

## Expectations Discussion Questions - MBG Major Advisor

The intent of this document is to facilitate a discussion between students and major advisors about topics such as mentorship style, scientific responsibilities, assessing student progress, communication in the lab, and more. There are different ways that one can use this document. For example, a student can write a paragraph or two describing their expectations that is shared with the faculty member prior to a discussion about a possible rotation. Alternatively, these questions can be used as a guide for a meeting between the student and the faculty member and student. The student and advisor can decide what questions listed below are important to discuss rather than discussing the entirety of the document. However, we encourage everyone to read the entire document to choose a subset of questions for further discussion.

### I. Rotation specific discussion points

#### What does a successful rotation look like?

1. Given the amount of time spent taking classes during year 1 in the GGD program (4.5 credits graded minimum per semester), approximately how many hours do you think should be spent in the rotation lab each week?
2. What types of interactions do you want a rotation student to have with labmates? (i.e. collaborating on projects, sharing lunch hours, discussing projects/literature)
3. What are you expecting students to learn from lab meetings (i.e. labmates projects, gaining presentation/communication skills, learning about lab communication styles)?
4. Do you expect rotation students to give lab meetings and do you provide help with presentation styles and how to give presentations beforehand?
5. What background reading would be helpful for rotation students to gauge the breadth of the research in the lab (i.e. grant proposals, literature, reviews, textbook chapters)?
6. Do you have a particular project in mind for the rotation student or are they getting involved with ongoing projects in the lab?
7. What level of completion do you expect of the rotation project(s)?

## II. General (rotations and joining the lab)

### Mentorship style -

1. How often do you prefer to meet with your students to discuss projects and progress?
2. Do you prefer discussions to be formal and planned ahead of time, conducted casually, or both? Does this vary based on discussion topic?
3. What does it mean to you for students to work independently? What does this look like practically?
4. Do you prefer students to take initiative to begin the next steps on projects or prefer to be involved to discuss this?
5. Who trains students on lab methods and techniques? For example, the advisor, research staff, post-docs, graduate students?
6. If a project takes a different direction from what was initially planned between you and the student, does the student have flexibility to take the project in a different direction?

### Scientific responsibilities-

1. How do you train students to write manuscripts?
  - a. Do you have a specific writing style?
  - b. Who contributes to each part of the manuscript?
    - i. i.e are the intro, figures, results, etc divided up?
    - ii. Does the student write the first draft for the advisor to edit?
2. Do students work on their own projects individually, will projects be a collaborative effort (e.g. with other students, post-docs, lab technicians), or does it depend on the project?
3. Do students work on collaborative projects within the lab and between labs? What is your role in establishing and managing collaborations?
4. What does funding look like for this student and how often will the student be expected to TA? If the student is paid off of a teaching assistantship, how does that affect your expectations for research productivity?
5. What do you think is the best way to go about solving the technical problems you encounter (e.g. having trouble optimizing IHC, difficulty genotyping, coding issues, etc.) and who do you expect to be available to help address these problems (e.g. graduate students, lab technicians, the advisor)?

## **Assessing student progress**

1. How do you prefer to assess student progress and give feedback (i.e. lay out goals together and review them, casual discussions in lab, presentations in lab meetings, written vs. verbal)?
2. How often do you prefer to discuss progress and give/get feedback?

## **Project organization**

1. Are students typically working on the same topics/grants as other students and researchers in the lab or on individual topics or grants?
2. Do you have a preference for when and how ownership of a project is assigned?
  - a. For example, when in the process of a project do you prefer manuscript authorship to be decided?
  - b. How is it addressed if there is a change in authorship during the course of the project?
3. How do you manage teamwork?

## **Side projects**

1. Are students able to develop your own side projects?
  - a. If so, can students approach you about side project ideas?
  - b. At what stage in project development should the student talk to you?

## **Communication in lab**

1. How do you create a space during lab meetings that encourages students to actively participate? What does active participation mean to you?
2. How do you prefer to communicate with your students (email, knock on door, both)?
3. Do you expect students to give regular lab meeting presentations and is there a style of presenting that you prefer (i.e. short casual updates to get advice and feedback, longer presentations of projects that are more developed, a mix?, others?)?
4. How do you create and support a positive and productive lab environment? What do you see as the role of students and other lab members in supporting a positive and productive lab environment?

## **Diversity and Inclusion**

1. In what ways are diversity, equity, and inclusion important to you?
2. How do you address diversity, equity, and inclusion in your lab? (statement on the lab website, conversations during lab meetings, etc?)

3. Do you value and support students who take on diversity, equity, and inclusion work?  
What does this look like?
4. Would you be comfortable talking to your student about any issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion and assisting with lab initiatives in this area?

## Conflict Resolution

1. Do you prefer conflicts between lab members to be handled by the advisor or privately between the two parties?
  - a. Does this differ for you based on the conflict: e.g. disagreements, or experiences related to bias based on race, class, nationality, disability, visa/citizenship status, gender identity, sexual orientation, and religion vs. non-identity related conflict?
  - b. How should instances of conflict be communicated to the advisor?
2. Do you have any questions you'd like to discuss about conflict resolution after reading the **GGD bluebook conflict resolution section**?

## Hours spent in lab

1. Do you regularly expect students to work nights and weekends, or is this occasional, as needed?
2. Are students able to have flexible work hours?
3. Are there hours or days that you are typically available to students?

## Career goals

1. Do you support students interested in academic and non-academic career tracks? Such as:
  - i. Research intensive academic faculty
  - ii. Primarily undergraduate institution
  - iii. Administration
  - iv. Research outside of academia - ie industry or government
  - v. Law or science policy
  - vi. Science communication, science writing
  - vii. others?
  - b. If so, how will you provide career support for students outside of research academic career tracks?
  - c. Do you support students taking time away from research for relevant career internships?
  - d. Do you support students taking on regular teaching assistantships?
2. Do you encourage your students to utilize the existing career development resources on campus?
3. What careers have students from your lab gone on to?

### **III. Other Questions/Concerns**

**What do you see as your greatest strength and weakness?**

**Is there anything else you'd like to discuss with your student about your work habits, communication style, or expectations for training?**