
Student/Adviser Agreement

The mentor/student relationship in science is founded upon the ideal of creating new knowledge developed through a set of shared experiences. Please consider adopting the following agreement to codify future research efforts.

Guidelines for Thesis Advisers and students:

- 1) Be committed to success and demonstrate this by words and actions; avoid procrastination and discuss research problems and other lab-related issues often and in detail.
- 2) Create a plan for research that should be accomplished within four years of joining the lab; include some sure-fire components and some ground-breaking research to ensure impacts on your field rather than incremental contributions.
- 3) Focus closely on projects with the potential for a student's first-author publication or two before graduation
- 4) Discuss teaching/service assignments and any problems with those as they progress. *The Graduate Center has mandated an upper limit of 4 hours of teaching/service per semester whether the student is paid as a Graduate Fellow or an adjunct. (Full release from teaching can be accomplished when external funds, fellowships and other resources fulfill all financial obligations to meet the guaranteed annual support level, including outlays for tuition and fringe benefits.)*
- 5) Discuss the details of financial support from grants administered by the RFCUNY (salary, RF title and dates on payroll); students must discuss teaching assignments with their department chair well in advance of critical deadlines. Guaranteed support must meet or exceed the level at which students began in their CUNY Science Scholarship year one. Plan at least one semester ahead for financial support when external funding resources are coming to an end!
- 6) Ensure that eligibility for health insurance (NYSHIP) is not jeopardized and that students maintain enrollment no matter where financial support comes from. In cases where a student is fully supported with funding separate from any CUNY appointment title, arrangements to guarantee eligibility for NYSHIP are possible and must be made. Consult with the Program Office.
- 7) Make arrangements well in advance of a request for Parental Accommodation or a Leave of Absence.
- 8) Create a student/mentor shared calendar with critical deadlines, meetings, appointments.
- 9) Discuss advanced courses and other useful opportunities/seminars, workshops including any at sister institutions (Rockefeller, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, NYU, Columbia, Mt. Sinai, Weill-Cornell, Rutgers, NYBG, AMNH).
- 10) Consult with the Program Office whenever questions arise; consult the thesis committee if problems arise that cannot be resolved between the thesis adviser and the student.
- 11) Establish the Thesis Committee at the end of the second semester a student is in the program; complete the Second Level Exam during the 3rd or 4th semester in the program.

Student agrees to abide by the following:

Student will abide by the items outlined in the general section above and the specific items below:

Student will:

- 1) Abide by safety rules and be aware of hazardous chemicals and procedures in research labs and in teaching labs.
- 2) Adhere to the policies, deadlines, and requirements of the PhD program as well as those of the Graduate Center based on the Student Handbooks
- 3) Obtain C-14 certification; get proper safety training especially for the storage and handling of radioactive materials.
- 4) READ the MANUAL; other people may have bad habits they transmit to you when sharing procedures and instruction on the use of instruments, etc.
- 5) Keep thorough dated records of your work either on paper or in electronic notebook on a daily/weekly basis for everything you do in your home lab and when visiting other labs.; when following published procedures, note problems and modifications you make.
- 6) Do not take unnecessary risks in the laboratory especially with instruments you have little experience running; do NOT assume anything about a procedure, chemical properties, potential hazards; obtain accurate information before beginning procedures.
- 7) Set goals for yourself and align these with the expectations of your thesis adviser.
- 8) Avoid being isolated in your lab and department by joining an “affinity group” of your peers and faculty, an effort the Program Office will initiate in the immediate future.
- 9) Clearly communicate your needs to your thesis adviser and aim to resolve conflicts with other lab personnel on a regular basis.
- 10) Accept criticism and feedback with an open mind rather than defensiveness.
- 11) Measure progress against self-assessment goals and be willing to adapt when your progress is deemed inadequate. Remember that you are expected to graduate within 5 years.
- 12) Stay abreast of the latest developments in your research area through reading the literature and regular attendance at seminars and scientific meetings.
- 13) Attend all program events, including, Career/Speednetworking Workshops, Horst Schulz Award Seminar and other career development events presented by CUNY and the Graduate Center Career and Professional Development Office.
- 14) Develop a collection of relevant publications that are likely to be included in your dissertation References section; use Mendeley or other software to organize them.
- 15) Attend group meetings regularly and volunteer to record minutes to document important items that should be shared with group members who were absent.
- 16) Become familiar with external and CUNY/GC funding opportunities and apply for those you are eligible for. Assistance is available from campus and GC-based offices of Research and Sponsored Programs and the EO Office.
- 17) Start and maintain the “myIDP” document and a CV.
- 18) Work on improving writing and find workshops devoted to such skills.

STUDENT NAME _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Thesis Advisers: Carefully consider how your own experiences as a doctoral student govern your current attitudes and style; consider how the attitudes and style of your thesis adviser may or may NOT align well with your current circumstances and adjust these to serve your best interests and to the best advantage of your students.

Adviser agrees to:

- 1) Allow/encourage/confirm that students abide by the guidelines above.
- 2) Clearly define long and short term research goals; use Blackboard to document learning goals in a syllabus* for each semester of research including those for the courses BICM82000 and 90000; without such documentation, no assessment can take place upon which a fair grade can be assigned. See * below
- 3) Measure progress objectively and give feedback in the form of constructive criticism often; be specific about failure to meet expectations not necessarily evaluated against your personal criteria but more global ones measured against the norms of the field of research; for example, the image of a lousy gel in which the bands form a big “smile” is unacceptable to the scientific community rather than merely for esthetic reasons.
- 4) Create guidelines for good lab behavior and for users of shared equipment; be sure students know and abide by the rules in colleagues/collaborators labs when working externally.
- 5) Assist in choosing thesis committee members according to program rules and to provide maximum benefit to the student’s short and long term career goals; include people from chemical/pharma industry whenever possible; include at least one member from outside CUNY. SKYPE participation is allowed on occasion.
- 6) Make specific arrangements for one-on-one mentoring and assign other senior lab personnel to supervise activities when you are away.
- 7) Encourage and organize collaborations with other groups when experimental data beyond the group’s expertise will increase the impact of the work.
- 8) Be sure students attend conferences even if they may not be ready to present original research. Funds can come from DSRGs and when money is tight, from program funds upon request.
- 9) Be sure students participate in all events sponsored by the program office (Career Development/Speednetworking Workshops, Horst Schulz Award Seminar, etc.); encourage attendance at career development activities beyond the Biochemistry Program and outside CUNY.
- 10) Organize group meetings and require attendance and participation by students at all levels. Ask someone in attendance to record minutes or make a record yourself of any important items immediately after such meetings.
- 11) Become familiar with external funding opportunities and encourage students to apply for them (assistance is available from campus and GC-based offices of Research and Sponsored Programs and the EO Office). Encourage students to apply for program and GC-sponsored awards, grants, etc.
- 12) Assist students in preparing and updating their “myIDP” and CV writing; provide access to specific activities to enhance writing skills especially for non-native English speakers.
- 13) Allow some vacation time from the lab!

NAME _____ Campus/Dept. _____

Signature _____ Date _____

** I am aiming to avoid problems such as the following: in the absence of a syllabus that lays out research goals for each semester, there is nothing to protect you and your student against a charge that the student is just not performing well and warrants dismissal from the lab. Writing a syllabus and posting it on Blackboard for the research course (82000 or 90000) can be accomplished with just a few minutes of input from you to write up general and more specific goals for your students that can be assessed for the purpose of a grade, such as: prepare second level exam proposal and rehearse its oral defense; learn Western blotting and demonstrate success at duplicating results; coordinate mass spec analysis of peptide digests with appropriate facility; prepare a poster for the upcoming ASBMB meeting and have it reviewed by all co-authors.*

OR, ask your students to prepare a reasonable set of goals for each semester and the summer which you can use for this syllabus to be posted on Blackboard.

In this way, for example, 2 semesters in which the student doesn't meet goals would provide the documentation that the student is consistently underperforming and no longer can be supported in their research efforts.