

Graduate Mentee Compact¹

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The purpose of this compact

The purpose of this compact is to “make the invisible visible” and explicitly address all the unwritten rules and expectations that come along with starting a graduate program. It is called a “compact” rather than “contract” because it is not binding, but rather a document intended to get everyone on the same page.

The broad goals of my research program

As part of my job as a professor, I am expected to conduct research, write grants, and publish papers that will make tangible contributions to science, the academic community, and society. We must carry out good scientific methods and conduct ourselves in an ethical way. I also value outreach and science education, both in the classroom and while engaging with the public. I expect you to participate in this component of our lab mission while you are part of the lab group.

What I expect from you (broadly)

Another part of my job as a professor is to train and advise students. My responsibility is to contribute to your professional development and progress in your degree. I will help you set goals and hopefully achieve them. In general, I expect you to:

- Learn how to plan, design, and conduct high-quality scientific research
- Learn how to present and document your scientific findings
- Be honest, ethical, and engaged
- Treat your labmates, research assistants, lab staff, and participants with respect: their culture, religion, beliefs, sexual orientation, positionality, and personality quirks. Science is for everyone.
- Respect yourself: Your need for time off, your happiness, your other commitments. You are responsible for constructing and communicating your boundaries, and I promise to listen.
- Pressure to succeed is something we all face, but it is *not* an excuse to engage in academic misconduct. Under no circumstances is it ok to plagiarize, tamper with data, make up data, or omit data. If you are feeling pressure to succeed and think that is interfering with your judgement, you should reach out to me and we can talk about it.
- Obtain your degree
- Tension or hostility in the lab affects everyone and behaving in a bullying, intimidating, rude or disrespectful way will not be tolerated. I expect everyone to be mature and professional while in the lab. This is a workplace and should be treated in that way. If there are any problems, please tell me.
- Work hard - don't give up!

I empower and expect you to take ownership over your educational experience

- Acknowledge that you have the primary responsibility for the successful completion of your degree. This includes commitment to your work in classrooms and the laboratory.

¹ Adapted from two sources: (1) Professor Trina McMahon, University of Wisconsin-Madison. Pfund, C., Branchaw, J., and Handelsman, J. (2014). *Entering Mentoring*. New York, NY: W.H. Freeman & Company; (2) Dr. Bridget Callaghan's lab manual: https://bablab.github.io/lab_manual/

You should maintain a high level of professionalism, self-motivation, engagement, scientific curiosity, and ethical standards.

- Ensure that you meet weekly with me and provide me with updates on the progress and results of your activities and experiments using the “Weekly Update” email. Complete your weekly update email and submit it on time to structure our one-on-one time. Make sure that you use this time to communicate new ideas that you have about your work and challenges that you are facing. Remember: I cannot address or advise about issues that you do not bring to my attention, and I am eager to engage in problem-solving with you.
- Be knowledgeable of the policies, deadlines, and requirements of the graduate program, the graduate school, and the university. Lisa Lee in the graduate advising office can assist you with this. Comply with all institutional policies, including academic program milestones, human subjects protection, laboratory practices, and rules related to safety.
- Engage in career development of undergraduate students. Use mentoring best practices (which I can share with you, or see the Entering Mentoring curriculum at nrmnet.net) to help further the career of your undergraduate students and develop your own mentoring skills. I expect you to meet with your research assistants regularly and provide mentoring, not just treating them as free labor. Conduct Individual Development Plans at the beginning of each RA’s time in the lab and do quarterly reviews of your undergraduate research assistants by completing the DiSH Lab RA evaluation form, talking to them about it, and submitting it additionally to the lab manager and me. Identify outstanding RAs and provide promotion opportunities for them. Highly talented and committed undergraduates working in the lab should be encouraged to contribute to the writing of manuscripts. If you wish to add other individuals as authors to your papers, please discuss this with me early on and before discussing the situation with the potential coauthors.

I expect you to be a team player

- Attend and actively participate in all group meetings, including in-person meetings, as well as seminars that are part of your educational program. Participation in group meetings does not mean only presenting your own work, but providing support to others in the lab through shared insight. Please don’t be distracted and don’t engage in other tasks not relevant to the meeting. Do your part to create a climate of vibrant engagement, effusive support, and mutual respect.
- Strive to be the very best lab citizen. Take part in shared laboratory responsibilities and use laboratory resources carefully and frugally. Maintain a safe and clean laboratory space where data and research participant confidentiality are protected. Monitor supply levels and respect the space.
- Be a good collaborator. Engage in collaborations within and beyond our lab group, and keep me apprised of any collaborations you embark on. Collaborations are more than just publishing papers together. They demand effective and frequent communication, mutual respect, trust, and shared goals. Effective collaboration, and therefore communication, is an extremely important component of the mission of our lab. Acknowledge the efforts of your collaborators.
- Be a near-peer mentor. As you become more senior in the lab, share your knowledge with the more junior grad students. Support them and teach them. They will look up to you (in the same way you will look up to them when you’re starting out!) and your mentorship will mean so much.
- I expect you to take part in our NSF-funded summer intensive. This includes leading career development workshops, research skills workshops, article discussions, feedback on student proposals, and attending the student presentations on the last day.

- I expect all graduate students in the lab to have “school spirit” – that means making an effort to go to departmental events, lab events, and thinking of ways to build community.
- I don’t expect you to be besties with everyone in the lab, but I do expect you to treat each other with respect, kindness, and with a benevolent filter. If you have an interpersonal problem, I would like you to first use techniques you can learn in the book *Crucial Conversations* to try to mend the relationship. If that doesn’t work, please reach out to me.

You will develop strong research skills

- Take advantage of your opportunity to work at a world-class university by developing and refining stellar research skills.
- Challenge yourself by presenting your work at meetings and seminars as early as you can and by preparing scientific articles that effectively present your work to others in the field. The “currency” in science is published papers; they drive a lot of what we do. And because our lab is supported by taxpayer dollars, we have an obligation to complete and disseminate our findings. I will work with you to write rapidly and publish your research as you move through your training program.
- Keep up with the literature so that you can have a hand in guiding your own research. Formally block at least 1 hour per week to peruse current tables of content for journals (signing up for email alerts from journals can facilitate this) or do literature searches.
- Maintain detailed, organized, and accurate laboratory records. This protects your own intellectual property and saves valuable time by avoiding backtracking. When a study is done, put manuals/protocols and all data labeled in a way where a stranger could figure it out on an archive like osf.io. If you need additional guidance on data sharing, consult me.
- Be aware that according to University policy, your notes, records, and all tangible research data are UCLA’s property in addition to yours. When you leave the lab, I encourage you to take copies of your data with you. But one full set of all data must stay in the lab, with appropriate and accessible documentation. Regularly back up your computer data to the server (see the lab manual for more instructions).
- Be the primary driver of statistical analysis, using the statistical consulting office as needed. I am only minimally helpful with advanced statistics, my apologies!
- In addition to data sharing described above, also engage in other Open Science principles like pre-registering studies and analyses at osf.io.
- Be responsive to advice and constructive criticism. Criticism can feel bad at times, but it gets easier as time passes. The feedback you get from me, your colleagues, your committee members, and your course instructors will ultimately improve your scientific work.

Expectations for workflow, time management, and communication

- Strive to meet deadlines; this is a highly effective way to manage your process. Deadlines can be managed in a number of ways, and I suggest weekly deadlines communicated through your Weekly update.
- One of your responsibilities is to optimally prioritize the different demands on your time. All else being equal, research is the most important priority, with coursework second.
- As long as you are meeting expectations, you can largely set your own schedule. It is your responsibility to talk with me if you are having difficulty completing your work, and I will consider your progress unsatisfactory if I need to follow up with you about completion of your lab or coursework. I will not micromanage you, and therefore it is your responsibility to achieve your goals.
- Please be mindful of the constraints on my time. Please do not assume I can read materials within a day or two, especially when I am traveling. When we set a deadline, I

will block off time to read and respond to your work. Ideally, please make the ask for me to set aside time at least a week in advance (by Friday, the following week is usually 100% booked).

- Remember that all of us are “new” at various points in our careers. If you feel uncertain, overwhelmed, or want additional support, please overtly ask for it. I welcome these conversations and view them as necessary.
- If there is something about my mentoring style that is proving difficult for you, please tell me so that you give me an opportunity to find an approach that works for you. No single style works for everyone; no one style is expected to work all of the time. Do not cancel meetings with me if you feel that you have not made adequate progress on your research; these might be the most critical times to meet with a mentor. Each year I will formally ask for your feedback on my mentorship style, but you can approach me at any time and I will gladly listen.
- Respond promptly (in most cases, within 24 hours) to emails/Slacks from anyone in our lab group and show up on time and prepare for meetings. If you need time to gather information in response to an email, please acknowledge receipt of the message and indicate when you will be able to provide the requested information. Note that I do not expect replies on weekends or holidays.
- Discuss policies on work hours, sick leave, and vacation with me directly. Consult with me and notify fellow lab members in advance of any planned absences. Graduate students should treat this as a full-time job (40 hours a week). I expect that most lab members will not exceed 2 weeks of personal travel away from the lab in any given year. I believe that personal and vacation time are essential for creative thinking and good health and encourage you to take regular vacations. Be aware, however, that there will necessarily be ebbs and flows - especially early in your training - when more effort will need to be devoted to work.
- Discuss policies on authorship as early as possible in the project; ideally before any work even begins. Barring unusual circumstances, it is my policy that students are first author on all work for which they took the lead on data collection and preparation of the initial draft of the manuscript. In the very rare cases where a graduate student fails to progress on a paper, I reserve the right to assign the project to myself or other students/staff/postdocs.

Expectations for papers and grants

“How many papers should I publish?” is a common question many students have. The answer is that it really depends—if your hypotheses can be tested using an online survey, you’ll publish more than if you have to do an in-lab experiment. As an advisor, I adjust my expectations accordingly. However, you might find it useful to know that on average a Psychology grad student has 4 publications by the time they graduate, and on average I expect you to submit at least two first-authored journal paper submissions.

I expect you to apply for fellowships and grants to fund you and your research, including but not limited to the NSF, GSRM, and GRM. Our lab has had a lot of success with NSF’s, but do not let that put pressure on you. NSF’s are insanely competitive, with a fair amount of random error depending on what reviewers you get, plus they recently cut the number of awards in half. I know it’s not easy, but try not to let the NSF rat race with other grad students in your cohort affect you too much! Most people in our lab apply in their second year of graduate school.

Disappointment and rejection are common in academia. Remember the story about Carol Greider, who won the Nobel prize on the same day her grant was “not discussed” (rejected for being in the bottom 50%). My expectation is not that you’ll get the grants and fellowships, but

that you learn each time you apply. I also expect you to pick yourself up quickly and move on. I've found that the strategy of applying for everything under the sun is very helpful. By the time the rejection rolls around, you're like "Oh yeah I forgot I even applied to that." And if the hit rate for something is 10%, then applying to 10 things means you will win one of them!

What you should expect from me

- I will work tirelessly for the good of the lab group; the success of every member of our group is my top priority, no matter their personal strengths and weaknesses, or career goals.
- I will be available for regular meetings and informal conversations. My busy schedule requires that we plan in advance for meetings to discuss your research and any professional or personal concerns you have. Although I will try to be available as much as possible for "drop-in business," keep in mind that I am often running to teach a class or to faculty meetings and will have limited time. If I am unable to meet, please don't interpret that as me not caring. Feel free to text me as well. However, I do not expect you to respond to texts or emails outside of business hours.
- I will help you navigate your graduate program of study. As stated previously, you are responsible for keeping up with deadlines and being knowledgeable about requirements for your specific program. However, I am available to help you interpret these requirements, select appropriate coursework, and select committee members.
- I will be your advocate. If you have a problem, come and see me. I will do my best to help you solve it.
- I am committed to mentoring you, even after you leave my lab. I am committed to your education and training while you are in my lab, and to advising and guiding your career development - to the degree you wish - long after you leave. I will provide honest letters of evaluation for you when you request them.
- I will lead by example and facilitate your training in complementary skills needed to be a successful scientist, such as oral and written communication, grant writing, lab management, mentoring, and scientific professionalism. I will encourage you to see opportunities in teaching, even if not required for your degree program. I will also strongly encourage you to gain practice in mentoring students.
- I will encourage you to attend scientific/professional meetings. Please use conferences as an opportunity to further your education, represent the lab and its research, and network. If you register for a conference, I expect you to attend the scientific sessions and participate in conference activities during the time you are there. I usually do not have funds to pay for this travel, but am always writing travel funding into my grants so please discuss funding issues with me. Travel fellowships are available through department.
- I will strive to be supportive, equitable, accessible, encouraging, and respectful. I will try my best to understand your unique situation, and mentor you accordingly. I am mindful that each student comes from a different background and has different professional goals. It will help if you keep me informed about your experiences and remember that graduate school is a job with very high expectations. I view my role as fostering your professional confidence and encouraging your critical thinking, skepticism, and creativity. I continually engage in self-education for best practices in graduate mentoring and am trained by the National Research Mentoring Network in faculty mentoring practices, and therefore I promise my mentoring practices are not arbitrary, but rather based in empirical data.