) about your research interests and career goals. This will set the stage for continuous advice that will help you throughout your career.

Establish Clear Expectations

Discuss with your advisor his/her expectations and how you can achieve your goals. Many students nationally have started developing Individual Development Plans (IDP's) in graduate school. An IDP allows you to assess your current skills, competencies and interests and make a plan for developing the academic and professional skills and competencies you need to meet your short and long term goals. IDPs are valuable tools for measuring your progress and recording your accomplishments. It is important to discuss your IDP with your advisor and committee throughout your graduate program. They can help provide you with opportunities to meet your goals and help you refine your goals as they change or become more focused.

Student Responsibilities

Review the lists of responsibilities below and discuss with your advisor any questions you may have regarding them. The goal is for you to take ownership over your graduate training and understand how your advisor can help you reach your goals.

- recognize that you bear the primary responsibility for the successful completion of your degree;
- be proactive about communicating with your advisor and thesis committee, understanding that communication is a two-way endeavor;
- be considerate of other time constraints imposed on faculty and staff, including competing demands;
- meet regularly with your advisor and provide her/him with updates on the results of your activities and research progress;
- attend and participate in research group meetings and seminars; keep up with original literature in your field;
- discuss policies on preparing manuscripts, authorship and attendance at professional meetings with your advisor when you start your research program;
- work with your research advisor to develop a thesis/dissertation project and select a thesis/dissertation committee;

- discuss work hours, sick leave, and vacation so that the policies are clear between yourself and your advisor; provide your advisor with advanced notice of planned absences;
- exercise the highest ethical standards in all aspects of your research (including but not limited to data collection, storage, analysis, and communication of research results);
- take an active role in identifying and pursuing professional development opportunities;
- clearly communicate with your advisor(s) regarding your career preferences;
- be proactive about improving your research skills, including written and oral presentation skills;
- seek mentoring and support resources beyond your faculty or research scientist advisor(s), including other faculty members, peers, and organizations;
- always act in an ethical, professional, and courteous manner toward other students, staff, and faculty;
- raise concerns or submit complaints through appropriate channels and only in good faith;
- know the policies governing graduate studies in the department and the graduate school and take responsibility for meeting departmental, school, and graduate school deadlines;
- complete all tasks assigned by the department and/or school, including those associated with assistantship positions, such as teaching, grading, and other assistantship responsibilities; provide the faculty teaching any course for which you are a TA with advanced notice of any planned absences and take responsibility for finding a replacement.

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Advisor and Co-Advisor Responsibilities

- be committed to your student's education and development as a future member of the scientific community
- set clear and reasonable expectations and goals for students regarding their academic performance and research progress
- communicate with your student on an ongoing basis and meet regularly in order to provide feedback on progress and advice;
- advise graduate students on the selection of an appropriate thesis/dissertation topic and assist them in selecting a thesis/dissertation committee;
- allow your student to take ownership of their research and encourage collaboration within and outside your research group;
- advise graduate students on timelines and expectations for submitting a thesis/dissertation proposal and committee selection, so that sufficient time is allowed for input from advisor and student peers;
- provide students with training and oversight in all relevant aspects of research, including the design of research projects, the development of oral and written

communication, grant preparation as appropriate, and the use of rigorous research techniques;

- encourage participation in professional meetings and try to secure funding for such activities;
- encourage publication of research by your student and provide clear criteria for authorship at the beginning of all collaborative projects;
- read and review journal manuscripts or thesis chapters in a timely manner for both students you supervise and those for which you are a committee member;
- discuss plagiarism with your students who are involved in research—what plagiarism is and how to properly cite the work of others, including copyright and self-plagiarism;
- avoid placing pressure on students to produce results that support particular hypotheses;
- provide career advice, offer help with interview and application preparation, and write letters of recommendation in a timely manner;
- schedule meetings to discuss topics other than research, such as professional development, career objectives and opportunities, workplace climate, laboratory personnel relations, etc.;
- acknowledge that some students will pursue careers outside of academia and/or outside their research discipline and assist them in achieving their chosen career goals;
- be a role model by acting in an ethical, professional, and courteous manner toward other students, staff, and faculty;
- be sensitive to the power imbalance in the student–advisor relationship;
- cooperate with any investigation stemming from a complaint, preserve confidentiality to the extent possible, avoid retaliation against whomever complained or was involved in the investigation, and only file complaints in good faith.
- avoid assigning duties or activities that are outside students' academic/professional responsibilities;
- for teaching assistantship positions, provide clear instruction at the start of the semester for particular tasks that require focused effort during key parts of the semester so that time can be allotted; make sure that time will not exceed 20 hrs/week;
- for research assistantships, generate a list of expectations for the semester and agree upon these, making sure that time will not exceed 20 hrs/week, and with the understanding that the tasks assigned will contribute to the professional training of the student and that the tasks will be meaningful to the student's educational experience;
- discuss policies and expectations for work hours, vacation time, and health contingencies;
- respect students' needs to allocate their time among competing demands while maintaining timely progress toward their degree.