

Biological Sciences Mentor-Mentee Expectations

The purpose of this document is to encourage a conversation between a graduate student mentee and their mentor about expectations. It is not a contract. Ideally, this conversation would happen before or during the GAs first semester.

Expectations of Mentors:

1. Ensure a safe, respectful, and inclusive working environment.
2. Ensure that students are trained to uphold the necessary standards of research integrity and ethics and ensure their activities are in compliance with federal and state regulatory requirements.
3. Ensure that students receive relevant and up-to-date safety training.
4. Clearly define expectations for authorship, inventorship and intellectual property (IP) ownership. Ownership of copyright is governed by Board of Trustees (BOT) Policy 210.1 and BOT Policy 210.2. Essentially the University of Arkansas owns the IP.
5. Be familiar with graduate school and graduate program (e.g., BIOL, CEMB, ENDY, SPAC, STAN) policies and requirements for graduate students, including visa rules and requirements for international students.
6. Provide evaluations of the students' research work as their *research supervisor*. Graduate student academic progress forms must be completed by the student and mentor annually and are a good place to provide the student feedback on their progress towards a degree.
7. Document graduate student progress and notify the student if they are making inadequate progress towards their degree as frequently as necessary. Consider including the area of concern in their progress, options that can remedy the situation, and a timeline to address the concern in these communications. It is recommended that such communications be documented in a letter or email.
8. Guide and support graduate researchers through all stages of their degree.
9. Provide access to the facilities and resources needed to complete their degree.
10. Assist in developing graduate student research topics, questions/hypotheses, methods, and milestones necessary for successful thesis completion.
11. Provide constructive feedback and help during preparation of presentations (e.g. talks and posters), manuscript, and thesis or dissertation drafts; agree to timelines for receiving and providing feedback on these items.
12. Recognize that graduate students have diverse professional goals including non-academic careers, encourage and support students to take advantage of professional development opportunities (e.g., conferences and workshops).
13. Agree to a schedule of regular individual meetings with graduate students; provide notice for cancelled meetings.
14. Be reasonably accessible either remotely or in person if needed outside of scheduled meetings.
15. Promptly respond to administrative tasks (e.g. progress reports, leave requests).
16. Refrain from asking graduate researchers for personal favors unrelated to their academics, and make clear that any refusal will have no negative consequences.
17. Be receptive to graduate student feedback on mentoring and try to resolve any conflicts respectfully and directly as soon as they arise.
18. Advise on where to seek confidential advice and explain the process of making a formal complaint if difficult situations cannot be resolved.
19. Understand that students may freely consult other trusted individuals if they wish to raise any concerns.

Expectations of Graduate Assistants:

1. Be familiar with graduate school and the specific graduate program (e.g., BIOL, CEMB, ENDY, SPAC, STAN) policies and requirements for graduate students, including visa rules and requirements for international students.
2. Maintain practical timelines for completing research milestones and the thesis. Master's and doctoral students are given 8 and 12 semesters by GSIE to complete their thesis or dissertation, respectively. Extensions may be requested by the programs' graduate studies coordinator on behalf of the GA, but they need to be justified.
3. Make consistent degree progress. Graduate student academic progress forms must be completed by the student and mentor annually.
4. Respond promptly to mentor notices of unsatisfactory progress; be receptive to mentor feedback on action items needed to make progress towards your degree.
5. Be self-directed in learning and research, including keeping up to date with the literature.
6. Help ensure that the lab is a safe, supportive, and inclusive working environment.
7. Uphold the necessary standards of research integrity and ethics and ensure your activities are in compliance with federal and state regulatory requirements.
8. Agree to deadlines for providing drafts to allow sufficient time for mentors and any other co-authors to review the material.
9. Provide notice for cancelled meetings.
10. Take advantage of professional development opportunities and skills training.
11. Discuss mentor's expectations for authorship and inventorship; the UA owns IP
12. Regularly attend departmental seminars and meetings.
13. Actively communicate with your mentor and ask for help when you need it.
14. Try to resolve any problems or disputes with your mentor as soon as they arise. If you cannot resolve the issue or are not comfortable talking with your mentor, you can contact members of your thesis committee, your graduate program director, or your department chairperson (see "Trusted Contact Persons" below).
15. Students can choose to dissolve the mentor-mentee relationship if problems or disputes arise that cannot be resolved. Speak to the Director or the Graduate Coordinator specific to your program about options.
16. A mentor can remove their sponsorship of a GA. This alone does not mean that the GA is released from the graduate program, but they will need to find another mentor to sponsor their thesis or dissertation research, usually by the end of the following academic semester.
17. Graduate assistants (GAs) may be terminated from their positions at the end of any semester if they are placed on academic warning, failure to earn a minimum number of graduate credits, or failure to maintain an appropriate grade point average as per program and/or Graduate School rules.
18. Graduate students may be terminated immediately for cause or for job abandonment among other conditions contained in BOT Policy 500.1.

Trusted Contact Persons:

It is important for graduate researchers to have trusted individuals whom they may contact for advice or to raise any concerns. Some potential contact persons in BISC include:

Dr. Michelle Evans-White: Department Chair for BISC

Dr. Kusum Naithani: Biology Graduate Studies Coordinator and Vice Chair for BISC

Dr. Douglas Rhoads: Cell and Molecular Biology Graduate Program Director

Dr. Daniel Lessner: Vice Chair for BISC

Dr. Erica Westerman: BISC DEI Committee Chair