

# Mentor/Mentee Expectations

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The relationships between doctoral students and their advisors/mentors are special. Doctoral students rely on their mentors for stewardship and support to develop as independent scholars. Mentors often experience the relationships with their mentees as very rewarding – helping individuals reach their goals, seeding the field with strong scholars, and reaping benefits from the intellectual exchange. Because of the importance of these relationships, clarity of expectations and communication can help develop and maintain a strong mentor/mentee relationship. Towards this end, this document aims to make clear some of the expectations that I have for my mentees, and what my mentees can expect from me.

### What I expect from my mentees

*I expect that you and I will both work to communicate our expectations of each other as clearly as we can, to foster a strong working relationship. This includes being frank with each other about our own strengths and weaknesses and their implications for how we can work together most productively.*

*I expect you to be the driver of your educational experience. I expect you to understand what is expected of you from our program and the graduate school, but to also determine how to best get your educational and professional needs met and to advocate for yourself.*

*I expect that you will read the **Doctoral Student Guidelines**, and update yourself on that information at each stage of your program. I can help *interpret* the Guidelines, but I expect you to take the initiative to review program guidelines first before asking for my guidance.*

*It is your responsibility to make sure you are following the Guidelines of the program (taking the appropriate coursework, meeting deadlines, etc.). I am here to help you determine how best to do so, but it is not my job to keep track.*

*I expect that if something is happening in your life that is getting in the way of your doctoral work, you will tell me so that we can problem solve how to get the work done, determine realistic timelines, etc. You can decide how much to share with me—but I need to know the general scope of the constraints to help you minimize the impact on your professional development and timely progress.*

*I expect you to let me know when you need to meet with me. At different points in the program, we will have more or less frequent contact. If there is something you need to talk about sooner than our next meeting, you should contact me to set up a time to meet.*

*I expect that you will be open to receiving constructive criticism of your work – or that you will commit to improve on your ability to learn from constructive criticism of your work. You are a student because you have things you want to learn, and learning from critiques of*

your work is often the best way to improve. I hope to model taking constructive criticism well – test me!

*I expect you to disagree with me.* This is your life, your career, and your doctoral program. If you disagree with a comment or suggestion I make, you need to communicate that to me and be your own advocate.

*I encourage your feedback.* I am a flawed individual and I will make mistakes. I still am a work in progress and am trying to become a better mentor and individual over time. If I say something that angers or upsets you, I hope that you will let me know so that we can talk about it. One or both of us will likely benefit from that conversation.

*I expect you to respond promptly to my e-mails* – within one business day, preferably.

*I expect you to take advantage of opportunities other than those I present to you* – for example, attending professional development sessions offered by the graduate school, the teaching academy, and institutes and centers on campus. This is a part of you taking control of your professional goals.

*I expect you to work hard towards your professional goals while also working towards a sustainable work/life balance.* Both hard work and work/life balance are important to sustaining a successful professional career over the long term.

#### What my mentees can expect from me

*I am eager to help you achieve your goals, and am committed to doing the best I can to support and advocate for you.* I enjoy helping other people achieve their goals, and my mentees are a priority for me.

*I will help you navigate your way through the doctoral program.* Although you are ultimately responsible for your deadlines and progress, I am pleased to help you interpret the guidelines and plan with you about strategies to get your professional needs met.

*I will make time for you.* I am very busy with a range of duties, but my mentees are a priority for me. If you need to meet with me sooner than planned, I expect you to contact me and tell me so. You should trust that I will be honest and tell you what I can and can't do regarding the timing of that meeting.

*I do not expect you to be just like me.* I am here to help you develop the career that you want for yourself. That may be in academia and it may not be. I am open to you having career goals of various types and am committed to helping you achieve them.

*Life is too short to not follow the path you want.* I believe that doctoral programs are not for everyone. If, during the course of your study, you decide that you may not want to continue with your doctoral degree, I encourage you to talk with me about it. There are good and

bad reasons for doing a doctoral degree. I am open to you changing your goals and deciding that this is not the right path for you. I am willing to help talk you through your options.

*I am not Facebook friends with current students. It's just my policy.*

*I prefer e-mail as the best way to reach me. I don't check my office phone messages consistently. I do not like to text about work, except in special circumstances. I don't like people to call me on my cell phone for work reasons, except in special circumstances (e.g., you are late for a meeting with me, an emergency happens).*

*I try to respond to e-mail within one business day, when I am in town. If you haven't heard from me in a couple days, or if it is urgent, please resend your message, as it may have gotten lost in the e-pile.*

*Although I am not responsible for funding you, I will do my best to help you find appropriate funding for your doctoral studies.*

*I don't have to be your primary mentor. If there is someone else who you think would be a better mentor/advisor for you, I am open to having that conversation. Having an appropriate primary mentor/advisor to help you reach your goals is important, and I am committed to helping you achieve your goals, even if it isn't with me as your mentor!*

*I expect that I will not be your only mentor. I would hate to think that you would be limited by only my advice and guidance. I encourage you to find others who can mentor you to meet different needs that you have. I will not be jealous but rather pleased if you get advice and assistance from others. Inevitably, you will get conflicting advice from me and others, and we can talk about that too.*

*I will be honest about the strengths and weaknesses of your work. For better or for worse, I am usually straightforward and direct with my feedback and you can expect that from me.*

*I understand that my role as mentor changes over time as a mentees needs change, and as a mentee moves towards independence. I will aim for clear communication about my changing expectations of you and you should aim for clear communication about your changing needs and concerns. Towards this end, every spring the Doctoral Program asks each doctoral student to report on his/her progress over the previous year and to highlight plans for the next year. We will use this as a time to thoroughly discuss your progress and plans.*

*Below is a list of some of the topics that I am prepared to help you with. I can either help you with these topics directly, or can help you find other people or opportunities to get your needs met in these domains. These topics will each become important to you at different stages in your development as an independent scholar. You should feel free to raise a discussion of any of these topics below, topics above, and other topics in our meetings.*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choosing appropriate courses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking with others in your area</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervising independent studies, if appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turning your research into publications – developing and submitting the manuscript, responding to reviewers, etc.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a preliminary exam topic and proposal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing protocols for the IRB for your research</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a dissertation topic and proposal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing and practicing research presentation skills</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forming and communicating with preliminary exam and dissertation committees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparing presentations and/or posters for professional meetings</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding appropriate TA and PA opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussing job options and preparing for the job market</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applying for funding, as appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brainstorming ideas for time management</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding other mentors to help you with topics that are not my strengths</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brainstorming ideas for maintaining work/life balance</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding teaching opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help you develop attainable goals and a plan for attaining them</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing teaching skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducting peer review of research</li> </ul>