

Planetary Evolution and Astrobiology Lab

Graduate Student Mentoring Agreement

Graduate school is a unique experience. Students often embark on ambitious research projects with limited direct supervision and not knowing what (if anything) they will discover. They are then expected to devote 5-6 years of their lives to train as an independent scientist and become world experts in their chosen field. In this environment, student success is contingent on the support and mentorship of senior colleagues, and in particular, their PhD advisor(s). The primary role of a PhD advisor is to provide scientific guidance, but they are also integral to their students' professional development and are expected to help students navigate the culture of academia, prepare for future career opportunities, and build their students' professional networks. At the same time, professorial faculty are dependent on their students because most university research gets produced by student and postdoc mentees and not directly by the professors, who must instead devote time to teaching, writing grants, service etc. This mutual reliance highlights the significance of mentor-mentee relationships. Clear expectations and effective communication are vital for success, hence the mentor-mentee agreement. This document outlines what both sides can expect, sets common goals, and establishes behavioral norms/responsibilities. It's a dynamic agreement, intended to be revisited annually as the student progresses through their degree.

Mentee Responsibilities

MENTEE acknowledge that they have the primary responsibility for the successful completion of their degree, including committing to coursework, teaching, thesis research and writing, and other academic and professional activities.

MENTEE is committed to providing feedback on the type of support they require, and MENTOR is committed to working intentionally to make sure they can construct effective and timely mentoring structures to support those needs. To this end, MENTEE will complete an annual survey to help MENTOR improve mentoring practices.

MENTEE will treat graduate school like a full-time job, meaning that total time spent on all grad school activities, including research, classes, assignments, meetings, attending seminars, and administrative task will constitute a typical work week. MENTOR may provide guidance on time management and suggested prioritization of tasks.

MENTEE will be explicit about their professional goals as they develop so that MENTOR can help prepare them for career opportunities within or outside academia.

MENTEE will work towards publishing all completed research in peer-reviewed scientific literature.

MENTEE will familiarize themselves with the "Lab Expectations" document for more specific guidelines on time management, authorship, publishing papers, conferences, and outreach.

Mentor Responsibilities

MENTOR is committed to providing all necessary support to ensure that MENTEE is successful. In particular, MENTOR will provide an environment that is intellectually stimulating, emotionally supportive, safe, equitable, and free of harassment to help foster MENTEE's development as a scholar or scientist.

MENTOR will provide constructive feedback on research ideas, preliminary results, manuscript drafts, and conference presentations etc. that is timely and detailed.

While MENTOR cannot guarantee indefinite RA funding, MENTOR will strive to provide a secure funding environment for MENTEE—including summer funding—to enable MENTEE to focus on their research. MENTEE will apply for external fellowships (e.g. NSF, NASA) and internal awards where appropriate, and will assist MENTOR with grant applications when invited to do so.

MENTOR will be prepared to help with the following topics: Choosing appropriate courses, Networking with others in your area; Turning your research into publications – developing and submitting the manuscript, responding to reviewers, etc.; Developing a preliminary exam topic and proposal; Developing a dissertation topic and proposal; Developing and practicing research presentation skills; Forming and communicating with preliminary exam and dissertation committees; Preparing presentations and/or posters for professional meetings; Discussing job options and preparing for the job market (both within and outside academia); Brainstorming ideas for time management; Finding other mentors to help you with topics that are not my strengths; Brainstorming ideas for maintaining work/life balance; Finding teaching and outreach opportunities, Help you develop attainable goals and a plan for attaining them; Developing teaching skills; Conducting peer review of research.

Joint Responsibilities

MENTOR and MENTEE will work together to design a thesis/dissertation project and help develop a timeline for completion of the project.

MENTOR and MENTEE will always communicate professionally and with mutual respect, especially on areas of disagreement. Both MENTOR and MENTEE will be open to constructive criticism and feedback.

MENTOR and MENTEE will meet regularly (once a week) to discuss both tangible research progress as well as other broader professional goals, classes, outreach etc. Both MENTOR and MENTEE are committed to transparent and honest communication, including any challenges they might be facing.

Specific MENTEE Goals for the next academic year:

1)

2)

3)

Specific MENTOR Goals for the next academic year:

1)

2)

3)

MENTOR Name

Signature

Date

MENTEE Name

Signature

Date