



Faculty Toolkit for Graduate Student Mentorship

Faculty mentorship not only plays an integral role in the success of graduate and post-doctoral students, but also enriches the broader scholarly community. Cultivating productive and rewarding mentorship relationships benefits mentees and mentors alike. Mentees become empowered to identify and pursue their academic and career goals, and mentors experience the opportunity of gratifying interpersonal relationships while advancing the discipline by counseling mentees in effective and innovative research, teaching practices, and professional development. Successful mentorship relationships depend on the collaboration and commitment of mentors and mentees to the common goals of scholarly enterprise, academic success, and professional development.

This toolkit offers an archive of resources related to the mentorship of graduate students. We have reviewed a host of materials and offer here those which we have found the most helpful.

[CITL Quick Guide for Mentoring Graduate Students](#) (this document overviews the responsibilities and competencies of successful mentors)

[CITL Hot Tips for Meeting with Graduate Students](#) (this document offers advice on establishing generative and sustainable meeting and communication practices with your mentees)

Other quick guides for graduate student mentorship:

- Brown University Graduate Division's ["Best Practices for Advising and Mentoring"](#)
- Northwestern University's ["Best Practices for Mentors"](#)
- University of Washington Graduate School's ["How to Mentor Graduate Students"](#)
- University of Minnesota's ["Graduate Student Advising Guide"](#) (for addressing common mentorship concerns)
- University of Minnesota's ["Advising and Mentoring Worst Practices"](#)

Guidebooks:

- University of Michigan, ["How to Mentor Graduate Students"](#)
- Case Western Reserve University, ["A Mentoring Guidebook for Faculty"](#)
- University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, ["Faculty Guide to Mentoring Graduate Students"](#)
- W.T. Grant Foundation, ["Pay it Forward: Guidance for Mentoring Junior Scholars"](#)

Planning Tools and Agreements

Individual Development Plans

An Individual Development Plan (IDP) is an individualized planning tool used to identify and track academic and professional development goals. IDPs serve to: 1) identify and describe long and short-term academic, career, and personal goals, 2) isolate the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve those goals, and 3) institute a timeline for tracking and measuring skills acquisition and scholarly activity. IDPs also serve as a useful communication tool between mentees and their mentors. [This video](#) from the University of Wisconsin-Madison Graduate Division overviews the uses and process of creating IDPs.

There are two widely used free online IDP tools: [MyIDP](#) (for those working in STEM fields) and [ImaginePhD](#) (for those working in the humanities and social sciences).

Download the CITL's [Sample Individual Development Plan](#)

Mentorship Agreements

It can also be useful to develop, with your mentee, a practical mentorship agreement/compact that establishes how and when you will meet and overviews each of your responsibilities. These compacts create a sense of mutual investment and responsibility for the mentorship relationship. Mentorship compacts might include:

- List of mentee's academic and career goals
- Steps for achieving those goals
- Expectations of mentee
- Expectations of mentor
- Frequency and location of meetings and scheduling practices
- Meeting topics
- Rules of engagement for in-person meetings
- Communication etiquette
- Agreement about confidentiality and disclosure
- Plan for addressing conflict
- Plan for evaluating the mentorship relationship
- Relationship termination clause

Download the CITL's [Sample Mentorship Agreement](#)

Other Sample Compacts and IDPs:

- University of Wisconsin [Mentorship Agreement Template](#)
- University of Michigan [Sample Mentoring Agreement](#)
- University of Washington [Sample Mentoring Agreement](#)
- Kentucky University [Mentoring Agreement Template](#)
- *Entering Mentoring: A Facilitator's Manual*, [Mentor-Mentee Contract](#)
- UCLA [Postdoctoral Student Compact](#)
- University of North Carolina [Postdoctoral Student IDP Worksheet](#)
- Florida State University [Individual Development Plan Template](#)
- USC Neuroscience Department [Individual Development Plan](#)

Inclusive Mentoring

It is important to consider how differences of identity and experience between you and your mentee affect the relationship dynamic or your mentorship approach. Likewise, effective mentorship can support equity within your field and in a broader scholarly community. Below you will find some helpful resources on inclusive mentorship:

- Kendall Johnson, ["Mentoring Matters: How to Support Students of Color in Academia"](#)
- Marissa López, ["On Mentoring First Generation and Graduate Students of Color"](#)
- Harriet W. Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning, Brown University, ["Inclusive Mentoring"](#)
- Linda DeAngelo, Council of Graduate Schools PowerPoint: ["Supporting Students of Color on the Pathway to Graduate Education: Barriers and Supports to Mentoring"](#)
- Thomas, Kecia M., et al. ["Mentoring minority graduate students: issues and strategies for institutions, faculty, and students"](#) (doi:10.1108/02610150710735471)

- Brigham and Women's Hospital Mentoring Curriculum & Toolkit, ["Mentoring Across Difference"](#)

Other Articles of Interest:

Adrianna Bankston, *Inside Higher Ed.*, ["Making Mentoring Relationships Meaningful"](#)

Claire Potter, *Inside Higher Ed.*, ["Why Faculty Advising Matters"](#)

Colleen Flaherty, *Inside Higher Ed.*, ["If You Want to Be My Student"](#) (one Columbia professor on his frank approach to mentorship)

Resources for Graduate Students:

You can also direct your graduate students to the CITL's Graduate Student Guide to Being a Good Mentee.

Other resources:

- University of Michigan's Mentorship Guide for Graduate Students ["How to Get the Mentorship You Want"](#)
- Council of Graduate Schools' ["Great Mentoring in Graduate School: A Quick Start Guide for Proteges"](#)
- Kerry Ann Rockquemore, *Chronicle Vitae*, ["When It Comes to Mentoring, the More the Merrier"](#)
- Michael Lanning, ["The Many Varieties of Mentors"](#)
- Hugh Kearns and Maria Gardiner, *Nature* 469, ["The Care and Maintenance of Your Advisor"](#)
- Indira Raman, *Neuron* 81, ["How to Be a Graduate Advisee"](#)
- K.D. Shives, *Inside Higher Ed.*, ["Picking a Good Mentor"](#)
- Katie Shives, *Inside Higher Ed.*, ["Managing Your Advisor"](#)
- Brady Krien, *Inside Higher Ed.*, ["Chart Your Course"](#) (on IDPs and career planning)



Quick Guide to Graduate Student Mentorship¹

Collaborate on and align expectations. Work *with* your graduate student to design and communicate clear short term and long-term goals for their research and career trajectory. Make use of a written compact or an Individual Development Plan that can be revisited and adjusted over time to adapt to the students' (and your) needs.

Communicate effectively. Make use of active listening in your mentorship relationships. Check in with your mentee during conversations to be sure you are "on the same page." Be patient when there is a communication challenge. Be clear, honest, and sensitive when offering constructive feedback. Be self-reflexive about the ways personal or professional differences between you and your mentee might impact your relationship and communicate about and navigate those differences together. Respond to emails or phone calls promptly.

Demystify graduate school. Much of graduate education is navigating vague bureaucracy and acculturating to a new set of disciplinary and departmental rules, many of which are unwritten. This means many graduate students don't even know what questions to ask or what skills they should be actively working to cultivate. Clarify your personal and broader program and institutional expectations for your graduate students around coursework, qualifying/comprehensive examinations, lab work, teaching, and research topics. As the student progresses through the program, continue to discuss the prevailing norms and criteria used to define quality graduate work.

Encourage the effective use of time. Work with the student on developing their time management skills. Help them establish schedules and deadline/benchmark accountability. Share techniques that have been useful for you and those you have worked with, but be generous towards the students' own proclivities and tactics.

Oversee and promote professional development. Many activities that have become second nature to you need to be made explicit to students. This could be things like faculty service, conference networking and talks, campus administrative practices and policies, lab direction, grant procurement, budget design, and being able to communicate one's research to folks outside the discipline. Help your graduate student learn about and enter into these spaces and practices.

¹ These competencies are adapted from the University of Michigan's "[How To Mentor Graduate Students: A Guide for Faculty](#)" and *Entering Mentoring* (2014).

Address equity and inclusion. Recognize the identity-based and cultural dimensions of power at play in the mentor-mentee relationship and work to dismantle conscious and unconscious biases and preconceptions.

Model and cultivate ethical behavior. Communicate with your mentee about the ethical issues which are at play in the mentor-mentee relationship, in the research work, and in teaching and other academic spaces. Be sure your graduate students understand the ethical standards of behavior in the discipline and model for them fair uses practices, responsible data collection, appropriate source citation, etc. in your own work.

Assist with finding other mentors. Be self-reflective about your own limits as a mentor, and be forthcoming about the kind of guidance and support you can provide. Introduce students to other faculty, staff, graduate students, or campus resources that can bolster your students' intellectual, emotional, and psychological support network.

Hot Tips for Meeting with Graduate Student Mentees

Create a mentorship agreement and follow its guidelines. Mentorship agreements are a great way to work collaboratively with your graduate student to delineate expectations, responsibilities, and rules of engagement for your mentorship relationship. This document should also establish meeting etiquette, communication standards, and scheduling practices. That way, these practices can be easily referred to (and altered if necessary). Be sure to include **meeting times, meeting frequency, and meeting locations** so there is no unnecessary logistical confusion.

Let your graduate student set the agenda. Part of being a successful mentor is providing opportunities for your graduate student to take charge of their graduate education. Selecting a meeting topic, crafting a meeting agenda, and communicating these to you in a professional manner are important skills for them to learn.

Listen! As the faculty member, you are positioned as the expert in the mentorship relationship, and it is true that you have ample experience and expertise not yet available to your graduate students. That said, it is important to be open to your graduate student's ideas and aspirations, and not use your own experiences and research preferences as a template for your student. It's likely your mentee won't follow the same exact path you did, and it's important that you stay attuned to their wants and needs.

Ask your graduate student to summarize the meeting after it's over. This is an excellent practice for helping your graduate student develop diligent listening and organizational skills. Asking them to document these meeting minutes in written form (email or a shared document) is also a useful way to maintain an archive of your conversations and your student's progress.

Establish expectations for next steps. This might be as simple as scheduling another meeting. Or it might mean thinking with the graduate student about taking a certain action or completing certain tasks. Whatever it may be, don't let the meeting end without a clear sense (for both of you) of what's next.

Have a plan to address conflicts. Make sure that you have a conversation with your graduate student early on in the relationship (or you could even include this in your mentorship agreement) about how you two will proceed if a significant conflict arises. Will you involve the Department head? Will you bring in a conflict resolution facilitator? Having this plan in place before a challenging encounter occurs can save the relationship from undergoing irrevocable damage.