

Policy on Mentor and Student Discussions

A strong, positive relationship between a graduate student and faculty mentor is mutually beneficial to both parties. To encourage open communication, faculty mentors and graduate students are required to have regular conversations that frankly **discuss mutual expectations around mentorship**. While no written agreement is required, many faculty and students may find one helpful (examples attached).

Mentors and students are encouraged to read the 'Compact Between Biomedical Graduate Students and Their Research Advisors' developed by the AAMC (<https://www.aamc.org/initiatives/research/gradcompact/>) that succinctly describes core tenants of graduate training, the commitment of graduate students and commitments of the faculty. There are additional resources, including many of the relevant policies, in our SoM Graduate Studies student and faculty handbooks available on the Graduate Studies web site..

Timing:

1. The first conversation should take place as part of the discussion with faculty about which research group or laboratory to join. It should include the topics below.
2. For PhD students, a second conversation should take place before the Qualifying Exam.
3. These mentorship conversations will be revisited regularly, at least annually.

Documentation:

It is the responsibility of the program director to ensure that these conversations are happening. Initially, the student and faculty member need to confirm this conversation occurred before the program director can approve a mentor choice. Subsequently, the program director should confirm that the conversation has taken place before allowing a qualifying exam to proceed. Annual conversations need to be documented as part of DAC/TAC meetings, and the dates they were held should be included in progress reports submitted to DAC/TAC or other required mentoring teams.

Conversation Topics

A. Roles and Expectations

1. Importance of successfully completing degree in a timely fashion
 - a. How to balance courses, seminars and research/capstone projects
 - b. How goals are determined
 - c. How progress is assessed
2. What expectations are there for submitting work and receiving timely feedback
3. What training is required (IRB, lab safety courses, acquiring or developing new methods)

B. Research Environment

1. What resources are available for ensuring a safe research or learning environment (include lab safety, protection from harassment, use of civil discourse)
2. What help is available for experimental design how are experimental protocols approved
3. Data management
 - a. How data will be recorded and stored
 - b. How data will be securely shared with others in and outside of the research/project team
4. Approval process for purchases
5. Balancing education and personal time
 - a. Typical hours anticipated to make best progress on research and projects
 - b. Where each think and write best (for example some labs are very busy, is there need for quiet place and if so, what activities need quiet)
 - c. Preferred process to communicate about taking personal time

C. Communication

1. Preferred communication style overall (email, phone, text, in person) and hours (24/7, weekdays only or limited hours)
2. Faculty time/accessibility ('mentor's approachability index' i.e., always around, open door, make appointment?)
3. Best learning/teaching styles

4. Important things to know about each other/special needs
5. Preferred approach to managing a disagreement

D. Career Development

1. Grant submission (required vs encouraged, what help will be provided by mentor, deadlines)
2. Plans for developing scientific communication skills (written and spoken)
3. Policy on attending scientific conferences
4. Policy on authorship
5. Post-graduation plans and what steps are required to get there

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