

Mentoring and Advisement Agreement Plan

This is an example of a general advising agreement primarily meant for use with a mentee and their academic committee and/or advisor. However, this document can be used and modified to suit other mentoring relationships. A mentoring plan is a way to clarify and formalize a relationship between a mentor and mentee. It is a reference document where mentor and mentee agree on their mutual commitments during the period they work together, *particularly around how the mentor's actions will assist the mentee in accomplishing their goals*. A mentoring agreement can enrich the mentor-mentee relationship by providing clear expectations, honest communication, goals and deadlines, and professional boundaries. It gives both (though often the least empowered person) a widely accepted practice to point to when showing that their agreements and expectations are not unreasonable or unusual and they should expect certain standards and respect.

This plan is designed to be regularly reviewed (e.g., annually) in order to reflect on whether all parties involved have met goals and agreements. This document should be used in conjunction with the "Mentoring and Advising Plan Reference" document included below. Individuals are encouraged to customize these documents as they see fit. This document was originally designed by Tisa Loewen (co-author on this manuscript) to aid in her own academic career both as a mentee and mentor.

Mentee Name: _____

Mentor Name(s) : _____

Date: _____

Review

1. *The date of this committee's last formal meeting was:* _____
(day/mo/yr)
2. *Review achievements and progress made toward accomplishing goals set in last mentoring plan or, if this is the very first committee meeting, toward meeting requirements since beginning the program (i.e., awards, honors, courses completed, comprehensive exam, preparation/writing, oral defense, research, conference presentations, publications, etc.). Expand as necessary:*
3. *What were the setbacks, difficulties, or limitations to achieving your goals you encountered? If the reasons are confidential (e.g., medical, family, etc.) please indicate the appropriate student advocate who can help you access not only the best resources for your needs but also the appropriate paperwork – (e.g., time extensions, absence justification, etc.). Expand as necessary:*

Goals

4. *Specific goals for the next year/ period/ term. Goals should speak to Research & Dissertation progress, Career Development, and any Personal goals the mentee may have. Expand as necessary:*

Actions

5. *To achieve these goals, the student/mentee, by mutual agreement with their committee, commit to these Research & Dissertation Oriented actions (expand as necessary):*
6. *To achieve these goals, the chair and members of the mentoring committee, by mutual agreement with the student/mentee, commit to these Research & Dissertation Oriented actions (expand as necessary):*
7. *To achieve these goals, the student/mentee, by mutual agreement with their committee, commit to these Career Development Oriented actions (expand as necessary):*
8. *To achieve these goals, the chair and members of the mentoring committee, by mutual agreement with the student/mentee, commit to these Career Development Oriented actions (expand as necessary):*
9. *To achieve these goals, the student/mentee, by mutual agreement with their committee, commit to these Personal Development actions (expand as necessary):*
10. *To achieve these goals, the chair and members of the mentoring committee, by mutual agreement with the student, commit to these Personal Development actions (expand as necessary):*

Looking forward

11. *How do you think you are performing now? How can we help you perform better toward your specific goals and well-being whether or not they are in line with completion of the program?*
12. *How can we help you perform better toward your specific goals and well-being that are in line with completion of the program?*
13. *What are your skills or strengths?*
14. *What are your weaknesses or stressors? How do you respond to failure? How can we support you?*
15. *What motivates you? How do you want us to celebrate your success?*
16. *What areas of expertise/understanding and skills would you like to develop (i.e., new areas of knowledge, new research techniques, public speaking, writing, managing, classroom teaching, mentorship, negotiation, etc.)? List your plans for learning these. What assistance, resources, or mentoring might help you accomplish these goals?*

Agreements

17. *Agreements related to interpersonal interactions:*

Because successful mentoring relationships involve a degree of self-disclosure and trust, we agree to the following expectations regarding openness, honesty, confidentiality, boundaries, etc. (add additional lines as necessary):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Anticipated date for the completion of the PhD degree/ program requirements:

_____ (mo/yr)

Comments (e.g., reasons why planned goals may deviate from expected for a student in a given stage in their program):

Date of this Mentoring Advisement Meeting (please write out the month): _____

<i>Role</i>	<i>Name</i> <i>(If student, please add your institution ID)</i>	<i>Signature</i>
<i>Student</i>		
<i>Chair</i>		
<i>Co-Chair</i>		
<i>Member</i>		
<i>Member</i>		

Mentoring and Advising Plan Reference

This document presents potential points of discussion graduate students and mentees may use with their advisor or mentor to come to an agreement on the nature of the mentorship relationship. These were written for use with the Mentoring and Advisement Agreement Plan or similar document to aid in the development of a cooperative partnership between a student and advisor or mentor and mentee. This document should be viewed as an à la carte menu – to pick and choose the elements most appropriate for each individual and customize as needed and can be used to later evaluate whether the mentor and mentee followed through with the chosen commitments. Some items listed may not be immediately useful (e.g., publishing or patent rights), but may become so as one’s trajectory progresses. As such, keeping an unaltered document for future reference is advised.

These agreements are left general and are applicable across the sciences and humanities. Individuals using this document may want to review them and rewrite them as “I” statements (I commit to...) and provide additional specific expectations.

General Commitments

Student/ Mentee Commitment

The mentee recognizes that by enrolling in a program where they are assigned a mentor, or by asking someone to serve as their mentor, they accept the following general responsibilities:

- Acknowledge that I have the primary responsibility for the successful completion of my degree, program, project, and/or goals that this mentorship relationship supports.
- Will seek guidance from my faculty/research advisor, research committee, other advisors, and mentors, or seek outside assistance if mentors are unavailable/ unhelpful.
- Maintain a high level of professionalism, engagement, curiosity, and ethical standards and nurture my motivation in healthy ways.
- Meet and communicate regularly with my mentor/advisor and provide them with updates on the progress and results towards my goals.
- Be knowledgeable about and comply with requirements and policies of my graduate program, lab, and institution.
- Make fair, equitable, and productive agreements with my advisor/mentor about attendance and participation in regular advisement meetings, lab responsibilities and meetings, department seminars, professional meetings, career development, publications, grant writing, research policies, safety guidelines, professionalism, and ethical standards.
- Be honest with myself, and when appropriate, with my mentors on my abilities and limitations, strengths and weaknesses, and expectations.
- Recognize that my advisor/mentor has a life and responsibilities outside of work, which need tending to and may impact work performance and timeliness of response.

Faculty Mentor/ Advisor Commitment

The faculty advisor recognizes that by accepting a student as an advisee or mentee, they are serving as a mentor, and accept the following general responsibilities:

- Commit to mentoring the graduate student in a fashion that I am confident with which enables their success in the scholarly community or otherwise.

- To achieve this, I will be open about my personality and mentoring style while also being receptive to feedback from the student on the mentoring styles they find beneficial.
- Aim to provide an environment that is respectful, supportive, and safe through the use of equitable language, free of harassment.
- Provide an environment that this is encouraging, inspiring professional confidence, with regular acknowledgements of the mentee's effort and hard work.
- Understand that "mentorship" involves passing down knowledge and experiences, modeling professional and ethical values and attitudes, opening doors of opportunity, encouragement, motivation, contributing to mentee's networking, and challenging the mentee appropriately.
- Recognize the possibility of conflicts between the interests of my own larger research program and the particular research goals of the mentee and will not let my larger goals interfere with their pursuit of their research.
- Recognize that my student/mentee is a whole person with a life and responsibilities that exist outside of work, which need tending to and may impact work performance.

Plan/Contract Agreement Points

Research & Dissertation Oriented: (*the mentor will...*)

- Facilitate the training of the graduate student in complementary skills needed to be a successful researcher; these may include oral and written communication skills, grant writing, lab management, animal and human research policies, the ethical conduct of research, and scientific professionalism.
- Be committed to helping the student plan and direct their research project by guiding them in setting reasonable and attainable goals and establishing a timeline for completion.
- Be committed to meeting with the student on a regular basis and provide resources in order for them to conduct thesis/dissertation research.
- Be knowledgeable about, and guide the graduate student through, the requirements and deadlines of their graduate program or guide the student to a faculty or staff member that is more knowledgeable of these details.
- Help the graduate student select a thesis/dissertation committee and support the student in assembling the committee regularly to review the graduate student's progress.
- Discuss policies on work hours, sick, vacation, and personal time off.
- Discuss lab expectations and responsibilities in specifics, paying close attention to time limitations (e.g., research assistants may be limited to 20 hours a week) and publication/acknowledgement procedures reflecting on whether these are exemplary of the most equitable and professional labs.
- Will not discourage the student from exploring new theoretical or methodological approaches, seeking additional mentors, or utilizing accessibility services.

Career Development: (*the mentor will...*)

- Understand that even if I, the mentor, do not have experience with some particular area of development, I will assist the student in finding the correct resources, use my networks and access to look into it myself, and follow up with the student to make sure they found what they need.
- Will not discourage the student from pursuing a career outside of academia, nor will I withhold resources and support (like letters of recommendation) that help them complete their degree/ start their career if I am made aware that they will leave academia.
- Discuss authorship standards regarding papers with the graduate student and acknowledge the graduate student's contributions to projects beyond their dissertation, working to help them publish or present their work in a timely manner.
- Discuss intellectual policy issues with the student in regard to disclosure, patent rights and publishing research discoveries, when they are appropriate.
- Encourage the student to seek additional opportunities in career development training.
- Encourage the graduate student to attend professional meetings and make an effort to help them secure funding for such activities.
- Advocate for your mentee among professional colleagues and promote them by introducing them and their work to your professional networks and at conferences and local events.
- Discuss standards on authorship and attendance at professional meetings with the student, understanding that while they need to know about these, some "accepted practices" are inequitable and unreasonable.
- Assist, when reasonable and within your means, in securing a post-graduate position while providing honest letters of recommendation for their next phase of professional development, being accessible to give advice and feedback on career goals.

Personal Development: (*the mentor will...*)

- Regard the student/mentee as a whole person, and appropriately encourage their prioritization of their wellbeing.
- Be honest about appropriate and relevant aspects of your own life and commitments outside of work and how these affect your professional process as this can demonstrate life-work integration.
- Even though you are not the mentees mental health professional, recognize that mental health issues among students, particularly graduate students, junior faculty, and other academic workers are on the rise and may affect the mentoring relationship and/ or goals.
- Recognize that when appropriate, welcoming conversation about personal aspects such as wellbeing, self-care, hobbies, struggles, and volunteer activities can build trust and understanding when engaged in appropriately.
- Be willing and ready to refer your mentee to resources within your organizational/ instructional structure that address personal development concerns (i.e., tutors, counseling, Dean of students, life coaches etc.)

Suggestions specific to the PI, main advisor, or Chair of Committee

- The mentor makes an effort to be aware when other members of the committee, lab, or research group are behaving inappropriately or unfairly towards the student and is willing

to intercede or move the project forward by using your position to amplify the student's needs/ ideas (e.g., backing student on a point to give it weight).

- As the lead of the committee, the mentor agrees to be cognizant of situations where there is disagreement among the group to the point that it is hindering progress of the student (it is okay to directly ask). These situations may require flexibility or may be an opportunity to encourage the student to make “a call” (i.e., during edits of co-authored papers or dissertation chapters).
- Both parties will discuss a communication plan, be clear and honest about time commitments, and formally acknowledge and adhere to the expected timelines for submission and responses for different scenarios. Examples of scenarios include, but are not limited to, email responses, timing for requesting letters of recommendation, written feedback on grant applications, edits on chapters, etc.

Related to interpersonal interactions

We each will review the Student Code of Conduct and/ or university FERPA and Title 9 requirements.

Because successful mentoring relationships involve a degree of self-disclosure and trust, we agree to the following expectations regarding openness, honesty, confidentiality, boundaries, etc. (use this space for notes and transfer to formal contract/ mentoring plan):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Specific Examples You Can Use or Alter as Needed:

1. Statements of a personal nature (family situations, health information, past experiences etc.) whether mentioned during meetings or read in grant applications (such as those often seen in personal statements) will be held in confidence (except when legally required to do otherwise such as mandatory reporting of self-harm or sexual violence).
2. We are comfortable using first names when referring to each in other both in person and in emails, except for situations in front of undergraduates (such as TA emails to class) or in these specific professional situations: conferences, job talks, colloquia wherein we will use these specific honoraria: Dr., Prof., Mx., etc.
3. Advisor is willing to hear complaints, concerns, and critiques of the program without allowing these concerns to reflect poorly on the student.
4. The mentee prefers to be referred to by this name both verbally and in text: *name with pronunciation*
5. The mentee has indicated that they prefer a hands-off mentorship style, therefore, we will meet regularly to assess progress towards goals, but I will not assess the student as disengaged simply because they are working independently.
6. The mentor will always leave the door to the office open when we are the only two people in the room.

Tips to the Student/Mentee

- Advocate for yourself

- But also respect your own boundaries and comfort level
- Ask trusted colleagues for help with wording
- Realize your advisor may have never been asked for something this specific before. Just because they are surprised or intrigued, does not mean they are not receptive or willing to try.
- This is a two-way street and your advisor may have expectations of you. Be familiar with the code of conduct, your program handbook, and evaluation standards so you can have a clear idea of what is acceptable to ask of you and what is not.
- An agreement might not work out and need to be revised and that is okay.
- Regularly assess your agreements by asking, did we follow through with the action steps?
- Realize your mentor may need very specific suggestions (e.g., I need to be shown how to use that machine by you in person) and may never have really learned how to mentor.
- Before proposing a contract suggestion, ask yourself if you've provided the necessary information that they need to agree to it. They may ask for specific examples if they don't understand how to meet that need. For example, if you are interested in working outside of academia, something they've possibly never done, they may need very specific questions so they can follow up with you.
- They may ask you uncomfortable questions such as, "How do you pronounce your name correctly?"; "What are your gender pronouns?"; "What does your family do?" Think about potential questions related to your expectations in advance and decide for yourself whether you want to answer these questions and how. You do not have to divulge any information you are uncomfortable with; however, you may want to think about what level of trust you require and how that will shape specific expectations you set. Disclosing sensitive information- such as that you are first generation or have accessibility exceptions, may be important to asking for what you need, but carries its own risks.
- Be open to constructive feedback. It's okay to say sometimes, just "You're right, let's improve it/how can I improve it?"
- It's also okay to tell your supervisor they are wrong, if you are comfortable doing so. We all make mistakes. If you do, communicate using the same level of respect and consideration you would like your advisor to use with you. It's also okay knowing they are wrong and not needing to tell them. Protecting yourself from potential defensiveness or backlash does not invalidate what you know to be true.

How to ask for some of these agreements:

Many of these agreements can be asked for by directly pointing to these general statements as reasonable, fair, and widely adhered to. Some may require more strategic discussion, while others may require specific guidelines that need to be negotiated. Here are some approaches you can try:

1. "I would be reassured if I could have your commitment to keep my personal details in confidentiality."
2. "I would find it helpful if I knew your guidelines on letters of recommendation; would a weekly reminder email be helpful, or how often do you prefer?"

3. “I would like to know more about *xyz*, but I know that this information isn’t applicable to me right now. Can we agree to discuss *xyz* in the next 6 months?”
4. “I may want to share general constructive critiques of the program with you, would you be willing to listen to these concerns?”
5. “If we were to come to an agreement on *xyz*, what would be a reasonable approach to you? This is what works for me...”
6. “Can I put in my mentorship plan that I have an expectation of your support to do *xyz*?”

References

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(Arizona State University, 2021; Association of American Medical Colleges, 2016; Brown University, 2021; Georgia Tech, 2021; Miserlian, 2019; Upstate Medical University, 2021)