

Statement of Expectations for Graduate Student Mentoring

Department of Entomology

(February 2023)

The mission of the graduate program in the Department of Entomology is to provide students with an excellent and individualized education in preparation for careers in academia, government, teaching and industry. Effective student mentoring is essential to this mission. Here we outline the values that inform our mentoring policies and goals.

Mentoring Values

1. **Professional Environment:** Maintaining a collegial, professional environment is essential for a student's professional development and provides a model for future behavior and success.
2. **Open Communication:** Clear and open communication between the program, mentors and students minimizes confusion, misinterpretation and conflict among these parties. Students should feel free to state opinions and discuss ideas and develop the maturity to tolerate professional disagreement.
3. **Valuing the Individual:** Everyone is to be valued as an individual, with unique values, goals, identities and personalities. All reasonable effort should be made to accommodate and respect individual differences in both mentees and mentors within the context of the graduate programs' mission. Communication, negotiation and compromise are essential to mentoring and being mentored.
4. **Reliable Access to Essential Resources:** Professional development requires a reliable source of funding for living expenses as well as resources in the form of educational opportunities (i.e., courses, internships, workshops), research (i.e., equipment, supplies, travel) and professional communication in the form of presentations at professional meetings, writing grant proposals, preparing manuscripts for publication and communicating with editors, formatting CVs, preparing a job application, etc.
5. **Expert Advice and Training:** Each student admitted to the graduate program and to the lab of a specific faculty mentor should expect to have expert advice on navigating academic policies, formulating research questions, experimental design & troubleshooting, interpretation of data, setting goals and milestones and receiving objective and constructive evaluation and feedback.

Mentoring by Faculty Advisors*

Advisors in the Department of Entomology will ...

1. establish a research environment that is intellectually stimulating, supportive, safe, and free of harassment.
2. know the policies, requirements, and deadlines of the graduate program and those of the Graduate School and assist the student in navigating these.
3. meet regularly with their graduate student at a mutually agreed-upon interval and provide constructive feedback on progress and results of ongoing research and/or coursework. Meetings are an opportunity to ask questions, discuss expectations, receive feedback, and set goals.

4. work with their graduate student to develop and execute a thesis or dissertation project, which will include providing advice in writing a proposal and discussing how to achieve the goals of the proposal. The advisor will work with their student to ensure continuing progress.
5. work with their graduate student to select a thesis or dissertation committee. The advisor will support their student in arranging regular (at least annual) committee meetings to review the student's progress.
6. provide feedback on their graduate student's written documents within a reasonable and specified time frame.
7. mentor their graduate student in following proper lab procedure and maintaining documentation of their work (e.g., lab procedures, data notebooks, computer code, academic integrity).
8. discuss expectations of their graduate students' work hours, working remotely, sick leave, and vacation. The advisor and student will inform each other in advance of any planned absences.
9. discuss acknowledgement of intellectual contributions to and authorship of presentations, publications, and other publicly disseminated work with their graduate student. The advisor will work with their student to present and publish the student's work in a timely manner.
10. discuss intellectual property issues with the student regarding disclosure, patent rights, and publishing research discoveries.
11. encourage their graduate student to attend professional meetings or workshops, and make an effort to secure and facilitate funding for such activities. The advisor will promote attendance at seminars and journal clubs that are beneficial to their student's professional development.
12. provide career advice and assist in finding a position for their graduate student following graduation. The advisor will provide honest letters of recommendation and be accessible for advice and feedback on career goals.
13. make every effort securing graduate student funding. The advisor will work with their graduate student and the graduate department to ensure the student remains funded and has adequate resources to accomplish their proposed research.
14. not require the graduate student to perform tasks unrelated to their academic and professional development (e.g., babysitting, dog walking, car washing, etc.).

Mentoring by the Graduate Program

The Dept of Entomology is committed to including graduate students in as many facets of departmental life as possible. Students who feel engaged and valued are more likely to contribute to the common objectives of the department, participate in activities that benefit their own professional advancement, seek advice and assistance from the department community, and carry a positive view of the department after graduation. Consequently, policies and traditions in the department emphasize student involvement in the life of the department.

1. Entomology Student Organization

The Department of Entomology has encouraged the formation and maintenance of a self-organizing [Entomology Student Organization \(ESO\)](#). ESO elects officers and appoints student representatives to serve on committees at the departmental, college and university levels. ESO is engaged in multiple activities key to student mentoring, including significant contribution to the orientation of incoming students, maintaining a [graduate student handbook](#), matching peer mentors with new students and organizing social events open to all department members. The ESO serves to both integrate new students and engage all graduate students in departmental affairs.

2. Recruitment / Interview Meetings with Prospective Students

In February of each year prospective graduate students are invited to attend a recruitment/interview event. This event provides applicants with face-to-face meetings with prospective mentors, to have open “faculty-free” discussions with current graduate students, and to learn about the culture and policies of the entomology program. ESO plays a significant role in this event.

3. New-Student Orientation

Orientation is held during the week before the start of fall semester. The orientation consists of a presentation by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), meetings with departmental staff, presentations by representatives from various on-campus offices and groups, and extensive interactions with current students. The DGS presentation emphasizes the differences between undergraduate and graduate study, the expectations of the program for “professional in training”, what students should expect from the program and general advice on dealing with the normal stresses of being a graduate student.

4. Peer Mentoring

The Entomology Student Organization matches a senior graduate student to each incoming student. First meetings between mentor and mentee takes place during the orientation day. The peer mentor provides information about departmental culture, classes, policies and general advice.

5. Departmental Retreat

The department holds an annual departmental retreat at an off-campus venue. The retreat is open to all staff, students and faculty in the department. The retreat includes a “state of the department” presentation by the department chair and presentations by faculty, postdocs and students from various labs. These are followed by break-out sessions in which communities within the department (faculty, graduate students, staff, postdocs) discuss issues that are important to them. All attendees then reassemble to discuss the issues that emerged from the break-out sessions.

6. Student Representation at Faculty Meetings

The ESO president attends all monthly faculty meetings. The president is encouraged to participate in all discussions, to present student proposals or concerns, and to provide ESO members with a report on the topics discussed at the faculty meeting.

7. Annual Reviews and Statements of Mutual Expectation

Each year the Coordinator of Graduate Studies (CGS) provides entomology graduate students and their faculty mentors with electronic forms to record student accomplishments, to document success or failure in completing programmatic milestones, and to formalize statements of mutual expectations between student and mentor for the coming year. The results are reviewed by the DGS to determine if the information provided is complete and sufficient and if deadlines and milestones have been met. The DGS

informs the student and mentor of any problems and how they may be remedied. The annual report also offers the student and mentor the opportunity to provide confidential statements to the DGS. Depending on the nature of these comments, the DGS may have discussions with the student, the mentor, or both to address problems in communication or other issues.

8. Exit Interviews

The DGS and Dept Chair meets with students that are near graduation or have recently graduated from the entomology program. The goal is to determine if there are aspects of the graduate program that can be improved or otherwise changed to enhance the student experience. Many of the events, policies and procedures mentioned previously emerged from these discussions.

When Problems in Mentoring Arise

It is common for problems or disagreements to arise between people who work closely together for long periods. Students and mentors are encouraged to have open and honest discussions with each other when this happens. If differences cannot be worked out between student and mentor, the following steps may be taken:

1. Either the student or advisor may bring the issue to the student's thesis/dissertation committee and arrange a meeting to discuss the issue.
2. The Graduate Program Director and the Department Chair are always available for one-on-one conversations. These individuals can provide advice and suggestions and/or serve as sounding boards for ideas. They are also available to speak on behalf of the "complainant" but will also respect confidentiality.
3. The Graduate Program Director and the Department Chair are also available to moderate a discussion between the advisor and student (3 folks in the room) to help resolve any issues.
4. If issues persist, the student ombudsperson can be engaged (<https://gradschool.umd.edu/about-us/ombuds-office>)
5. Sometimes, there is just a bad fit between the student and advisor. This does not mean that the advisor is bad or that the student cannot succeed in graduate school. It just reflects a bad match, that was not anticipated when the two started working together. In this case, if differences cannot be resolved, the student will be encouraged to try to find a new advisor.
 - a. The Department will cover the student's stipend through a TA or RA for one semester
 - b. During that semester, the student may rotate through 1-2 labs to try to find a better fit. The student should consult their committee, the graduate director or others for advice about which labs to seek rotation in, and they will contact faculty directly to determine whether the faculty member is willing/able to take on a student.
 - c. By the end of two rotations, it is expected that the student will have found a new faculty member who agrees to advise them. At that point, the student will switch into the lab, informing the Graduate Director and Graduate Coordinator.
 - d. The new faculty advisor assumes financial responsibility for the student starting at the beginning of the semester after the rotation.
 - e. Should the student not find an advisor after 1 semester of rotation, the department may consider supporting them for one additional semester to complete more rotations.

*Section modified from "Advisor-Doctoral Student Expectations at Scripps Institute of Oceanography"
https://scripps.ucsd.edu/system/files/2020-09/Advisor-Doctoral_Student_Expectations_at_SIO.pdf