

***Graduate School Advising Agreement Guidelines***

Organized and effective advising is beneficial to both the advisor and advisee. This document is intended to be a supplemental tool created to support a graduate student’s short and long-term goals while also giving advisors tools to clarify expectations. This document is meant to facilitate this conversation between the graduate student and their advisor and should be reviewed once a semester and/or once significant educational milestones have been met. This document should be modified and developed collaboratively throughout the advisee/advisor working relationship. The Graduate School recommends advisees and advisors adhere to the following 10 guidelines:

1. **Regular one-on-one meetings:** Both advisee and advisor should agree on the frequency and length of meetings. Feedback is critical to student success and clear expectations will help ensure that both parties are successful and supported during the advisee/advisor relationship. Depending on where the student is in the graduate degree process, meetings may need to be more or less frequent.

Advisors and advisees should agree on how agendas for these meetings will be formulated. One approach, especially for more advanced students, would be for the advisee to send out an agenda to their advisor prior to their meetings with a list of all items that need to be discussed and any issues the advisee would like to bring to the attention of their advisor; if the advisor wishes to add anything to the list, they should make edits to the emailed list and send it back to their advisee.

1. **Intentional Communication:** Both advisee and advisor should properly prepare for meetings and adhere to the agenda.
2. **Documentation and record keeping:** Both advisee and advisor should take notes during meetings. The advisee should email a description of discussion topics and any agreed upon next steps to their advisor. The advisor will let the student know if any corrections or modifications need to be made. These notes will help clarify expectations and provide records for both parties.
3. **Lab Work/Teaching Expectations and Requirements (GRA and TA appointments):** If applicable, the advisor should provide an overview of lab and/or department expectations, practices, and requirements so that the student has the information necessary to succeed in their research and/or teaching role. ***(Please see the included lab sample document for an example of how to address department specific expectations in supplemental materials.)***

Students should be informed in advance about what kind of work they are expected to do and how they will be included in projects/research currently underway.

Students who have teaching appointments should be informed about the responsibilities for the courses they are assigned to teach along with key contacts for the appointment. Will the students serve as teaching assistants or co-teachers? How many course sections will the advisee be required to teach? How many preps should they expect to prepare each semester? How many students will they have in each course? Will the syllabus be provided, or should they expect to create their own? Will their teaching loads be regular or should they expect changes from semester to semester?

Lab, teaching and department documents are supplemental to this form. Advisors, please be sure to include pertinent information about lab, teaching and department expectations to your advisee. Advisees please ask clarifying questions so that you have a holistic understanding of the workload, principles, and expectations surrounding your work for your department/advisor.

1. **Graduation and milestone completion timeline:**

***The chart below is a SAMPLE timeline.***

Advisee and advisor should discuss progression and timelines related to graduation at an early point in the student’s graduate career. Advisee and advisor should have knowledge of [Graduate School](https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/current-students/graduate-school-policies-and-procedures) and program requirements, guidelines and expectations for graduation. Advisees should discuss the timeline of important milestones with their advisors and make sure they understand what is expected at each step. The timeline should be evaluated each semester and updated if necessary.

Milestones marked with \* are required by the Graduate School. Other milestones are program specific and can be removed from the timeline as appropriate. (For example, preliminary exam or dissertation prospectus may be removed if not required by the program.) Other milestones can be added as necessary. Specificity can be added to this document by noting whether the milestone should be completed during a fall or spring semester, if necessary.

In order to have the degree awarded in any given semester, advisees and advisors should be aware of relevant [deadlines](https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/academic-resources/graduation-requirements) set by the Graduate School for the dissertation defense and submission of approved dissertation. Completion dates for these milestones should be set with those deadlines in mind.

Students should also be informed on how and when to form their committees. As this is specific to departments, please add any applicable information to this document.

| **Academic Milestone** | **Year 1** | **Year 2** | **Year 3** | **Year 4** | **Year 5** | **Year 6** | **Notes** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Preliminary/Qualifying exam |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Completion of coursework\* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Comprehensive exam\* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Dissertation prospectus/proposal |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Dissertation defense\* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Submission of approved dissertation\* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| Other program milestones: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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1. **Professional obligations and dates:** Advisees should be aware of department and lab meetings that they are required to attend. Any service expectations or professional opportunities should be discussed with the advisee.

The advisor should discuss conference attendance recommendations and requirements. Advisors should also explain how advisees should obtain funding for travel.

1. **Publication expectations:** ***(If applicable in the student’s field of study.)*** The advisee and advisor should discuss topics and timeline for student papers/publications. Will the dissertation follow, say, a three-paper model? What must be completed/published prior to the dissertation defense? The advisee and advisor should discuss how the work will be edited and submitted. Advisees should have a clear understanding of primary authorship and co-authorship expectations on papers they publish prior to graduation.
2. **Feedback:** Prior to submitting any work to the advisor, the advisor and advisee should discuss the feedback process. Guiding questions include: Should the advisee ask for specific feedback from the advisor? What is the nature of the feedback that will be provided by the advisor? Does the advisor do line-by-line edits or should the advisee plan on using campus writing support services for documents edits? What are the expectations for turnaround time between when a draft is submitted and when the advisee can expect feedback?

Advisors should let advisees know how long it will take for them to provide feedback. Advisors should commit to providing feedback in a timely fashion based on upcoming milestone goals.

Advisors should provide regular academic performance updates, including clarifying expectations surrounding level and quality of work. Advisors should let advisees know if they are making adequate progress, and what they need to do to meet graduate school level expectations to secure graduation.

1. **Boundaries:** Both advisee and advisor should be clear on one another’s personal and professional boundaries. The power differential in this dynamic could convolute the working relationship, and both advisor and advisee should discuss and agree to the work that needs to be done and how it will come to completion. The advisee and advisor should also decide when phoning or texting a personal number is appropriate.

How will the advisee and advisor communicate? Email, text, phone calls? What kind of response time should both parties anticipate?

1. **Conflict Resolution:** If conflict should arise, the student advisee and faculty advisor should attempt to resolve the issue informally. The Director of Graduate Studies, program director, or Department Chair may also be contacted for context and guidance. The [Ombuds](https://www.colorado.edu/ombuds/) office can act as a confidential resource for conflict resolution, along with assisting with mediation in some cases. If resolution cannot be reached informally, students may consider additional avenues for their complaint. The Graduate School grievance process and procedures document includes information about jurisdiction for a variety of issues, and explains the process for grievances which fall under the purview of the Graduate School. [Resources](https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/current-students/campus-resources) related to conflict resolution and information on the [grievance process](https://www.colorado.edu/graduateschool/current-students/graduate-school-policies-and-procedures) can be found on the Graduate School website. Conflicts related to discrimination and harassment or sexual misconduct should be reported to the [Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance](https://www.colorado.edu/oiec/reporting-resolution-options). If the student is employed by CU and has an employment grievance, they should consult [Faculty Affairs](https://www.colorado.edu/facultyaffairs/) for guidance.

In conclusion, this document can assist in establishing productive professional relationships. This document serves both the advisee and the advisor by providing guidelines and a plan for clarifying expectations, lessening conflict and providing structure. By initialing below, both parties are acknowledging that they have received, read, and understand the information above.

*The information contained in this document is intended to provide recommended best practices and guidelines for graduate student mentoring. It is not intended to, nor does it, create an express or implied contract between the advisor and advisee or between or among the university and any faculty member or graduate student.*

**Please feel free to add any other points of concern below prior to initialing.**

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Student Initials: Advisor Initials:

Please contact The Director of Graduate Community and Program Development, Dr. Leslie-Ellen Blood <leslie.blood@colorado.edu>, with any questions you have on how to use this document.

**The PI Lab**

**Note: the text below is meant to serve as an *example*.** It is strongly suggested that advisors evaluate the text below and customize to the specific needs of their individual lab. Once created, this information should be reviewed with students annually in case something needs to be changed. Discuss these onboarding items with students. This information can help reduce conflict by aligning lab-specific and advisor-specific expectations early. Examples are provided below of potential answers. Your answers will likely be different, so please tailor them to meet your needs and research methods.

**Purpose:***Example:*

**Lab Hours are:**

*Example: Generally, 7 AM to 4 PM for me, and ideally our paths would cross during that time. If you’re not a ‘morning person’ I’d expect you to work later in the day. I expect you to come to lab meetings which are on X days at X time. You’re an adult, so I expect you to manage that time yourself, and I expect the work will get done. How you want to schedule that time is up to you.*

**If you want to reach me:***Example: Email is always good, in person is great but I’m not always in the immediate vicinity. Feel free to drop in when we’re not having our one on one. When my door is closed please do not disturb. My cell is X and my office is room Y.*

**When I go out of town:***Example: I will let you know. If it’s a personal vacation, I’ll be offline. If it’s professional (conference, talk, etc) I’ll still be reachable but my emails will be delayed. I keep a calendar at X so you’ll know where I am and when I’ll be back. If there’s an issue that needs immediate assistance, please speak to <Lab Manager> until I am back.*

**If I email you:***Example: I expect a response within 2 business days, if I would like a faster response (during tight deadline times) we will have a conversation about that. Generally, if I email on weekends I don’t expect an answer until Monday during lab hours, unless we’re up against a deadline and we’ve had a discussion about emailing outside of the workweek. I do not expect late night responses or very early morning responses if I email during those times. I do, however, expect a response.*

**If you email me:** *Example: I will respond to all emails from you within 2-3 business days. If I am on travel, this can be delayed. I’ll be sure you’re aware of when I will be offline. If I don’t respond during ‘normal times’, please email again – I get a great deal of email so sometimes I need to be reminded.*

**If you want to go on a vacation:**

*Example: Just give me 3 weeks’ notice. Certain times of year are bad for travel. Such as during the school year when you are TA’ing. We’ll coordinate a calendar to make sure the needs of the lab are covered. For family emergencies, obviously no notice is needed (but please let me know you are out so I don’t worry). Students in my lab get 2 weeks vacation a year, plus major university holidays.*

**If you are sick:***Example: Please do not come to the lab. Rest and get well, see a doctor if you need to. If you need to communicate anything serious, please let me know (I don’t need details, but I do want to know how you are doing).*

**If you make a mistake:***Example: Please come to me or to a postdoc in the lab. Mistakes happen during grad school, and during the scientific process. THIS IS NORMAL. This is how we learn.* **If you and I are in conflict:**  
*Example: We should try to resolve the problem informally first, but if you don’t feel like I’m hearing your concern or you feel uncomfortable raising it with me, you should first go to the graduate advisor (if you don’t need confidentiality) or the Ombuds office (if you need confidentiality). They should help you with mediation, and will direct you to formal complaint avenues should it prove necessary.*

**If you feel your research interests have changed OR our working relationship is not the best fit:**

*Example: It is okay to let me know if your research interests have changed, OR if you feel the working culture in this lab is not the best fit for you. Please feel free to come and discuss with me on this. We can sort out issues together and work on your next plan of action or next steps to succeed in the PhD program.*

**Core values of my lab (List 5):***Example: Respect. Accountability. Perseverance. Compassion. Support.*

**Lab Culture:***Example: I work hard to maintain a respectful lab culture. If at any time there is an issue between lab mates I hope it can be resolved through discussion and mutual respect. If it becomes a problem, please bring it to me. Everyone should feel safe, supported, and empowered.*

**Graduate School is:***Example: Not easy! It’s a marathon, and there will be ups and downs throughout the process. You may feel like a failure, or an imposter. THIS IS NORMAL. Please know you were brought into my lab for a good reason, and I am here to support you – work hard and don’t give up. You can do this!*

**EXPECTATIONS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS:**

**Department Expectations:**

See the graduate handbook <link>

**Expectations Specific to My Lab:**

**<Make use of a table to provide lab-specific milestones; Customize as needed>**

| **Lab milestones** | **Year 1** | **Year 2** | **Year 3** | **Year 4** | **Year 5** | **Year 6** | **Notes** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Master equipment |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Read X papers |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Publish a paper |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Go to a conference |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Give annual talk |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Present at lab meeting |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Broad goals: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**<List other lab-related expectations here>**

**What I expect from YOU:**

**When you graduate from my lab I hope you:**

**I expect you to manage your pace to and goals of the PhD by:**

**I expect you to communicate to others in my lab:**

**I hope you obtain research skills and abilities in:**

**I expect your communication with me (and others):**

**My expectations for deadlines are:**

**What You Should Expect From Me:**

**As a mentor I promise to:**

**In regard to your career goals I promise to:**

**Feedback from me will be:**

**You will be evaluated on your progress (on project and towards degree – how often?):**

**This document serves both the advisee and the advisor by providing agreed-upon guidelines which will clarify expectations, lessen conflict and provide structure.**