

IGPNS Mentor-Mentee Guidelines

Effective PhD training in the Interdepartmental Graduate Program in Nutritional Sciences (IGPNS) relies on a strong relationship between the faculty mentor and the PhD student. Both the mentor and the student enter this relationship with expectations of each other and it is important to ensure that there is a shared understanding and agreement of those expectations. This document lays out some common commitments that we expect faculty members and students to make to each other. It is a fluid document in that we expect some changes in expectations to occur as a student progresses through their PhD training. If adopted, this document should be reviewed by the student and mentor at least once a year to ensure that they are working together effectively.

Expectations of the PhD student

- I acknowledge that I have the primary responsibility for the successful attainment of my degree. This includes my commitment to focus my time and efforts on classes and in the laboratory. I will maintain a high level of professionalism, self-motivation, engagement, scientific curiosity, and ethical standards.
- I recognize that I have the primary responsibility for my professional development and commitment to life-long learning. I will stay abreast of the latest developments in my area of research through reading the literature and attending relevant seminars and scientific meetings. I will actively seek out opportunities outside of the classroom (e.g. professional development seminars, workshops in scientific writing or grant writing, oral communication skills, teaching, etc.) to help meet my career goals.
- I will develop a timeline to achieve my educational and research goals and review it annually with my mentor.
- I will maintain detailed, organized, and accurate laboratory records and in the format requested by my mentor. I will regularly backup computer files to avoid loss of valuable data.
- I will be honest and respect all ethical standards when I conduct my research and engage in scholarly activity. This includes compliance with all institutional and federal regulations for human and animal research as well as those regarding copyright infringement, permissions, plagiarism, etc.
- I will strive to be increasingly independent in my training activities including designing and conducting experiments, writing grant applications and publications, and mentoring undergraduate or less experienced graduate students.
- I will seek regular feedback on my performance and challenges I face through open and timely discussions with my mentor. I will be accepting of advice and constructive criticism and recognize that this feedback is intended to improve my professional skills.
- I will be knowledgeable and responsible for complying with the policies, deadlines, and requirements of the IGPNS, the graduate school, and the university.
- I will treat others with respect and foster a positive workplace climate in my research lab, program, and department.

Expectations of the Faculty Mentor(s)

- I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to facilitate the training and professional development of the PhD student to the best of my abilities. I will work closely with this student to develop a program plan that best prepares them to achieve their PhD training goals.
- I will maintain a relationship with the student that is based on trust and mutual respect.
- I recognize that open communication and periodic formal performance reviews will ensure that the expectations of both parties are met.
- I will foster an increasing level of independence and responsibility as the student progresses through their PhD training.
- I will promote all ethical standards for conducting research and engaging in scholarly activity. This includes compliance with all institutional and federal regulations for human and animal research as well as responsibility for copyright, permissions, plagiarism, etc.
- I will clearly define expectations of conduct within my research team and make myself available to discuss climate or ethical concerns as they arise.
- I will commit to be a supportive colleague as the student transitions to the next stage in their career and, to the extent possible, throughout their professional life. I recognize that the role of mentor continues after formal training ends.
- I will encourage participation in professional development and networking opportunities.
- I will treat others with respect and foster a positive workplace climate in my research lab, program, and department.

Items for Discussion

The mentor and student should discuss the items below and any other issues in order to reach a shared understanding of their relationship. The mentee should then summarize the final decisions and have the agreement signed and dated by the parties listed.

- How often will we meet? When and where will our meetings take place? Who will be responsible for establishing the agenda?
- What is the preferred method of communication between meetings? How quickly can a response to questions be expected?
- How much lead time do the participants need to review materials prior to discussion?
- What are the policies for work hours, sick time, and vacations?
- What are the policies for manuscript authorship, research presentations, and ownership of data?
- What format and content is expected in lab notebooks and other data archiving systems?
- What additional expectations does the mentor have of the student?
- What additional expectations does the student have of the mentor?