**University of Minnesota  
Graduate Program in Neuroscience**

**Setting up Mentor-Mentee Ground Rules and Expectations: An Advising Statement**

Establishing clear expectations at the start of an advising relationship is critical and can occur with a discussion of a faculty member’s advising statement. We strongly recommend that each GPN faculty preceptor develop an advising statement that outlines key expectations and responsibilities. We provide an example on the next page with some minimal expectations for GPN students pursuing a PhD. Faculty members can use this example advising statement as a template, but should feel free to modify this statement so that it accurately reflects their own advising philosophy and expectations. For example, a faculty member may have different expectations with regard to number of first-authored publications or more defined expectations with regard to work hours. Such expectations should be clearly described so that trainees are fully aware of what is expected in order to have a successful PhD training experience. Additional advising statements are available from members of the GPN leadership team and also available [online](https://www.med.umn.edu/education-training/medical-scientist-training-program-mdphd/about-program/staff-directory).

Mentor and mentee need to communicate clearly from the start about your respective roles and responsibilities. These might include:

* Goals: develop and share a work plan that includes short-term and long-term goals as well as the timeframe for reaching those goals. Make sure the work plan meets the program’s requirements and is feasible. Make clear that the mentee is to achieve these goals with the support of the mentor and that the mentor is responsible for keeping the mentee accountable.
* Meetings: Establish a meeting schedule that includes a defined frequency of contact. Keep the mentee informed if you have a busy travel schedule, are about to take a sabbatical, or will be assuming an administrative position that may impact the frequency of meetings. Assign the mentee the responsibility to take the lead in these meetings.
* Thresholds: Be explicit about the kinds of issues the mentor and mentee feel require a face-to-face meeting. Clarify when and how mentor and mentee can be contacted including contact at home. Establish rules for expectations about rapidly of response to inquires via email and in person.
* Assessments: Establish a schedule for when the mentor will provide an assessment of the mentee’s general progress and a format that will be used in providing that assessment. Do the same for planned assignments of the mentor by the mentee.
* Drafts: Establish expectations of what first drafts should look like before they are submitted to the mentor.
* Publishing and Presenting: Establish expectations regarding when and where you would like to see the mentee give research presentations. Explain the standards and norms for authorship credit in your field, and the extent to which you can assist them with preparing work for submission to journals and conferences.
* Intellectual Property: Before beginning work on a project, clarify who owns the data that is being collected, and whether others will have access to it. Also discuss issues of copyright and potential patent agreements.

I believe my role as a PhD advisor is to advance my trainees’ career through direct engagement that facilitates guidance, and sharing experience and expertise. It is my goal in this advising statement to set clear expectations and responsibilities and help support their professional and career goals. In general, I will help foster a sense of professional responsibility and continuous professional development, assist in building a mentorship team, and ensure continual movement towards successful completion of the PhD degree.

Research Goals

* I expect my trainees to develop concrete short term and long term research goals as well as a timeframe for reaching these goals.
* I expect my trainees to submit and publish peer-reviewed first author publications.
* I expect my trainees to keep up with the literature. Generally, trainees should set aside time for reading the primary literature every day and present and discuss published papers at Journal Club meetings.
* I expect my trainees to be open to participate in collaborations with other lab members or other researchers outside of their primary research project that can expand their research skills and publication opportunities.
* I will read and respond to all work submitted to me in a timely manner, within the constraints of my other responsibilities. I will strive to return all materials at least within a week of submission to me.
* I expect my trainees to present their research findings at meetings at least once a year. I will help facilitate the presentation of your research at meetings, both internal and external, and I will work with you so that your presentations effectively communicate your research.

Graduate Stipend and Funding

* I have the primary responsibility to provide for adequate funding of both the research and stipend for my trainees.
* I expect my trainees to participate in the writing of grant proposals, including writing their own fellowship proposals and participate on reviewing other author’s papers

Meetings

* I will meet regularly with my trainees at a mutually agreed upon interval, and expect that trainees will also be available to meet with me. I recognize that this interval will vary with my trainee’s needs overall and at specific times during the course of training. This includes both regular meetings and informal conversations. I operate with an open policy and strongly encourage students to discuss with me data not only when things work but also to discuss experiments that do not work as planned.
* I expect my trainees to prepare a progress report every 3 months and present it at a scheduled meeting to evaluate progress and plan future directions.
* I expect my trainees to participate in all laboratory group meetings, as well as the seminars and programs related specifically to my trainee’s research focus and graduate program.
* I expect my trainees to improve their writing skills by participating in writing abstracts for national and international meetings, writing fellowships and manuscripts. My approach is to provide input at both the onset and during the writing. I will also provide opportunities to work with me on the review of research manuscripts I am asked to review or write.
* I expect my trainees to meet with their thesis committees at least annually, or as often as required by the Neuroscience graduate program, and to participate in the required MSTP annual progress meetings.

Professionalism

* I expect my trainees to be a good laboratory citizen: help train new students, help maintain equipment, and ensure supplies that are jointly used are maintained.
* I expect my trainees to maintain an accurate and detailed laboratory notebook. This is the legal record of research, and belongs to the laboratory and university, not to the trainee or me. It is critical it be accurate and sufficiently detailed that every experiment could be replicated by another individual and get the same result.
* I expect my trainees to meet laboratory as well as program-related deadlines.
* I will set specific guidelines on work hours, sick leave, and vacation time, and these should be discussed and approved by me. I will help trainees recognize that the amount of time put into research will be directly reflected in the overall time to completion of the PhD.
* I expect my trainees to behave professionally and treat all others with respect. Anything else will not be tolerated.
* Trainees should speak to me if there are concerns about interactions with other lab members. If there are concerns about interactions with me, please reach out to the graduate program DGS or other program leaders. The [Student Conflict Resolution Center](http://www.sos.umn.edu/) is a helpful resource.

Ethical Behavior

* I will maintain ethical standards in my research and scholarly work, including compliance with institutional and federal regulations for research, as well as issues of copyright.
* I expect my trainees to complete all required training and maintain ethical standards for their research and scholarly work.

Independence

* I will work with my trainees to help them become increasingly independent and increasingly responsible as they progress in their thesis research.
* I expect my trainees to develop and explore new research ideas by themselves.
* I expect my trainees to develop a thoughtful and critical thinking and ask questions in regular meetings in our laboratory and other national and international meetings.
* I will be supportive, equitable, accessible, encouraging, and respectful. I expect my trainees to recognize that constructive criticism and feedback is intended to improve their work.
* I will be an advocate for my trainees during their tenure in my laboratory but also as they continue their specific career pathway.

Professional and Career Development

* I will support the professional development goals of my trainees, and work with them to help define what those will be and how to best achieve them.
* I recognize that we all need mentor teams. I will help my trainees identify and seek out external resources that will help them reach those goals if they are not part of the laboratory expertise or that of graduate program training.
* I expect my trainees to complete the annually required IDP Progress Report and use this as a tool to guide their professional development.
* I expect my trainees attend to at least one national meeting a year and at least one international meeting during their training time. When necessary I expect my trainees to participate in specific research courses that will expand their research skills and network.

Personal Life and Wellness:

* There is more to life than work. I expect my trainees to take time for themselves, in order to ensure physical, psychological, and social well-being.
* Trainees should be aware of the [mental health and wellness resources](http://mentalhealth.umn.edu/) at UMN.

Timeline

* I expect my PhD trainees to complete their PhD training in ~5 years.
* I expect my trainees to have at least one first-authored, peer-reviewed research publication prior to completion of the PhD degree.