

ALIGNING MENTOR AND TRAINEE EXPECTATIONS

Learning Objectives

Trainees will:

- Understand that their expectations of their research mentoring relationship may be different from their mentors.
- Establish an open line of communication with their mentor in order to address any differences and align their expectations.

Assignment

1. Answer the questions on the Research Trainee Expectations worksheet.
2. Discuss the questions with your mentor to align your goals and expectations for the research experience. Send the Research Mentor Expectations worksheet to your mentor before the meeting so that he/she can prepare.
3. Trainees and mentors should tailor their discussion to the specific needs of *their* relationship.
4. After the discussion, complete the Mentor–Trainee Expectation document together.

RESEARCH TRAINEE EXPECTATIONS

1. Why do you want to do research?
2. What are your career goals? How can this research experience and the mentor–trainee relationship help you achieve them?
3. What would success in this research experience look like to you?
4. How many hours per week and at what times/days do you expect to work on your mentor's research?
5. Assuming a good fit, how long do you expect to work with this research group?
6. What, if any, specific technical or communication skills do you expect to learn as part of the research experience?
7. How do you learn best (written procedure, verbal instructions, watch and repeat, etc.)? What can your mentor do to help you learn the techniques and skills in a timely manner that you need to be successful in your research lab? What can you do before you start in the lab to allow you to be successful in this research group?
8. Once you are trained in basic techniques, would you prefer to continue to work closely with others (e.g., on a team project), or independently?
9. Once you have learned the techniques and procedures used in your lab do you prefer that your mentor watch closely what you do, walking you through all the steps, or do you prefer a hands off approach to being supervised?
10. How will you document your research results? Is there a specific protocol for keeping a laboratory notebook in your research group?
11. To whom do you expect to go if you have questions about your research project? Does your mentor expect you to come solely (or first) to them, or should you feel free to ask others in the research group? If others, can your mentor identify those in the group who would be good resource people for your project?
12. Are you comfortable with the methodology used in the lab? Does it involve the use of animals, for example? Does it involve lengthy field trips where you might be isolated with other researchers for weeks at a time? How do you feel about that?
13. Will the research that you will be involved in be confidential? Are you allowed to discuss your project with other individuals outside of your laboratory?
14. What role will your mentor play in the development of your skills as a writer? Is your mentor willing to help you with your research-related writing along the way or does he/she only want to read it after it is in its final version? If your mentor only wants to read final versions of your writing, could they appoint someone in the laboratory/ research team to proofread your writings?
15. Do you know all the institutional safety and ethics training that is required to work in your research project? Discuss the required training with your mentor and establish a deadline by which you should complete it.
16. If you have previous research experience, what skills do you expect to bring to your new research group?