

# Graduate Student Mentorship Value and Commitment Statement

## Department of Psychological Sciences

This document articulates our collective commitments to graduate student mentorship and advising. It centers our core values and creates an accountability framework to ensure that students are given mentorship and resources throughout their graduate program that promote their ability to thrive. Effective mentoring and successful graduate outcomes require establishing and implementing best practices from the beginning of a graduate student's career within the department.

UConn's [Faculty Professional Responsibilities policy](#) articulates the commitment members of the graduate faculty to mentoring:

*At the graduate level, large amounts of time are spent in one-on-one development and critiques of students' thinking, writing, and research methods and the implementation of those methods. The training of future researchers by faculty is inherently personal and time-consuming but is one of the basic responsibilities of faculty at a research university. Each graduate student represents a significant commitment, both in time and effort. Such time commitments are an investment in creating an educated professional who, in turn, will affect the lives of future students and the future of society.*

In support of the above policy and our commitment to effective graduate mentoring, we commit to the following broad values:

- **Respect.** The mentor is an important source of advice and guidance, and respect of the advisee's time, research, and professional goals is an important component of guidance.
- **Open communication.** Regular discussions with the advisee about both parties' expectations will create transparency, which is important when goals are not being met.
- **Professionalism.** Clear boundaries about appropriate spheres for interactions and discussion topics ensure that the relationship remains professional.
- **Responsiveness.** A shared understanding of reasonable timelines for responding to students' communications and requests will follow from the above values.
- **Well-being.** Managing the stress of graduate studies can be aided by maintaining an appropriate work/life balance, and an open dialogue about such balance is encouraged.
- **Normalized change.** The advisor-advisee relationship is typically assigned before the advisee arrives on campus. Sometimes it becomes clear that the original mentoring relationship is simply not a good fit for a variety of reasons. Advisors should support changes to mentorship with assurances that change is not a disruptive decision.

All of the above areas of the faculty-advisee relationship are expansions of topics already covered in [UConn's Code of Conduct](#) and are not meant to supersede that code. All UConn community members should be familiar with the code and the various offices on campus that monitor compliance with the code and with state and federal regulations.

Finally, although the above principles are stated from the advisor's point of view, these expectations are meant to be reciprocal.

## Graduate Student Self-Care Resources

- [UConn Counseling and Mental Health Services](#)
- [Ombuds \(confidential and anonymous\)](#)

- [Department of Psychological Sciences Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Resources](#)
- [Sexual Harassment and Discrimination](#)
- [International Student & Scholar Services \(ISSS\)](#)
- [Guidance and Support for Graduate Students, UConn Graduate School](#)
- [James, B. T. \(2019\). Staying in and staying healthy: Insights for positive mental health in graduate school. The Behavioral Neuroscientist and Comparative Psychologist.](#)

## Other resources

- Maestre, F. T. (2019). Ten simple rules towards healthier research labs. PLoS Computational Biology, 15(4), e1006914.
- Gee, K. L., & Popper, A. N. (2017). Improving academic mentoring relationships and environments. Acoustics Today, 13(3), 27-35.
- Colón-Ramos, D. A. (2018). Statements of Mentorship. Eneuro, 5(6).
- [Chapter 5: Mentoring and Being Mentored. In Making the Right Moves: A Practical Guide to Scientific Management for Postdocs and New Faculty, Second Edition.](#)

## Developing Shared Expectations: STEM and Social Sciences Focus

1. Communication and meetings:
  - a. What is the best way/technology to get in touch with each other? What is the appropriate time-frame to expect a response?
  - b. When do you plan to meet (be as specific as you can), is an agenda required, how long will the meeting be?
2. Student's role on project: Describe student's primary area(s) of responsibility and expectations (e.g., reading peer-reviewed literature, in-lab working hours, etc.).
3. Participation in group meetings (if relevant): Student will participate in the following ongoing research group meetings. What does this participation look like?
4. Tentative papers on which student will be an author or coauthor: Discuss disciplinary norms around authorship; list the papers and the likely order of student's authorship, e.g., first, second, etc.
5. Opportunities for feedback: In what form and how often can the student expect to receive feedback regarding overall progress, research activities, etc.? How much time is needed by the mentor to provide feedback on written work, such as chapter and publication drafts?
6. Professional meeting(s) that the student will attend and dates: What funding is available to attend these meetings?
7. Networking opportunities: Discuss additional opportunities to network (e.g., meeting with seminar speakers, etc.)
8. Time away from campus: Discuss expectations regarding vacations and time away from campus and how best to plan for them. What is the time-frame for notification regarding anticipated absences?
9. Funding: Discuss the funding model and plans for future funding (e.g., internal and external fellowships; summer support); discuss any uncertainty in future sources of funding, and contingencies.
10. Completion of programmatic milestones and other milestones (as applicable)
11. Target semester defense and graduation
12. Professional goals: Identify short-term and long-term goals, and discuss any steps/resources/training necessary to accomplish the goals.
13. Skill development: Identify the skills and abilities that the student will focus on developing during the upcoming year. These could be academic, research, or professional skills, as well as additional training experiences such as workshops or internships.
14. Other areas: List here any other areas of understanding between the student and mentor regarding working relationship during the student's tenure.