

EEB recognizes the central importance of the advisor-advisee relationship in graduate training. Advisees have the right to outstanding graduate mentoring from their advisors; however, healthy and productive mentoring relationships require good intentions, clear communication, and ongoing investment from both advisor and advisee. To that end, both advisors and advisees are expected to work hard to develop and maintain their relationship, including communicating when elements of the relationship are not working for one or both parties.

The purpose of this template is to assist advisors and advisees in documenting mutually agreed upon goals and expectations that will serve as the foundation for the mentoring relationship. The goal in filling out these prompts is not to be overly prescriptive, but to set general expectations that will apply to the vast majority of situations that arise between students and their mentors. There are many additional resources (e.g., [EEB Graduate Student Handbook](#)) and rules (e.g., [UCLA Standards & Practices for Graduate Study](#)) that define expectations and requirements for graduate study, and this document is not meant to replace or explain those. Further, the individualized and personal nature of mentoring means that it is inherently challenging to find a "one size fits all" template. This template is expected to be amended to meet the needs of individual mentors (i.e., PIs) as well as their individual mentees (i.e., graduate students). Although each individual advisor-advisee pair is recommended to complete this compact once – at the initialization of the relationship (see instructions) – relationships are dynamic and the advisor-advisee dynamic often changes over time; to that end, it is further recommended that advisor-advisee pairs return to this document at regular intervals (e.g., annually) and discuss whether any part(s) need to be modified or amended.

## Instructions

*If you have never worked from a written agreement between advisors and advisees, here are some steps to take as you work through the process of co-creating your compact using the following template as a starting point:*

1. Graduate students and their advisors should begin by each completing the "Student-Advisor Expectation Scales" exercise.
2. After completing the exercise, a meeting should be held to discuss areas of commonality and difference. This will help highlight areas of the compact that might need further discussion prior to any proposed text.
3. Following that discussion, the advisor should use the template below – or tailor an existing lab compact – to reflect the shared expectations that have been discussed. The draft template now demonstrates the needs of each individual student and the uniqueness of each advisor-advisee relationship.
4. In areas where consensus could not be reached during initial discussions, the decision can be made to not specify any agreement, or the advisor and advisee can reach out to departmental resources to help reach an agreement.
5. Draft compacts should be presented to advisees to provide input, feedback, and if desired, directly suggest modifications.
6. Suggestions and input are incorporated into a revised compact, recursively, until both parties are satisfied.
7. This process of back-and-forth discussions and suggested revisions is critical as it provides the opportunity for both parties to develop a shared set of agreed norms for the mentoring relationship and the work that will be accomplished.
8. Upon agreement, a signed compact should be retained by both parties, and a copy should be emailed to the [EEB Grad Office](#).

### **What happens if shared expectations outlined in the compact are not met?**

The intention of the compact is not to be a binding and legal document, but an opportunity to be explicit about expectations that are typically either unstated or unidirectional in advising relationships. By co-creating a compact, it becomes a tool that helps clarify where conflict or misunderstandings may arise; if mutually agreed upon expectations are not met, then this is a key opportunity for both parties to reflect and discuss! Advising is a living, dynamic process, and compacts are proven to support the deepening, enrichment, and ultimately success of the advisor-advisee relationship.

**A. Communication**

*Issues that frequently come up that you may wish to explicitly address and discuss include:*

- Through what channel(s) will we communicate?
- What is our expectation of a timely response?
- Are there certain days or times when communication should be avoided, or when a response should not be expected?
- To what degree is the content or context of our conversations confidential? What should we do if confidentiality is a concern?
- How should we handle conflict if it arises?

For Nathan, verbal discussion of research ideas is often easiest, but he is open to whatever modalities (email, writing, etc.) work best for the student. Slack, verbal communication, or a text is preferred for topics that might be quickly resolved with a brief exchange. Within the work week, we should expect email responses from one another within 48h (even just to acknowledge the message was received and a more detailed response is forthcoming), and Slack within some hours. We should not expect responses of one another during nights and weekends. We will set up out-of-office responders when away from work or in the field for more than 2 work days.

Conversations will be confidential unless we check in with each other regarding sharing details. Written communication through official channels (Slack, UCLA email, etc.) should not be viewed as confidential due to the Freedom of Information Act, so discretion may be needed for some sensitive topics. If you are asked something over email that you are not comfortable putting into writing you can always reply with a request to discuss in person or over the phone/ zoom. Many faculty and staff on campus will share this practice.

Regarding potential conflict, we will try to resolve it ourselves first, communicating using the channels described above. If that doesn't work, concerns can be brought to the Graduate Advisor (ideally), the Graduate Vice Chair, the Graduate Office, or the EEB Chair. The EEB department website always lists the current faculty and staff serving in these roles. It is best to try start with departmental resources first before escalating the issue to campus offices such as the Ombuds office or UCLA Graduate Division. For Graduate Students, the EEB Graduate Handbook contains more resources for how to seek support for conflicts.

**B. Advisor-Advisee Meetings**

- How often will we meet and for how long?
- Where will meetings occur?
- Who sets the agenda for meetings, and how free-form versus defined should they be?
- What are the expectations for how the advisor prepares for the meeting?
- What are the expectations for how the advisee prepares for the meeting?
- What is the cancellation policy for meetings?
- Are there any expectations for follow-up after meetings?

We expect to meet weekly for 30-60 minutes in Nathan's office, to be collaboratively scheduled each quarter once your other class schedules are set. More meetings can always be collaboratively scheduled, but the practice

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of the standing weekly meeting is to ensure we always have at least one time a week set aside to discuss progress.

In the case of travel or other logistical issues Zoom or a phonecall is always an option, and can be initiated in place of an in person meeting by either person. The agenda will always be set by the student unless we agree on something beforehand. The meeting does not need to take the full scheduled time, and the meeting can be canceled by the student if it is not needed, but it is preferable to check in even briefly rather than canceling outright if possible. If Nathan needs to cancel a weekly meeting due to a conflict he will always seek to reschedule something within a day or two of the meeting.

We can collaboratively agree on the agenda and any expected preparation (ie papers to read, etc) for the next meeting. In the first year of graduate school, meetings typically focus on collaboratively structured reading of the literature around the students developing research goals and interests, but meetings can address any topic of need to the student.

**C. Feedback on Research and Measuring Progress**

- How much time should be expected for the mentor to provide feedback on short documents (e.g., a few pages)?
- How much time should be expected for the mentor to provide feedback on longer documents (e.g., manuscripts)?
- In what format will feedback on written documents be provided?
- How will (internal, advisor-advisee created) deadlines be used to structure progress?
- If deadlines are created, what will happen if a deadline is missed?

We will discuss expected time for feedback as the need arises. Timeframes will depend on both of our workloads, prior commitments and any pending external deadlines. Nathan can typically do a read-through or edit for a manuscript within a week, though he will do all he can to help meet earlier deadlines. It is always appropriate and useful to specify the kind of feedback that is desired (ie big picture comments, detailed line edits, etc).

We will strive to create a supportive and trusting relationship with one another that supports the intellectual risk taking that is critical for innovative progress in science without fear of negative consequences about being "wrong" about an idea we are working on together. This is supported by assuming the best intentions of one another in our interactions and working hard to be transparent and forthcoming about any concerns that either of us has about the mentoring relationship.

Internal deadlines can be used for projects if requested, but they should be agreed up collaboratively. If we miss an agreed-upon internal deadline, we should acknowledge it and discuss next steps and contingency plans, if needed.

**D. Lab Participation and Collaboration**

- What are the expectations for participation in lab and/or research group meetings?
- How should the advisee seek out or develop additional mentors?
- Who gets to initiate or invite research collaborations? Are there any limitations?
- How is authorship determined (for both advisee-led and advisor-led work)? How is author order determined?

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All lab members are expected to be an active participant in lab meetings, and to lead lab meeting once per quarter on a subject that helps to advance the research and training goals of the lab, broadly defined. More details of the current goals and norms of lab meeting are posted on the lab website, and everyone is invited to suggest edits or updates to this living document.

Nathan encourages the development of mentorship networks and can facilitate exercises to help plan them out on request at any time. Any collaborators on lab or thesis-related projects will be invited only after we discuss the matter together first, as there can be complex issues that need to be navigated, especially around existing collaborations that include scientists from outside of our lab, including existing data use or authorship agreements.

Typically, Nathan will serve as the last author on projects arising from thesis work of students in the lab, and the student leading the work will be first author, with both taking on responsibilities commensurate with these roles. Authorship on any side projects is not assumed, and would be discussed on a case-by-case basis, with authorship accurately reflecting important contributions to the development and execution of the paper. Everyone should strive to discuss authorship early in the development of a project, and a formal author contribution statement, developed collaboratively, should be a part of any lab paper, even if not required by the journal, in order to accurately protect and represent the work of the student.

**E. Finances and Expenses**

- Who is responsible for paying for (including writing grants) research expenses (including lab and field work)? How are responsibilities shared or not?
- How will research expenses be tracked and who is responsible?
- Who is responsible for paying for attendance at a conference? How are responsibilities shared (e.g., registration versus travel) or not?
- Who is responsible for paying for meals or activities that arise in the course of work (e.g., a lab lunch at a restaurant)?

Students are expected to pursue internal and external funding opportunities for their research as they arise, though Nathan will try to reserve general lab funds (or grant funds) as a backup for student projects. The research funding for any project should be discussed clearly at the outset of the project and revisited as often as needed to clarify any uncertainty.

Generally, EEB and UCLA expect that we seek up-front purchasing of items though the finance office rather than seeking reimbursement after the fact, so planning for research needs is critical, as the campus purchasing process can be very slow at times. Nathan needs to approve any lab expenses or reimbursements through the finance office, so we should discuss any expenses before requests are made to staff.

Nathan (and typically EEB) are often able to help offset some conference expenses when work from the lab is being presented, but funding needs to be discussed before plans are made to attend a meeting, as conference expenses can vary widely based on the meeting and the location.

Lab members are generally expected to cover their own meals while at work or in the field, though Nathan may offer to cover some special event meals from time to time. As one common exception, some remote field station locations include board (meals) in station fees due to logistical constraints, and support for this expense should be discussed up front before the trip, and

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typically will be covered by the same funding source that is covering the research expenses.

**F. Personal Time and Comfort Level**

- What are the expectations for on-campus versus off-campus work during times that are not scheduled? How do expectations change throughout the year (e.g., summer vs. academic-year)?
- What are the expectations for vacations and time away from campus and how best to plan for them? What is the time-frame for notification regarding anticipated absences?
- Is there a place or time for 'personal' issues to be discussed between advisor and advisee? Are there any topics which are 'off limits'?

In-person work on campus is highly encouraged for the benefits that offers to all in terms of creating a productive and engaging lab culture, but ultimately everyone needs to seek out the conditions that best promote productivity, which may include some days working from off campus. Hybrid meetings are often challenging to run as effectively as in person events, and so everyone should plan to attend group events like lab meetings in person unless extenuating circumstances arise.

Everyone should take vacations within reason, ideally during scheduled vacation times as per the UCLA academic calendar. If you are planning a vacation or time away from work during the regular work times (ie within weeks 1-10 of an academic quarter) it is important to inform Nathan and discuss with him to ensure that it is OK and that we have a plan for progress on any outstanding projects.

Nathan is open to discussing any personal topic at any point, though he will follow the lead of lab members as to what topics are of interest to discuss beyond what is required in the scope of work in the lab. Nathan understands that people's positionality (background, gender, racial and ethnic background, family history, etc.) often directly shapes their experience in research and in the lab, and is open to discussing and pursuing ways to support lab members in any way that is needed. These discussions can either be direct (ie one on one discussions of certain topics) or more abstract (ie leading the lab in a discussion of a piece of scholarship related to positionality in science or academia generally)- either is great!

**G. Additional Items**

*Add here any additional areas of understanding between the advisor and advisee.*

As a mentee, I expect you to take full responsibility for your progress towards your degree completion. You can expect me to demonstrate commitment to your research and educational program, and offer stimulation, respect, constructive criticism, and consistent encouragement. I expect you to be cognizant of all relevant external deadlines, especially related to our graduate program, and work diligently to meet them.

I expect you to work hard to develop a research topic that is aligns with your goals and interests, advances the field of ecology in substantive ways, and is tractable within the timeframe of your degree program and the resources available. This project can be in systems the lab already works in, or new ones. You can expect me to support you in this work by listening to your goals and interests, suggesting research ideas and topics, and offering guidance on project design and other considerations.

**Advisee Name**

**Advisor Name** Nathan Kraft

We can both expect one another to hold each other to the highest standards for ethical conduct and communication.

This compact can be revisited and updated at any point as needed by either person.

*Signatures below indicate that the signed party has read and discussed the above compact and has had a chance to suggest revisions, additions, and edits.*

Advisee Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_