

An Invitation to Establish Shared Expectations Between Mentors and Mentees

The relationship between a faculty mentor and graduate student is critical to the success of both individuals. A recent study published in [*Nature Biotechnology*](https://www.nature.com/articles/nbt.4089) investigated the influence of that relationship on the wellbeing of graduate students, and found that stronger, more supportive and more positive mentoring relationships between graduate students and their PI/advisors was related with lower levels of anxiety and depression. A key component to the development of a positive and supportive relationship between advisors and students and a positive climate among a research group is the establishment of shared expectations.

All faculty advisors and graduate students are encouraged to hold conversations, both individually, as research groups where relevant, and as programs, to establish shared expectations for students, the mentors, and the departments.

The best practice is to treat these as ongoing conversations that are reviewed periodically, especially after key milestones are achieved when the needs and expectations may change. Typical times may include:

Examples of topics to discuss include:

**Academic Requirements**

* Learn about the academic requirements to obtain the degree
  + (Consult your Program Handbook, The Graduate School’s [Bulletin of Information](https://graduateschool.nd.edu/policies-forms/forms-policies-procedures/) and The Graduate School’s [Academic Code](https://graduateschool.nd.edu/policies-forms/forms-policies-procedures/)
* List any key points or clarifications to discuss together:
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* Identify the milestones that your graduate program requires you to meet in order to maintain satisfactory progress toward the degree. Note the key milestones across your 5 year PhD program or 1-3 year Master’s program here.
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* Outline the program’s teaching opportunities / requirements
* Discuss how your graduate program assesses progress
* Determine the program’s process and timeline for periodic reviews
* Discuss the role of the mentor vs the role of the DGS and the role of other faculty in the program. What information, feedback, and guidance should you expect from each source?
* Talk about how, and how often, feedback should be sought / provided
* Identify whether there is an interdisciplinary nature to the research focus

**Legal Requirements**

* Discuss how [FERPA](https://registrar.nd.edu/students/ferpa.php) requirements are adhered to
* Learn about how appropriate [accommodations for students with disabilities](https://sarabeadisabilityservices.nd.edu/) are identified and provided (Note: Disabilities can be both physical and mental)
* Review what is required as a mandatory reporter for [Title IX](https://titleix.nd.edu/)
* Learn about the [resources that are available](https://titleix.nd.edu/support-resources/) to support mandatory reporters, potential complainants and respondents

**Department Culture / Lab Culture**

* Talk about the typical culture within the discipline, or the specific research group
  + Learn about typical work hours (start, stop, total, safe to work alone, weekends, holidays, etc.)
  + Discuss time off for vacation and other leaves
  + Establish the frequency of mentor – mentee meetings
  + Ask about preferred modes of communication and typical response times
  + Determine the lead time for requested feedback
  + Discuss evaluation criteria and frequency for research performance
  + Learn the policy governing authorship order in the discipline
  + Establish data retention and ownership practices
  + Review the requirements for [responsible conduct of research](https://research.nd.edu/our-services/compliance/responsible-conduct/)
  + Learn how the contributions of appropriate others are acknowledged in the work
  + Determine what work space is available to grad students
  + Determine what meeting space is available / appropriate for those teaching to meet with students
  + Discuss what behavior is expected / prohibited to ensure fair, respectful, and appropriate [treatment of all persons](https://equity.nd.edu/)

**Professional Development**

* Learn what professional skills are expected of those in the discipline (in addition to discussing this with mentors, consider making an appointment with a [Grad Career Services Consultant](https://gradcareers.nd.edu/contact-us/))
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* Discuss what intellectual and [professional development activities](https://graduateschool.nd.edu/graduate-training/) beyond the disciplinary academics should be pursued
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* Identify opportunities for internships or other enrichment experiences or additional training
* Talk about how the balance between research / academic responsibilities, extra-curricular activities, and personal time? is maintained to ensure overall wellness
* Identify resources available to support all aspects of wellness.
* Discuss how professional networks can be developed and maintained, both within Notre Dame, and across external networks
* Learn how the degree / training is best framed for different job opportunities across various career paths

**Financial Wellness**

* Review the financial expenses associated with the degree program, and the resources available to support those expenses
  + [University imposed fees](https://financialaid.nd.edu/graduate-students/planning/graduate-school-programs/)
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  + Research supplies and equipment
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  + Publication expenses
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  + Research travel expenses ([Graduate School Resource](https://graduateschool.nd.edu/graduate-training/research-communication/gspda/))
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  + Conference presentation expenses ([Graduate School Resource](https://graduateschool.nd.edu/graduate-training/research-communication/gspda/)) ([GSU Resource](https://gsu.nd.edu/student-resources/gsu-conference-presentation-grant/))
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  + Supplemental training expenses ([Graduate School Resource](https://graduateschool.nd.edu/graduate-training/research-communication/gspda/))
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**Other Resources:**

Evans, T. M., Bira, L., Gastelum, J. B., Weiss, L. T., & Vanderford, N. L. (2018). Evidence for a mental health crisis in graduate education. *Nature Biotechnology 36*, 282–284

<https://www.nature.com/articles/nbt.4089>

Guidelines for Good Practices in Graduate Education, Rice University

<https://graduate.rice.edu/goodpractices>

Graduate Education Expectations, Northwestern University

<http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/documents/campus-life/graduate-expectations-Nov-2011.pdf>

How to Get the Mentoring You Want: A Guide for Graduate Students, Rackham Graduate School, University of Michigan

<http://www.rackham.umich.edu/downloads/publications/mentoring.pdf>

*Great mentoring in Graduate School: A quick start for protégés*. Council of Graduate Schools: Occasional Paper Series, Number 4, September 2016. (Lunsford & Baker)

<http://cgsnet.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/CGS_OPS_Mentoring2016.pdf>

Checklist of mentoring behaviors (Lunsford & Baker, 2016).

<http://cgsnet.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/CGS_OPS_Mentoring2016.pdf> -See p. 7.

M*entoring Guide - A Guide for Mentor*; includes: Key Mentoring Skills;   
Stages of Mentoring; Building the Relationship; Ending the Formal Relationship; Best Practices

<http://www.rackham.umich.edu/downloads/more-mentoring-guide-for-mentors.pdf>  
  
Stages of Mentoring:

<https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/mentoring-graduate-students/#stages>

University of Nebraska-Lincoln: series of worksheets to guide mentor expectations  
<http://www.unl.edu/mentoring/mentoring-resources>

Duke: *Difficult Conversations with Your Advisor*  
<http://duke-advisee-tips.weebly.com/difficult-conversations-with-your-adviser.html>  
  
APA:*Navigating the Power Differential (prof - student power dynamics*; seeking outside help)  
<http://www.apa.org/gradpsych/2016/01/power-differential.aspx>

Stanford: *Communicating Effectively with Your Advisor*  
<https://vpge.stanford.edu/events/programs/communicating-effectively-your>  
  
MI State: *Conflict Resolution*  
<https://careersuccess.msu.edu/conflict-resolution>

*Three Steps To Communicating Effectively With Your PhD Supervisor; Making It Easy for Your Professor to Support You*  
<http://www.nextscientist.com/communicating-effectively-phd-supervisor/>  
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