**Mentoring and Advising Contract Points of Agreement**

Here are suggested points of agreement every graduate student should feel empowered to discuss with their adviser or mentor. These were written for use in an annual mentorship agreement or similar document to aid in the adviser/ student cooperative partnership. You can pick and choose the ones most appropriate for you, customize them, and you may want to reserve some for when they are most appropriate in your academic trajectory so progress can be assessed during follow up meetings. For example, you may want to reserve mentorship on publishing or patent rights for the year you begin a book deal or licensing agreement. This way, you can provide specific actionable steps to gain that knowledge and so you can later evaluate whether you and your mentor followed through with those commitments. These agreements are left general. You may want to review them and rewrite them as “I” statements (I commit to…) and provide additional specific expectations. Some examples of these are provided below.

**Faculty Adviser Commitment**

The faculty adviser recognizes that by accepting a student as an advisee or mentee, they are serving as a mentor, and accept the following responsibilities:

**General:**

* Am committed to mentoring the graduate student in a fashion that I am comfortable with but also enables their success. To achieve this, I will be receptive to feedback from the student on the mentoring styles they find beneficial.
* Aim to provide an environment that is respectful, supportive, and safe through the use of equitable language, free of harassment.
* Provide an environment that this is encouraging, inspiring professional confidence, with regular acknowledgements of the mentee’s effort and hard work.
* Understand that “mentorship” involves passing down knowledge and experiences, modeling values and attitudes, opening doors of opportunity, encouragement, motivation, contributing to mentee’s networking, and challenging the mentee appropriately.

**Research & Dissertation Oriented:**

* Facilitate the training of the graduate student in complementary skills needed to be a successful researcher; these may include oral and written communication skills, grant writing, lab management, animal and human research policies, the ethical conduct of research, and scientific professionalism.
* Be committed to helping the student plan and direct their research project by guiding them in setting reasonable and attainable goals and establishing a timeline for completion.
* Be committed to meeting with the student on a regular basis and provide resources in order for them to conduct thesis/dissertation research.
* Be knowledgeable about, and guide the graduate student through, the requirements and deadlines of their graduate program or guide the student to a faculty or staff member that is more knowledgeable of these details.
* Help the graduate student select a thesis/dissertation committee and support the student in assembling that this committee at least twice a year to review the graduate student’s progress.

**Career Development:**

* Understand that even if I, the mentor, do not have experience with some particular area of development, I will assist the student in finding the correct resources, use my networks and access to look into it myself, and follow up with the student to make sure they found what they need.
* Will not discourage the student from pursuing a career outside of academia, nor will I withhold resources and support (like letters of recommendation) that help them complete their degree/ start their career if I am made aware that they will leave academia.
* Discuss authorship standards regarding papers with the graduate student and acknowledge the graduate student’s contributions to projects beyond their dissertation, working to help them publish or present their work in a timely manner.
* Discuss intellectual policy issues with the student in regard to disclosure, patent rights and publishing research discoveries, when they are appropriate.
* Encourage the student to seek additional opportunities in career development training.
* Encourage the graduate student to attend professional meetings and make an effort to help them secure funding for such activities.
* Advocate for your mentee among professional colleagues and promote them by introducing them and their work to your professional networks and at conferences and local events.
* Discuss standards on authorship and attendance at professional meetings with the student, understanding that while they need to know about these, some “accepted practices” are inequitable and unreasonable.
* Assist, when reasonable and within your means, in securing a post-graduate position while providing honest letters of recommendation for their next phase of professional development, being accessible to give advice and feedback on career goals.

**Suggestions specific to the PI, main adviser, or Chair if Committee:**

* The mentor makes an effort to be aware when other members of the committee, lab, or research group are behaving inappropriately or unfairly towards the student and is willing to intercede or move the project forward by using your position to amplify the student’s needs/ ideas (e.g. backing student on a point to give it weight).
* As the lead of the committee, the mentor agrees to be cognizant of situations where there is disagreement among the group to the point that it is hindering progress of the student (it is okay to directly ask). These situations may require flexibility or may be an opportunity to encourage the student to make “a call” (i.e., during edits of co-authored papers or dissertation chapters).
* Both parties will discuss a communication plan and formally acknowledge the expected timelines for submission and responses for different scenarios, such as but not limited to, email responses, timing for requesting letters of recommendation, written feedback on grant applications, edits on chapters, etc.

**Related to interpersonal interactions:**

We each will review the Student Code of Conduct and/ or university FERPA requirements.

Because successful mentoring relationships involve a degree of self-disclosure and trust, we agree to the following expectations regarding openness, honestly, confidentiality, boundaries, etc.:

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Specific Examples You Can Use or Alter as Needed:**

1. Statements of a personal nature (family situations, health information, past experiences etc.) whether mentioned during meetings or read in grant applications (such as those often seen in personal statements) will be held in confidence (except when legally required to do otherwise such as mandatory reporting of self-harm or sexual violence).
2. We are comfortable using first names when referring to each in other both in person and in emails, except for situations in front of undergraduates (such as TA emails to class) or in these specific professional situations: conferences, job talks, colloquia wherein we will use these specific honoraria: Dr., Prof., Mx., etc.
3. Adviser is willing to hear complaints, concerns, and critiques of the program without allowing these concerns to reflect poorly on the student.
4. The mentee prefers to be referred to by this name both verbally and in text: *name with pronunciation*
5. The mentee has indicated that they prefer a hands-off mentorship style, therefore, we will meet regularly to assess progress towards goals, but I will not assess the student as disengaged simply because they are working independently.
6. The mentor will always leave the door to the office open when we are the only two people in the room.

**Tips to the Student:**

* Advocate for yourself
* But also respect your own boundaries and comfort level
* Ask trusted colleagues for help with wording
* Realize your adviser may have never been asked for something this specific before. Just because they are surprised or intrigued, does not mean they are not receptive or willing to try.
* This is a two-way street and your adviser may have expectations of you. Be familiar with the code of conduct, your approach handbook, and evaluation standards so you can have a clear idea of what is acceptable to ask of you and what is not.
* An agreement might not work out and need to be revised and that is okay.
* Regularly assess your agreements by asking, did we follow through with the action steps?
* Realize your mentor may need very specific suggestions (i.e. I need to be shown how to use that machine by you in person) and may never have really learned how to mentor.
* Before proposing a contract suggestion, ask yourself if you’ve provided the necessary information that they need to agree to it. They may ask for specific examples if they don’t understand how to meet that need. For example, if you are interested in working outside of academia, something they’ve possibly never done, they may need very specific questions so they can follow up with you.
* They may ask you uncomfortable questions such as, “How do you pronounce your name correctly?”; “What are your gender pronouns?”; “What does your family do?” Think about potential questions related to your expectations in advance and decide for yourself whether you want to answer these questions and how. You do not have to divulge any information you uncomfortable with, however, you may want to think about what level of trust you require and how that will shape specific expectations you set. Disclosing sensitive information- such as that you are first generation or have accessibility exceptions, may be important to asking for what you need, but carries its own risks.
* Be open to constructive feedback. It’s okay to say sometimes, just “You’re right, let’s improve it/ how can I improve it?” (Writing is a great example of this).
* It’s also okay to tell your supervisor they are wrong, if you are comfortable doing so. We all make mistakes. If you do, communicate using the same level of respect and consideration you would like your advisor to use with you. It’s also okay knowing they are wrong and not needing to tell them. Protecting yourself from potential defensiveness or backlash does not invalidate what you know to be true.

**How to ask for some of these agreements:**

Many of these agreements can be asked for by directly pointing to these general statements as reasonable, fair, and widely adhered to. Some may require more strategic discussion, while others may require specific guidelines that need to be negotiated. Here are some approaches you can try:

“I would be reassured if I could have your commitment to keep my personal details in confidentiality.”

“I would find it helpful if I knew your guidelines on letters of recommendation; would a weekly reminder email be helpful, or how often do you prefer?”

“I’d like to know more about xyz, but I know that this information isn’t applicable to me right now. Can we agree to discuss xyz in the next 6 months?”

“Sometimes I may want to share with you general constructive critiques of the program, would you be willing to listen to these concerns?”

“If we were to come to an agreement on xyz, what sounds like a reasonable approach to you? This is what works for me.”

“Can I put in my mentorship plan that I have an expectation of your support to do xyz?”

**Sources/ References:**

1. Interdisciplinary Research Colloquium Faculty Mentoring Plan, by the ASU Graduate College Mentoring Network
2. Expectations of Advisors and Advisees (2016), <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/academics/graduate/expectations/>
3. Advising Agreement, <https://www.upstate.edu/grad/pdf/AdvisingAgreement_Biochem.pdf>
4. Creating a mentoring agreement, <https://graduate.asu.edu/blog/best-practices/creating-mentoring-agreement>