

PACE Mentee Expectations

As a mentee in the Physics & Astronomy Community Excellence programs - namely Fire Up Fridays (FUFs) and Exceleration, the expectations described in this document will (if followed) will help you get the most out of these programs and build strong, rewarding relationships with your FUF and Exceleration mentors. (It can also help you strengthen your working relationship with your research advisor and other faculty mentors!)

Initiative

Don't be afraid to lead the relationship. You are the center of YOUR universe, so it's up to you to build and shape it.

1. **Start off by reflecting on your goals.** Some questions to get you started on this reflection are:
 - a. What are your short (e.g. this quarter, this academic year) and long term goals (e.g. during grad program, post PhD)?
 - b. How can these goals be achieved?
 - c. What are the knowledge/skill/experience gaps you need to fill to achieve your goals?
2. **Be proactive in reaching out to your mentor.** You can best manage the relationship by:
 - a. asking for meetings when you want/need them
 - b. sending polite reminders of meetings, action items, etc.
 - c. asking for their feedback/evaluation of you, your work and/or performance
 - d. asking what's expected of you and the relationship (this may pertain slightly more to your relationship with your research advisor)
3. **Prepare for your meetings.**
 - a. Craft a simple agenda for the discussion to ensure you have time to discuss the most pressing items
 - b. Share the agenda!
 - c. Read up on the topics you want to discuss - i.e. consider not asking questions Google can easily answer.
 - d. Recap the last meeting and provide any relevant updates. (Remember, growth is exciting and should be celebrated! This should not feel like a dreaded progress report.)
4. If your mentor is not an expert in an area you would like help with, **ask for additional mentor recommendations.** (Remember, you can peruse all FUF & Exceleration Mentor's biographies with their areas of expertise on our website.)

Communication Skills

Interpersonal communication skills are key to a rewarding mentorship. They show mutual respect and prevent future misunderstandings.

1. **Proactively communicate.** Some examples of this are:

- a. respecting your mentor's time (e.g. ask when they need to end the meeting and be a diligent timekeeper)
 - b. establish mutual rules for canceling meetings (e.g. text me at least 2 hours before, or email 24 hours before, etc.)
 - c. establish a quarterly meeting schedule
 - d. if agreed upon, provide reminders
 - e. reply promptly (~24-36 hours) i.e. don't "ghost"
 - f. avoid long emails - stick to yes/no questions and 1 sentence updates (all other communication is best conducted during meetings)
2. **Using healthy communication techniques will strengthen your relationship.**
- a. be candid with and respect boundaries (time, physical, pronouns, topics of conversation, e.g. "I don't think that's appropriate for us to discuss")
 - b. build trust with them (e.g. keep your promises)
 - c. openly address any areas of difference or conflict
 - d. have in person meetings when possible (tone is difficult to convey in email/text)
 - e. stick with "I" statements ("I feel ____ when ____ because _____. What I need is ____").
3. Some **additional key communication skills** are:
- a. active listening (fully concentrate on what your mentor is saying, if you are unclear, try to summarize and repeat it back to verify)
 - b. don't make assumptions (often unhelpful words are from ignorance/miscommunication)
 - c. practice cultural sensitivity (see point b.)
 - d. exercise a healthy and non-offensive sense of humor (see point c.)
 - e. look for commonalities and build upon them together (mentors are not always your ideal best friend, and they shouldn't be. Focus on what you have in common and using that to help yourself!)
 - f. watch for non-verbal cues (see point c. and b.)

Follow Through

Be persistent with all 'next steps'. Successful mentor-mentee relationships start first with mutual faith, in both words and in action.

1. **Verbally summarize and reflect at the end of the meeting.**
 - a. It's often good to do a quick personal summary and reflection after the meeting. This can help clarify action items and takeaways for both parties.
2. **Define action items and next steps during the meeting.**
 - a. Recap these at the very end of the meeting.
 - b. Give each item a completion timeline.
3. **Underpromise and overdeliver.**
 - a. By practicing setting healthy expectations for yourself and those around you, you become more self aware of your own work habits and abilities.
 - b. A good tool is to multiply your initial estimate by 2-3 times.
4. **Try the advice, and soon!**
 - a. It may sound unconventional, or seem undesirable, but your mentor is there to provide you with resources and advice that you haven't tried before. Give it a shot!
 - b. Try to learn at your quickest pace and be communicative when you're having trouble.