

Graduate Student Expectations

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New students often know neither what's expected of them nor what they can expect of their faculty advisor. This handout helps to orient new students to the group.

Expectations of you as a student

Your goal is to execute your research in a way that is careful and precise, but also efficient. Science is not a 9 to 5 job, and you cannot succeed as a 9 to 5 student. You will often find yourself reading, doing research, analyzing data, or writing manuscripts on weeknights or weekends, whether you are on campus or off.

As a PhD student, you will find time-management challenging. If you struggle with time management, then your academic and mental well being will suffer. However, if you successfully manage your time, then you will find the challenges and successes of your time as a PhD uplifting and rewarding. I expect you to explore and develop a time management style. If you need a place to start, google *Getting Things Done* by David Allen.

I expect you to update me regularly about your progress, successes, and concerns in one-on-one meetings, usually once per week. You should prepare and send me an agenda for the meetings, which I will add to. These are in addition to formal updates in periodic group meetings and teleconferences with outside collaborators. This communication is critical to keep our working relationship productive. Involvement in collaborations, inside and especially outside the department, are crucial to your success! I expect you to tell me of concerns that you have about your research or our interactions.

I expect you to attend seminars and journal club regularly and to participate in other departmental activities.

I expect you to develop proficiency with the Unix/Linux operating system and computer programming (e.g. C, C++, Fortran90, Python), including parallel computing. All codes and manuscripts must be kept under version control software and all data must be backed up.

I expect you to pursue funding related to your project. These can be fellowships from the NSF or Florida Space Grant Consortium, Sigma Xi grants, or other external sources.

I expect you to read the primary literature. Read articles in scientific journals and on arXiv.org that are relevant to your work or the broader field, or that interest you. I will point you to relevant journals and articles, but do not rely on me to point you to everything. You should expect to be able to summarize one paper per week at either group meetings or Journal Club. In this summary, be succinct. Briefly give the background, including the most interesting overarching questions, and share the results or punchline. Then expand a little by briefly showing the supporting plots and/or equations.

If funding is available to cover your expenses, I expect you to present results from your research at national meetings, at least every other year. You must show me a complete draft of what you will present at least seven days before the meeting begins.

Publications are the primary means for communicating science, and as such, they are the primary indicators of your progress. I expect you to have submitted at least two first-author, peer-reviewed papers (based on your PhD work) for publication before I sign off on your dissertation. This is the minimum publication rate that I expect. If you wish to be competitive on the job market, then you should hold yourself to a higher standard. To be competitive, you will need

about one paper per year as a PhD student. I expect that you will be willing to contribute to the group as a whole, both intellectually and by assisting with research and training outside of your project.

Finally, I expect you to treat members of the group, including me, with respect and dignity.

Expectations of me as an advisor

With advanced notice, I will always make time to discuss your research and your academic training. I commit to a minimum of 30 minutes even during the worst weeks, but it will often be much more time than that.

I will advise you about the career path that you select (post-doctoral positions or non-academic), and the necessary next steps. If I am not familiar with that career path, I will refer you the best I am able to people or resources that can help to guide you.

I will read and comment on any manuscripts, applications, or other written materials you give me within two weeks (excluding theses). Generally comments will come quicker, but please get these to me at least this far in advance of any deadline.

I will write you detailed letters of recommendation based on your research experience. Upon request, I will update you with my assessment of your progress, both in research and in your overall training.

I will introduce you to others in the field and help you make contacts that will be useful throughout your career.

I understand that the peculiarly asymmetric social relationship between advisor and student makes it easy for me to bruise your feelings with an unintentional comment or even a well-meant criticism. I suffered such bruises when I was a student, and will try to be mindful. In addition, I will try to acquaint you with practical ways to address and diminish the stresses of being a student, as far as that is possible.

I will treat you, and all the members of the group, with respect and dignity.

Adapted from Noor (2012) and Prof. Kevin Huffenberger's graduate expectations.