Grad Student Agreement

One area in which I have seen student/advisor interactions founder is when there are differing expectations of the roles of the student and advisor during graduate school. This document reflects my thoughts on important areas to address in the advisee-advisor relationship. It is not meant to be all-inclusive, but to establish and outline areas of responsibility that I have, as an advisor, to my students, and that my students have to me and to their research. Additionally, I will add to this as I or others identify issues or missed areas and will try to use this to reflect on best modes for my advising and areas that need improvement. Much of this may seem obvious or self-explanatory, but I hope that by writing these things out it will 1) make it clear that it is ok to ask for help or advice in certain areas, 2) force both of us to consider these questions, ideally in advance of any issues, and 3) start and continue this process with clear expectations and an avenue to address issues.

Seth Bushinsky, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

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1. Work-life balance
Work hours
In general, it's helpful if we all aim to work roughly during 9am-5pm working hours. I find that research is more collaborative, productive, and enjoyable if you run into other group members and department members outside of scheduled meetings. However, my life doesn't easily fit a "normal" schedule at all times and I don't expect yours to either. If you'll need to work odd hours for a significant period of time, just let me know and we can work out different meeting times if need be, or more regular check-ins via e-mail. Similarly, I will try to be consistent in the hours I am around (and let you know when I will be gone) so that you can pop in for quick questions.

Note that major life events will change this and that's fine and expected.

Vacation
Work isn't your whole life and I expect you to take vacations. These can be long weekends, a week or two at a time, or whatever works for you. I don't expect to keep track of your vacation time. I do ask that it is reasonable. My current definition of reasonable is ~4 weeks per year. Also, if you're going to be gone for several days or more, please let me know in advance so that we can plan around work that needs to be done. If there is a meeting, cruise, or other work that has to be done on a strict timeline, I ask that you try to talk to me well in advance and plan around the work. In return, I will try my best to not request some large amount of work on a tight timeline and expect you to drop everything. If you need additional time off for something unexpected, talk to me and we can figure out what makes sense.

If you're having a kid, congrats! We can work out additional time off and some sort of flexible work schedule for when you're back.

Email hours, when I expect replies, etc.
Just as for work hours, I don't always get caught up on e-mail during a normal work day. Some people advocate queuing emails to only send during work hours, so as not to pressure students to respond at, say, 5am on a Sunday. Because I'd like to give you the flexibility to work when works best for you, I would rather send an email whenever I have the time. If you want to respond during non-work hours, that's fine. If you want to wait until work hours, that is also fine. Only in some time-sensitive situations (one of us is at sea and needs an immediate response) should anyone expect a quick response at odd hours.

Sick leave
Graduate Assistants at UHM currently do not have sick leave as part of their contracts. Regardless, if you are sick, you should not be coming to work or trying to accomplish all of your work at home. Please let me know if you need to take some time off but I'm not going to be counting days and keeping track. Take the time that you need to get better. If it's a longer term issue/absence we can talk about possible work arounds or other courses of action.

2. Conferences, meetings, and getting to know the community

Depending on your goals for grad school and post-grad school life, meetings can play an important role. I view one of my roles as an advisor to connect you to people who can help you with your career. With that in mind:

-   You should go to meetings (ideally to present)
-   I should help you meet people at meetings who do relevant work or who you would like to meet
-   You should apply for travel money
-   I will try to have travel money available (but can't predict the future)

There is often travel money available through a wide range of sources. It looks good for you to get travel money and the more money you get independently, the more our group can go to a wide range of meetings. As far as how many meetings to go to: it depends. At times you will want to network extensively, for example when thinking about postdocs / faculty jobs. At other times you need to consider the time (and carbon footprint) involved in going to meetings. I aim for 1 large meeting (Ocean Sciences, AGU) and 1 small meeting or workshop a year. This is far less than some people and far less than there are good meetings to go to, but seems like the right balance for me right now. As an early grad student, 1 meeting a year starting in your second year seems about right. It's far better to go and present interesting material – that way you can talk to people, practice explaining your work, make professional connections – than it is to go to many meetings and not get any of your own work done.

3. Non-research commitments, i.e. outreach, inclusion/equity/diversity efforts, teaching

Outreach and equity, diversity, and inclusion work are critical to the future of our field (both oceanography and the broader earth sciences). I am fully supportive of this being a component of your grad school career. We also have to be mindful of your academic timeline and make sure you are continuing to make progress. Like everything, there will be ebbs and flows. Also,

not everyone wants to do outreach or non-research work. That is fine, I just ask that you consider the broader scientific community and think of how you can make it better.

4. Funding

By accepting you as a grad student I am committing to the best of my ability to secure funding for you as a student. That is not to say I will always be successful though and it is possible I will ask you to TA if I cannot find funding. The counterpoint to this is that I expect you to apply for fellowships to secure your own funding. I can help write proposals, brainstorm ideas, and identify good opportunities. It benefits us both if you secure your own funding and is good practice for applying to things down the road. As with many things in grad school, do not take failure to heart. The majority of things I have applied to I have not gotten. But the few that I did were very beneficial to my career and independence. Funding aside, it is a good experience to TA for a semester and I would recommend most students do so. It is not a departmental requirement and I won't force you to, but teaching other people is a good skill to practice.

5. Supplies, computer, etc.

As with travel, I will try to always have money from a grant to buy computers when needed, office equipment, etc. You shouldn't feel limited by your tools and if you do, please talk to me. Please pay attention to ergonomics, don't leave grad school with back pain or carpal tunnel syndrome. Also, I will pay for or provide steel toed boots, foul weather gear, etc., as needed.

6. Field and lab work

Field work is one of the things I love about oceanography. It can also be stressful and dangerous. Some thoughts:

- Be safe. If you feel very unprepared or unsure about something and I am not there, make sure you communicate that to the chief scientist or crew.
- Be organized and prepared. Ship time is expensive, equipment is expensive, and a mistake can mean we lose a deployment opportunity entirely or have to wait a year.
- Mistakes will happen. Don't take the above point as an indication that I think you should be perfect. I spent years working on a calibration system for deployment during grad school only to short out a sensor through carelessness while at sea. It sucked, but it wasn't the end of the world.
- I have been to sea with a wide range of people and crews – some are great, supportive, and friendly. Others were not. Sexism, racism, and discrimination will not be tolerated. If anything comes up, please talk to me and we can figure out how to address the situation.
- Drinking at sea. The U.S. research fleet is dry, but that is not true of some international ships. Please follow the rules of the ship, but also err on the side of caution. There are enough dangerous parts of being at sea without adding alcohol. Also keep in mind that you represent our lab group and doing something dumb can mean the end of partnerships or collaborations.

7. Communication

How often we meet and in what format will vary person to person and over time. As a default, meeting once every week or two makes sense. These can be informal check-ins, but are a good time to discuss papers, stumbling blocks, etc. The goal is to not have several weeks in a row with no progress because you were stuck on something or lost. I won't expect continual progress, but it's good to not go for long periods without talking. Depending on group size and time constraints I will also plan to have lab lunches once a week or so and expect everyone to attend.

8. Career goals

I don't expect everyone to want to stay in academia and we should talk with some regularity about career plans and goals. I will try to support you in whichever direction you decide to go. Much of my experience is in academia, so if you want to consider other options, talk to me so that I can make sure I am providing the correct support and guidance for your goals. Also, it is good to build a network of mentors outside of our lab / department / institution. This can take some time, but exposure to a wide range of opinions/experiences is better than just relying on one person. My career path has worked (mostly) for me, but that doesn't mean it represents the right way to do things. I will try to help introduce you to people you can go to for advice or facilitate connections.

9. Ethics

Our work is funded by the public and relies on the trust and goodwill of our colleagues. I don't anticipate issues here, but it should be clear that academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. A good primer on scientific ethics is "[On Being a Scientist: A Guide to Responsible Conduct in Research](#)". A shorter and more enjoyable read on the benefits of being a good collaborator is [here](#), written by Emmanuel Boss, a Professor at the University of Maine.

10. Authorship

Scientific authorship can be a tricky subject and is best dealt with at the outset of any collaboration. Obviously the world can be less black and white and you can find yourself having done more work than previously expected on someone else's project, but the earlier it is worked out the better. The three criteria I try to use to determine authorship are:

- Significant intellectual contribution to study design
- Significant contribution to data collection or analysis
- Contribution to writing

Authorship should be expected if all three criteria are satisfied. If only two are satisfied then authorship is probable, but should be considered and perhaps the opportunity to contribute more broadly should be offered. For instance, if a lab technician collects data and helped when initially planning an experiment, but did not help with the writing, you should ask if they would like to be an author and provide comments on the manuscript. A common situation is when a

more senior collaborator does not respond to requests for comments on a manuscript. I don't have an easy answer here except that it is better to be generous with authorship and we should talk over anything that doesn't seem correct. People who only fulfill one of the above points, or who share code, data, expertise, etc., but do not rise to the level of authorship should be thanked in the acknowledgements.

Significant edits/versions
May/June 2020 – general editing for clarity.
July 5, 2020: added sick leave section