# Integrative Biology Department

# **Document of Expectations for Graduate Student and Advisor**

**Purpose:** Establishing clear expectation documents is a valuable practice for principal investigators and their lab members because it establishes a shared understanding of roles, responsibilities, and norms within the research environment. These documents serve as a communication tool that outlines how the advisor-mentee relationship will function, covering areas such as work hours, authorship policies, feedback timelines, lab culture, and professional development opportunities. By explicitly defining expectations early on, both parties can reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings, manage potential conflicts more effectively, and create a more inclusive and supportive lab environment. It also empowers mentees by giving them a clearer picture of what success looks like and how they will be supported in achieving it. For advisors, it provides a framework to ensure fairness and consistency in how mentorship is delivered. Ultimately, expectation documents contribute to a more transparent, respectful, and productive research experience for everyone involved.

**Instructions:** Use this document to structure a discussion between the graduate student and their advisor to onboard them prior to the student joining the lab and department. It is intended to establish clear expectations of joining the lab and some aspects to be discussed and revisited annually thereafter. This document can be used as a checklist. All university and department policies are expected to be followed; these expectations provide additional guidance for both individuals. If your lab has already developed expectations documents, please use this document as an opportunity to revisit current expectations and have open discussions with lab members to improve lab culture and conduct policies.

# **1. Introduction**

* **Objective Statement:** Outline the purpose of the mentoring agreement, emphasizing the commitment to effective, inclusive, and culturally appropriate mentoring.
* **Implementation:** Describe the frequency of discussing these issues (at a minimum, annually)

# **2. What you can expect from the advisor:**

### Guidance on Work Expectations and Plans:

* **Regular Assessments:** Schedule periodic evaluations to assess progress and address any issues.
* **Transparent Expectations:** Share information about the different responsibilities on the advisor’s plate, and the time and frequency that they can allocate to mentoring and training.
* **Constructive Feedback:** Establish a framework for providing and receiving feedback.
* **Mentoring Aligned with Individual Goals:** Tailor mentoring to support the mentee’s personal and professional objectives.
* **Respect realistic and feasible working schedules:** establish realistic working hours that allow the student to perform and succeed in individual research toward their dissertation while performing service, mentorship, teaching, and lab duties.

### Training and Resources:

* **Verify Required Trainings:** Verify mentees complete necessary training programs.
* **Data Privacy & Safety Trainings:** Verify mentees complete these specific trainings as required.
* **Encourage Additional Trainings:** MSU offers a wide selection of beneficial trainings and workshops such as cultural competency, implicit bias, and mental health.

### Professional Development:

* **Training Opportunities:** Identify workshops, seminars, conferences, and other skill development opportunities.
* **Networking:** Encourage participation in academic and professional networks.
* **Publication and Presentation:** Outline expectations for disseminating research through publications and presentations at conferences and other events.

### Resources and Support:

* **Funding**: Provide the mentee with a timeline or framework for funding sources and options during their graduate school timeframe.
* **Workplace Accommodations:** Ensure all necessary accessibility needs and workplace accommodations are met.
* **Access to Resources:** Detail available resources, including laboratory equipment, funding, and administrative support.
* **Support Services:** Highlight support services such as writing centers, accessibility and disability services, mental health services, and career counseling.

# **3. What you can expect from the Graduate Student:**

* **Policies:** Follow the guidelines and policies of the University and the Integrative Biology Department Graduate Program6

### Commitment to Work:

* **Guidance on Work Expectations and Plans:** Understand and adhere to project goals and expectations.
* **Work Hours:** Maintain agreed-upon working hours.
* **In Case of Absence:** Be sure to communicate in a timely manner regarding any emergencies or events that prevent or restrict you from your research.

### Professional and Academic Duties:

* **Mentoring Undergraduates:** For PhD students, mentor undergraduates on designated projects that can promote achieving any mentoring goals. Ensure to foster a welcoming and respectful environment. Make sure to set up short-term and longer-term goals with your mentee.
* **Lab Management Duties:** Participate in managing lab operations as required.
* **Complete Required Trainings and Coursework:** Fulfill all mandatory training and academic requirements.
* **Professional development:** Frequently attend and seek out department seminars, and other recommended professional development and career growth programs and opportunities.
* **Publication and Presentation:** Establish goals for writing publication manuscripts and presenting your research.

# **4. Mutual expectations:**

### Goal Setting and Objectives

* **SMART Goals:** Define specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound goals for research and professional development.
* **Milestones:** Establish key milestones according to the graduate student handbook and define strategies to monitor progress.
* **Long-Term Career Goals:** Discuss and align on the supervisee’s long-term career aspirations.

### Communications:

* **Preferred Methods:** Specify preferred communication channels (e.g., email, text, Slack, Teams).
* **Response Expectations:** Define expectations for responses outside of work hours.
* **Contact Hours:** Define expected availability and communication times.
* **Contact Information:** Provide up-to-date contact details for both mentor and mentee.
* **Inclusive Professional Language:** Encourage the use of respectful and inclusive language.

### Cultural Competence:

* **Cultural Awareness:** Promote understanding and respect for diverse backgrounds and perspectives.
* **Bias Mitigation:** Address and mitigate potential biases in mentoring relationships.

### Conflict Resolution:

* **Procedure:** Outline steps for addressing and resolving conflicts or misunderstandings.

### Time Management and Commitment:

* **Expectations:** Define the expected time commitment for both mentor and mentee.
* **Scheduling:** Establish guidelines for scheduling and managing time effectively to balance research, coursework, and other responsibilities.
* **Time off**: Define the guidelines for requesting time off and the expectations for work during university breaks.

### Research Products and Access:

* **Lab notebooks:** Define where these should be kept, when are they updated, and who has access to them. Discuss the notebook structure and policies.
* **Data, Code, and other Research Product Handling:**
  + **Group Collaboration:** Define how experiments, code, and/or data will be collaboratively managed. Clarify roles and responsibilities.
  + **Data & Code Stewardship and Access:** Because as per policy all data are owned by MSU, researchers need to clarify who is the steward of collected data and who also has access and can use the data.
  + **Long-Term Curation:** Specify formats and plans for long-term data storage and curation.
* **Authorship and Credit:** Define expectations for authorship and other forms of credit and attribution for all data products, not just data (including code and other research products).

# **5. Signatures and Agreements**

* **Acknowledgment:** Provide spaces for both parties to sign and acknowledge their commitment to the mentoring agreement.
* **Date:** Include dates to formalize the agreement.