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Mentoring Guidelines Development Guide

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Guide for Developing Mentoring Guidelines

A Guide to the Guide

These recommendations are intended to aid in the development of mentoring guidelines relative to PhD students and their advisors.

Your SURJ guidelines will function as a tool to help students and their advisors have better, stronger mentoring relationships by setting the standard for good, even great mentorship, as well as for the roles that a student will play in their time within your program. This frame of comparison will be helpful to students and advisors alike in clarifying what is expected of each member of a mentoring partnership (or team!) and in helping them to identify places for improvement and to problem solve where necessary. It further helps define these roles for future students and mentors, paving a path forward to a more productive, positive experience for all.

Ideally, these mentoring guidelines should not manifest as simply a list of rules, but as an accessible, nuanced document which takes the needs and responsibilities of all parties into account, and can evolve over time to reflect changing expectations. Rather than to directly instruct, the hope is that these mentoring guidelines can lead by example and encourage students and advisors to make their partnership the best that it can be.

Below is a step-by-step guide, which focuses on the purpose of each section and the questions each section should answer and provides further details for how this may manifest in your final document. This is a companion piece to our sample guidelines, which are written to correspond directly to the layout of this document.

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This sets the stage for the information to follow and shows your reader how they can use this information to benefit their particular circumstances, whether they are a current (or prospective) student, an advisor, or an unofficial mentor.

Note: You may also choose to use your Introduction to present any relevant vocabulary or key concepts related to mentoring that you plan to reference in your guidelines. This additional background is an opportunity for education on these topics that can give your audience further
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COMMUNICATION

One of the most important sections of your guidelines is that which discusses communication. This section should seek to define what healthy communication looks like in a mentoring relationship: general timelines for communication frequency and overall availability, what healthy communication should achieve, and how to define good boundaries and recognize unhealthy communication that may need to be addressed.

This is also a good place to make plain the important, non-research conversations that should be occurring in a mentoring partnership, such as those about a student's future, life balance, and the individual needs and expectations of each person.

You should seek to answer questions such as:

What constitutes good communication in a mentoring relationship?

What are the traits of an excellent committee member?
What are the specific, concrete responsibilities of a committee member?
What activities or actions should a student take to help build their academic community? What role should an advisor play for their student in this process?
How should a mentorship partnership/team facilitate collaboration with other individuals to help meet student needs?

For students and for advisors, defining the role of the committee and its measures, as well as

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program more efficient, and helps an advisor to hone these skills even further.

REFLECTION AND GROWTH

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grow and develop, and this is just as true for advisors and mentors. This section should

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what to do if it is identified that there is room for improvement, to keep all accountable to

one another and to themselves.

You should seek to answer questions such as:

In what ways should a student seek feedback from their advisor on their progress and performance?
In what ways should an advisor seek feedback from the student on how they can better meet their needs?
How can a student or advisor recognize that the other is not meeting these standards? How can they work to remedy this?
How can a student or advisor recognize that they are not meeting these standards, themselves? How can they work to remedy this?
What systems or plans are in place to help keep individuals accountable?

PROBLEM SOLVING

This section should be a direct bridge from the section that precedes it, to aid in the mediation of challenges ranging from minor conflicts to changes in advising circumstances. It should include details on how to recognize potential or mounting conflicts, how to manage interpersonal difficulties, how to reach out for greater help (and who to reach out to) and the process for determining that a change of advisor is needed and how to do this. This should serve as a resource for students and advisors to help address even prevent small and larger issues alike. It should also include the link to the reporting tool designed by Kirsten Overdahl

[https://projects.gradschool.duke.edu/reporting/] In the event that an individual is coming to the document with a concern that may need to be addressed at a higher level.

You should seek to answer questions such as:

How should common mentoring issues be addressed, specifically disagreements and personal disputes?
When should a student reach out to an Ombudsperson, their DGS, or their Chair?
When should an advisor reach out for help?
How can you determine if a student would be better suited to a different advisor?
What is the process of changing your advising circumstances?

Giving members of a mentoring relationship the tools to problem-solve effectively saves both time and energy, and has the power to significantly improve the circumstances of those within the mentoring relationship. It also has the potential to reduce the frequency with which conflicts are handled at a higher administrative level, further saving time and stress for program leadership.

Epilogue

These guidelines are designed to be inherently comprehensive, and this guide has been
 G H Y H O R S H G D I W H U W K R U R X J K U H Y L H Z R I V L P L O D U J X L G H O L
Arts and Sciences Graduate School. This guide is a companion piece to the Sample Guidelines which give an example of the kind of document that this guide could inspire.

Whether you choose to adopt the sample guidelines, to edit our guidelines as you see fit, or to use this guide to generate a unique set of mentoring guidelines for your program, we hope that all versions maintain the spirit of the original vision for this project: to guide students and advisors alike to take the initiative to grow their mentoring relationship into the best version of itself; to lead without simply instructing; to speak with the compassion and clarity that all members of
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We thank you for making use of this guide and welcome any feedback on how it may be improved – please direct any such correspondence to chaney.boroski@duke.edu

Sample Mentoring Guidelines

Introduction

The relationship between a PhD student and their advisor is incredibly valuable and important, with the potential to G H I L Q H   D   V W X G H Q W ¶ V   S D W K   D I W H U   J U D G X approach to mentoring future students (or to their own research), and to be the experience that V K D S H V   D   V W X G H Q W ¶ V   D S S U R D F K   W R   P H Q W R U L Q J   R W K H U V

In all working relationships, clarity of expectations, defined approaches to problem solving and conflict resolution, and an understanding of how to navigate the personal and logistical complexities of the relationship do a great deal to strengthen and improve it. Further, with the privilege that is pursuing higher education, and the privilege of guiding a student through this process, comes a significant amount of responsibility that should be concretely defined for all parties involved.

Prior knowledge of the historically unspoken expectations of the PhD process is an advantage that not all are afforded; this has the potential to create exclusionary barriers within our community, barriers that we have a responsibility to dismantle. Sharing this knowledge broadly and doing the work to optimize existing systems and practices speaks to our commitment to advocate for and meet the needs of all students, faculty members, and staff, and makes our School a better place to learn and to grow.

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personal needs and boundaries and honoring the needs and boundaries of one another. Differences, large and small, can provide opportunities to learn from and grow with one another ±with patience, time, openness, and concerted effort, we can make the most of each of these opportunities.

Communication

Healthy communication is a cornerstone of a successful mentoring relationship, from managing projects to seeking feedback to mitigating conflict. Healthy communication between advisor and student is mutually respectful, constructively honest, and supportive of the goals of each person, regardless of what is occurring in the mentoring relationship at any given time.

Both should practice active listening when they engage with one another, seeking to stay S U H V H Q W   W R   D V N   T X H V W L R Q V   W K D W   D O O R Z   W K H P   W R   O H D focus energy on fully understanding each other and making each other feel understood. Deliberately focusing on these principles can help advisor and student reduce miscommunications and prevent conflicts that arise from not seeing/empathizing with one D Q R W K H U ¶ V   S H U V S H F W L Y H

An advisor and student should talk early and often about the needs and expectati ons of E R W K   U H O D W L Y H   W R   W K H L U   Z R U N L Q J   U H O D W L R Q V K L S $ Q D the student is working toward their goals, and of any particular academic or professional concerns or challenges that the student is facing or expect to face. It is important to continue such conversations throughout the working relationship, as these may grow and develop over a V W X G H Q W ¶ V   W L P H   D W   ' X N H

An advisor should communicate to the student about potential restrictions on their schedule and about any professional plans or obligations which may affect the student or their progress. Student and advisor alike should be able to rely on one another to communicate in a Z D \   W K D W   L V   U H V S H F W I X O   R I   H D F K   R W K H U ¶ V   W L P H . the two should construct explicitly discuss their expectations in regard to timelines for answering correspondence, providing feedback, etc., to be sure that they are reasonable and that they are on the same page.

Good boundaries are also crucial to a professional relationship ±the two should come to a mutual understanding of proper times of day for communication, if certain discussion topics are particularly sensitive for one party or the other, and what roles a student or advisor is not willing to or should not be expected to fulfill for the other. A student and advisor also should feel comfortable raising potential issues with one another, soliciting feedback on their personal performance in their role, and expressing when a need is not being met or when a certain expis

If you find yourself feeling consistently frustrated, leaving conversations feeling physically or emotionally drained, feeling as if you are not being heard, or as if conflicts have become excessively common or severe, this is something to be remedied immediately. See Problem Solving for more details on what to do in these instances.

Mutual and Personal Responsibilities

In order for the working relationship of an advisor and advisee to be functional, both need to maintain certain responsibilities, to one another and to themselves. While these responsibilities are detailed below, these lists are not necessarily comprehensive, and a student and advisor should also strive for candid and productive conversations about their personal expectations as an addendum to this list.

The Student, to their Advisor

- x   Communicate often and honestly about your personal progress, challenges, and goals.
- x   Strive to work efficiently and to be a consistently reliable member of your lab.
- x   6 W U L Y H W R O L V W H Q O H D U Q D Q G J U R Z D V D U H V X O W R

The Student, to Themselves

- x   Be knowledgeable and aware of degree milestones, deadlines, etc., so that you can stay on top of your responsibilities relative to your program. While your advisor, DGS, and DGSA should be a resource in this respect, it is your responsibility to stay informed.
- x   Keep careful records of your work, especially writings, and take care to safeguard all materials or data you produce or acquire as a student.
- x   Be an advocate for yourself – your professional goals, your needs, and your mental health and well-being – be willing to ask for help when you need it and be willing to speak up if you need help meeting needs that the resources available to you are not sufficient to address.

The Advisor, to their Student

- x   Make consistent efforts to inform the student of opportunities that will aid in the pursuit of their future goals.
- x   Provide a clear and consistent set of expectations about what is necessary to successfully defend a PhD dissertation.
- x   Be honest with your student about what they will need to do to meet their goals or to fulfill the requirements of their program.
- x   Be willing to be a resource for your student as they navigate the research, dissertation, and publication processes – especially when your student is still learning these processes. If you find that the student may benefit from expanding their network to meet their needs, help to facilitate such connections.
- x   Be an advocate for your student – support their aspirations, help them to grow, and be willing to be a branch between them and the opportunities and connections to which you may have access.

o When provided the opportunity, be willing to promote the student's abilities, and accomplishments via letter of recommendation, professional introductions (when appropriate), and the like. If you fear you are unable to do this, see the last section, Problem Solving.

The Advisor, to Themselves

- Be honest with yourself about the resources you have to offer each of your students — your time, energy, and effort are a critical part of their (and your) success and knowing your limitations can prevent you from overcommitting.
- Reflect on your past experiences as an advisor — are there things you would have done differently, or sought to do better? If so, find ways to make each mentoring experience better than the last, for their sake and your own.

Both Student and Advisor, to One Another

- Communicate often and honestly with one another, seeking to always listen actively.
- Be respectful of one another's time and energy.
- Be open to constructive feedback from one another, and willing to grow from it. Listen to one another's concerns and make an effort to a[ddress them] before doing so.
- Be sure expectations of one another are both reasonable and clearly stated, and that these expectations are actively fulfilled.

Both Student and Advisor, to Themselves

- Seek out feedback on how you can better fulfill each role you play.
- Seek out opportunities for personal and professional development.
- Act always with academic and scholarly integrity.
- Take advantage of the resources afforded to you to be your best in the roles you play.
- Put your best effort into all work that you do, whether for yourself or others.

What is best effort? Your best effort is the best work you can reasonably do, relative to your personal capability and current circumstances. It is important to be honest with yourself about what your best effort looks like at a given time — it will surely differ in some ways from that of others, and of yourself under different circumstances. Be honest with one another during times when you feel you are not doing your best, or to 'feel unequal' to expectations you may have set in the past.

For more information on how student and advisor alike should take responsibility for their growth and development in their roles, see Reflection and Growth.

Building Academic Community

The relationship between student and advisor is far from the only relationship that will impact either's experience of a student's journey — members, informal mentors, and other members of the academic community should shape your experience and hopefully leave a positive, lasting impression.

Building academic community is something that should be sought actively by student and advisor alike. This may be done by (among other things):

- x identifying opportunities to engage with the broader scientific community through conferences and seminars
- x purposefully seeking out informal mentors who may be helpful in the pursuit of goals or V N L O O V   R X W V L G H   R I   D Q   D G Y L V R U ¶ V   H [S H U W L V H
- x creating a strong and effective committee

A student has the responsibility to be open to the ways in which expanding their academic community could be beneficial to them, and advisors have the responsibility to be an advocate

Reflection and Growth

The process of personal and professional growth is a continuous one; there is never a phase of your life or career where it will be behind you. With this said, it is your responsibility (whether you are a student or a mentor) to seek out the feedback, trainings, and guidance that will help you to grow in the roles you fill or hope to fill. This may manifest as:

x Seeking out and participating in seminars and trainings relative to your personal and professional development. [Duke OPTIONS](#) is an especially strong resource for these efforts.

x Starting dialogues with supervisors, colleagues, and mentees about what you can do better in your role relative to them, and making thoughtful effort to improve in those ways.

x Self-reflection – consider past conflicts and challenges, identifying roles you may have played, and seek to address them. This helps to reduce, or even prevent, these challenges from occurring in the future.

x Practicing mindfulness in your communications with colleagues, mentors, and mentees. How do you feel physically when you engage with those in your professional network, and what effect might that have on you? What emotions arise in challenging circumstances, and how do you manage them? Being present with our bodies and minds when engaging with others can help us to notice issues before they arise, to address internal and external stressors, and to make us more mindful members of our communities.

There are many ways in which each of us can grow: becoming more efficient and effective, becoming better communicators, becoming better advocates for ourselves and those we support. Consider creative ways to do this, and make them a priority in your everyday. The more we put time and effort into ourselves and into the roles we play within our communities, the stronger those communities, and all within them, will be.

Problem Solving

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- x The student is detached and disinterested in the work that they are doing and at least one member of the partnership feels the student would be better suited to a different advisor doing different work
- x The advisor feels unwilling or unable to provide honest letters of recommendation or otherwise advocate for the student
- x The student and advisor do not feel they are capable of having a functional working relationship
- x The student and advisor feel they have an irreconcilable difference that would interfere
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- x Something has occurred which necessitates the termination of the working relationship

The process of changing your advising circumstances is detailed below:

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your program.]

Conclusion

   We hope that the guidelines detailed in this document have been helpful to define and