

Examples of Mentoring Agreements



Adapted from the *W.H. Freeman Entering Mentoring Series*, 2017

Note: Document provided by the generosity of Dr. Stephanie Roberts at the University of Washington.

Mentor/Mentee Expectations

Fall 2017

Stephanie Robert

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.



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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.

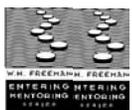
I expect that you will be open to receiving constructive criticism of your work – or that you will commit to improve on your ability to learn from constructive criticism of your work. You are a student because you have things you want to learn, and learning from critiques of your work is often the best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



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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.



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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">• Choosing appropriate courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Networking with others in your area
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supervising independent studies, if appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Turning your research into publications – developing and submitting the manuscript, responding to reviewers, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing a preliminary exam topic and proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing protocols for the IRB for your research
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing a dissertation topic and proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing and practicing research presentation skills



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forming and communicating with preliminary exam and dissertation committees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparing presentations and/or posters for professional meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding appropriate TA and PA opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussing job options and preparing for the job market
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applying for funding, as appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brainstorming ideas for time management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding other mentors to help you with topics that are not my strengths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brainstorming ideas for maintaining work/life balance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding teaching opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help you develop attainable goals and a plan for attaining them
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing teaching skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducting peer review of research



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Mentor/mentee expectations

Eric Grodsky

I value highly the professional and intellectual relationships I enjoy with my students. Despite the respect and affect I feel for my colleagues and for this department as an institution, the graduate students we attract were the strongest draw in my return in 2012.

This document makes explicit the expectations I hold for my advisees and the things my advisees can expect from me. It is not meant as a contract but as a means of clarifying my expectations of you and what I think is reasonable for you to expect from me. I am happy to discuss or clarify any of these things. As you will see, I try to be both direct and clear in my communication. I hope that you will be as well.

What I expect from advisees

Scholarship

- You will attend at least one brown bag consistently.
- My goal is for us to write two papers together, one with me as the first author and one with you as the first author, and another paper with you as the sole author. This may take up to three years.

Communication

- When I email you with a question, concern or recommendation you will respond within one business day.
- We will communicate under the presumption that all communication is intended to be constructive.
- We will meet at least monthly and more often as needed.
- If there is something getting in the way of your progress, personal or professional, you will communicate with me about this in a timely manner. 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.

Academic progress

- You will take three courses per semester until you advance to candidacy unless you are TAing or have some other reason to take only two courses.
- We will discuss course options during the registration period each semester.
- You will see the department's schedule for timely progress as a guideline but not be beholden to it. What you and I agree to, however, is binding.

Professional development

- You will take advantage of opportunities to meet with visiting scholars. This is part of what we do.
- You will present your work when 1) we agree it is ready for presentation and 2)



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opportunities arise. This includes presenting locally, at brown bags, and at regional or national conferences.

SAMPLE



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- You will be explicit with me about your professional goals as they develop. You do NOT need to aim to be a professor at a prestigious research university, or a professor at all (though we clearly think you are capable of doing so- you are here). You may even decide you do not want to pursue a PhD. That's fine. Don't be trapped by your own (mis)perceptions of the path ahead or of the faculty's expectations of you. It's your life.

What advisees should expect from me

Scholarship

- I will do my best to provide you with access to computational resources and data you need to do your work.
- I will read and comment on your written work in a timely fashion.
- I will observe and comment on practice presentations for conferences so long as those presentations occur with sufficient advance notice.

Communication

- I communicate most frequently by email. I am respectful but direct in my communication.
- Unless I am travelling, I will typically respond to your emails within one business day.
- If I am slow getting back to you, please do not hesitate to remind me that I owe you a response, comments, etc.
- I comment on and edit manuscripts extensively, usually with track changes in Word. Do not be overwhelmed or surprised when I have a lot to say about your writing in addition to the substantive and methodological aspects of your papers. It's all part of the process.
- I am not Facebook friends with current students.

Professional development

- I will provide you with opportunities to meet scholars in the field.
- I will do my best to help you find funding, either through me or elsewhere.
- I will not be in the least bit hurt or offended if you choose a different mentor/advisor. You need to take ownership of your professional development- and that may include finding a mentor whose expertise and expectations are more closely aligned with your needs. I am completely open to discussing these with you.



**UAB CENTER FOR CLINICAL AND TRANSLATIONAL SCIENCE
MENTORING CONTRACT**

This contract is intended to serve as a guideline to facilitate communications between a trainee (mentee) and his/her mentors. It is suggested that the document be thoroughly reviewed and completed by the mentee and his/her mentor individually, and then jointly review and discuss each person's answers in order to reach an agreement. The mentee should re-write the agreed upon answers before the contract is signed and dated by him/her and each mentor. The mentee is responsible for keeping the contract and reviewing/updating it as necessary. For mentees appointed to a training program, a signed copy will be submitted to training program leadership for the trainee's file.

Scholar/Trainee: _____

Mentor Team: (Primary): _____

 (Secondary): _____

1. What type of assistance does the mentee want from the mentor?

2. What expectations do the mentors have of the mentee?

3. What expectations does the mentee have of the mentors?

4. How often will you meet, where?

5. What will meeting topics include?



6. What core competencies will be obtained? How will they be obtained? Please refer to the list of core competencies and provide section and number for each competency that you will obtain.

7. What senior level biostatistician will you meet with to discuss design and statistical analysis plan? _____

How often will you meet with biostatistician?

8. How will you know when the mentoring relationship has served its purpose and needs to be terminated?

9. We have agreed that our initial meetings will focus on these three topics:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Scholar/Trainee Signature _____ Date _____

Primary Mentor Signature _____ Date _____

Co-Mentor Signature _____ Date _____

