



College of  
Graduate Studies



GRADUATE ENRICHMENT  
MENTORING INITIATIVE  
(GEMini)  
COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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## **AGREE: Advisor-Grad Student Relationship Expectations and Engagement:**

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**A Template for Developing Shared Expectations Between Advisors and  
Graduate Students**

Advisors and graduate students should establish clear and open communication from the outset regarding their roles and responsibilities. Developing a shared expectation plan at the beginning of the mentoring relationship helps set a strong foundation for success. This plan should be a dynamic document, revisited and revised as needed, ideally at least once a year. Below is a sample of key discussion areas to consider. Feel free to select and adapt these topics based on the specific needs of your discipline. The information presented here was largely obtained from the 2017 compact developed by the Association of American Medical Colleges.



# Supporting Graduate Student Mental Health, A Vital Role for Advisors and Mentors

As your graduate advisor, I will provide the mentorship and training needed to help you develop into an independent researcher. To achieve this goal, we must establish effective communication and align our expectations with one another. This document provides a framework for communicating the research culture under my supervision and how you and I will work together to further your research productivity and intellectual development. I believe in mentoring everyone in a manner that best meets their needs, and I look forward to having open discussions about these expectations and revisiting them as necessary to enable your successful professional development. Please note that this document is not a substitute for university rules and regulations, and that those policies and any legal requirements supersede anything in this document.

## What you can expect from me

- **I will set the research direction for your project and provide the support needed to pursue those directions.** This will include helping you identify a compelling research topic, securing funding through grant writing, and ensuring compliance with all necessary institutional protocols. Whether your work involves laboratory research, fieldwork, creative practice, archival research, or theoretical inquiry, I will help ensure that you have the necessary resources and infrastructure. Additionally, I will seek collaborators across disciplines and sectors to broaden the scope and impact of your work.
- **I am committed to mentoring you now and in the future.** I am committed to supporting your education and training under my supervision, as well as advising and guiding your career development. I will actively promote you and your work to help you achieve your professional goals. While I will serve as your supervisor, I encourage you to seek additional mentors whose expertise and perspectives can further enrich your academic and professional journey. I will actively promote you and your work to help you achieve your goals.
- **I will encourage you to attend professional meetings and try to fund these activities.** These meetings are important for showcasing your work and building connections as you pursue positions beyond your time under my direct supervision.
- **I will be available for regular meetings and will provide a timely review of your research progress.** In addition, I will do my best to provide an open-door policy and respond quickly to emails. Please be aware that there will be times when I will be unavailable due to other obligations. For abstracts and brief research questions, I will typically review in 1-2 days; for papers and theses, please allow 1-2 weeks. In the event of an emergency, I may be contacted on my cell phone.
- **I will provide a work environment that is intellectually stimulating, supportive, safe, and free from harassment.** I will take seriously any difficulties you may encounter in your position. If there are conflicts with another lab member, please let me know, and I will work with both of you to find a resolution. I will try to understand your unique situation and welcome your suggestions for improving your experience under my supervision.

## What I expect from you

You will take ownership of your educational experience.

- You are **responsible for understanding your graduate program's requirements and ensuring that you remain in compliance** with them. As you progress, I will work with you to select courses, qualifying exams, and form your committee.
- You will have the **primary responsibility for the successful completion of your degree.** You will be committed to your graduate education and will demonstrate this by your efforts in the classroom, the research space, and all other related academic and professional activities. You will maintain a high level of professionalism, self-motivation, initiative, engagement, curiosity, and ethical standards, including complying with institutional and research group standards for contributing to an inclusive research environment.
- You will **meet regularly with me to provide updates on your research results, progress, and challenges.** Come prepared to discuss/present your recent research and the next steps. Please bring a written agenda or presentation to each meeting, outlining what you have accomplished and what you plan to do in the coming week. You are expected to bring your results, any papers you have read, your laptop (if needed for presenting slides or data), and any other materials that will help make the meeting more productive.
- To earn your degree, **you must transition toward independence.** We will work together to monitor this process, but ultimately, your graduation timeline depends on the quality and completion of your work and not just the time invested.

- **Seek out professional development opportunities** – being a successful researcher involves more than being good at the bench. You must communicate well (presentations, papers, grants), develop personal skills (lab management, leadership, mentoring), maintain high ethical standards, and, for a faculty career, teach. However, these opportunities must be balanced with the most important element of your career development – research progress towards completing your thesis/dissertation.

### **You will develop your research skills.**

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- Begin **reading background literature** - read the papers I recommend, perform literature searches, and review the findings. Dedicate time each week to staying current and exploring new research.
- Keep **detailed, organized, and accurate research records**. For data/research ownership, please note that original notebooks, digital files, and tangible research materials belong to the institution and will remain at UCF when you finish your thesis/dissertation so that other individuals can reproduce and carry on related research, under institutional policy. Only with my explicit approval and by institutional policy may you make copies of your notebooks and digital files and have access to tangible research materials that you helped to generate during your graduate training.
- Develop your **writing and presentation skills**. As you start to make progress, begin outlining a paper's figures and drafting the text. Be prepared to go through rounds of revisions before submitting an abstract or paper. Although the availability of travel funds will vary, I encourage you to submit your work for presentation at least one conference per year. **Attend relevant seminars** – I suggest 1-2/month to learn both science and how to give a good talk.
- Develop your **mentoring and management skills**. Mentoring undergraduate and junior graduate students not only helps you achieve your experimental goals but also provides an opportunity to further your professional development as a supervisor. As the direct supervisor of an undergraduate student, you will be expected to train them appropriately, provide them with experimental guidance, and ensure that they operate safely and respectfully in the research lab/creative spaces.
- Consider **applying for fellowships, traineeships, and travel grants**. Not only will an award help your career and the overall research funding situation, but the experience of writing the proposal will also help you think about what you are doing more deeply.
- Learn how to **accept and utilize constructive criticism**. The feedback from me, colleagues, committee members, and course instructors is intended to improve your work.

### **You will contribute to the lab and be a good lab citizen.**

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- Senior graduate students are responsible for helping train new students in essential skills, such as lab procedures, conducting individual and group meetings, literature searching, and more. **Our profession is a community** – many people will support you throughout your journey, and it's important to pay that forward by sharing your knowledge and experience with others.
- **Research belongs to the group, not any one individual**. Therefore, you are expected to leave your original notebooks and files when you depart. Additionally, you may be asked to assist me in submitting grant applications to NSF or NIH, which is for maintaining ongoing support for the lab.
- You may have **designated lab jobs** such as ordering, general maintenance, taking care of one of the instruments, etc. Failure to do your lab jobs not only affects you, but it can also impede the entire lab and will not be tolerated. Everyone is expected to help with general lab operations and cleanliness.
- Be **respectful and tolerant of others, and collaborate collegially** by appreciating individual differences in values, personalities, and work styles.

## Practical Considerations

### Authorship

One of the most important tasks during your graduate studies is disseminating your research through publications and presentations. Therefore, authorship of these works is a key indicator of your contribution to the field. Authorship indicates a significant contribution to a paper, which may include intellectual ideas that enhance the research or experimental contributions. Simply following instructions without actively participating in experimental design or interpretation may be acknowledged but is unlikely to result in authorship.

While the order of authors varies by specific field, in general, the first author is the student or postdoctoral scholar who took the lead and wrote the paper, the last author is the advisor, and the authors in between are in order of decreasing contribution. Failure to complete papers before leaving the lab may result in a junior member doing so as the first author in your place.

### Annual Evaluations

Each year, we will conduct an evaluation to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. As part of this process, we will review your Individual Development Plan (IDP) to reflect on your progress, goals, and evolving needs. I will let you know if I am satisfied with your progress and help identify steps to address any concerns. This is also an opportunity for you to share how I can better support your success, whether you need more guidance, greater independence, more frequent meetings, or other forms of support.

### Conflict Resolution

If a conflict arises with another lab member during your time under my supervision, I will work with you to find a resolution. If the issue remains unresolved or if you're uncomfortable speaking with me, I encourage you to contact the Department Chair, your graduate program Chair, or the university Ombuds office ([ombuds.ucf.edu/](https://ombuds.ucf.edu/)) for support.

### Mental Health and Well-being

Graduate school can be an enriching yet challenging experience. Please take your well-being and mental health seriously. Please refer to the following document to learn more about the resources: [Thriving as a Graduate Student: A Guide to Mental Health and Well-being](#).

### Other Areas to be Discussed:

List here any other areas of understanding between the student and advisor regarding their working relationship during the student's tenure. Examples include:

Regular one-on-one meetings: [frequency] \_\_\_\_\_

Format: [In-person/virtual/hybrid] \_\_\_\_\_

Research group meetings: [frequency] \_\_\_\_\_

Progress reports: [Frequency and format] \_\_\_\_\_

Publication expectations \_\_\_\_\_

Primary communication method: [Email/Slack/etc.] \_\_\_\_\_

Expected working hours \_\_\_\_\_

Remote work policies \_\_\_\_\_

Weekend/holiday work policies \_\_\_\_\_

Vacation/absence notification: [Timeline and process] \_\_\_\_\_

# Signatures

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Faculty Advisor Name Printed: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name Printed: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature and Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_