

Mentoring Guide: Questions for Mentor/Mentee Interactions

Use these questions to find out the mentor's expectations:

- Can you describe your views on how much independence on a project is right for a graduate student in your lab?
- Do you typically have graduate students work on many diverse projects at one time or do you guide them through one project at a time?
- What criteria do you use with graduate students to determine if a project has hit a dead-end?
- What criteria do you use with a graduate student to determine if a new set of experiments are worth pursuing?
- Do you meet one-on-one with your graduate students regularly to communicate your expectations?
- Not all graduate students plan the same career path or know what path they want (academic researcher, teacher, industry, government etc.) Do your expectations and the type of project differ for students when they are on different career paths?
- What do you require from graduate students with regard to participation in:
 - lab meetings
 - department seminars
 - coursework and the grades associated with them
 - scientific conferences
- Do you have expectations for a specific number of hours a graduate student should be physically present in the lab per day or week? Are weekend hours expected? Do you have a policy for taking time off?
- Do you have expectations for how many papers a graduate student in your lab should publish before graduating?
- How do you handle authorship on papers? Will I be first author if I do all of the work?
- Do you expect that your graduate students find their own funding?
- What teaching responsibilities are required? Are there options to do more for graduate students wanting more?
- Do you require graduate students to take undergraduate mentees in the lab? Is it an option for graduate students that want to do this?
- Do you support external collaborations? Do you expect me to establish one during my time here?

Use these questions to learn about this specific lab's culture:

- Who are the people that make up the lab? What are their titles and what roles do they have?
- Does the lab do fun stuff together outside of the lab such as lunches or outings?
- How will the other people's roles in the lab affect me? (Do I report to any of them?)
- Are there rules and etiquette in the lab that keep it functioning? (For example, do we order supplies for ourselves or is there a single person that does this?)

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Importantly, you too have expectations. Use some of these suggested questions to get started:

- What can I expect to learn from you?
- If I were to have a conflict with another lab member, could I talk frankly to you about it?
- Can we meet regularly to discuss my progress on my project?
- Do you provide mentorship or training in scientific writing, presentation skills, ethics, etc?
- Can you help me write a NSF (or other) graduate fellowship proposal?
- If I want to attend a conference, will I be able to go? Will I have to pay my own way?