

A HANDBOOK --- FOR MENTORS AND MENTEES

Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences
University of Rochester, NY
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Version History

- This is a living document that is continuously updated by members of the Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences at the University of Rochester.
- This PDF is version August 2026. This version lacks content in the first five sections (Introduction – Best Practices). The mentorship program began in 2025 using this provisional handbook version. It is currently the most up-to-date version available, and updates will be announced on our departmental website. Direct any questions to the department representative listed in the "Contact" section of our website: <https://www.sas.rochester.edu/bcs/>.

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Introduction

Mission Statement

Who to Contact?

Building the Mentorship Relationship

Understanding the Mentor-Mentee Dynamic

Foundations

Communication Framework

Setting Expectations

Establishing Communication Preferences

Effective Feedback

Active Listening

Common Challenges

Identifying Group Identity

Mental Health

Imposter Syndrome

Work-life balance

Best Practices

For Mentors

For Mentees

Structuring the Mentorship Relationship

The quality of mentorship relationship is foundational to graduate and postdoctoral training. This section introduces forms designed to establish clear expectations, foster open communication, and prevent conflicts that may arise during the mentorship journey. By providing a scaffolding to the mentoring relationship, we acknowledge the intentional effort required from both parties for a successful mentor-mentee relationship.

- **The Mentor-Mentee Agreement (MMA)** is designed to help facilitate the discussion of expectations and goals. The agreement is between the mentee and their mentor(s). The mentorship committee also has access to the agreement. Separate MMAs are provided for graduate students and postdocs.
- **The Individual Study Plan (ISP)** serves as a way to track graduate students' development and goals as they progress through the program. The ISP will be shared with the scientific advisory committee and the mentorship committee.

These forms are described over the next few pages, along with instructions on how to use them. You can download and print them for your use. The forms are intended to create a documented record of expectations, goals, and responsibilities. The (at least) annual cycle of renewal, revisions, and feedback is meant to ensure that agreements evolve as researchers progress in their training.

Meeting Requirements and Timeline for Graduate Students

The MMA and the ISP constitute important input for two annual meetings that graduate students are expected to have, one in the Fall semester with a member of the Mentorship Committee and one in the Spring with their Scientific Advisory Committee. Both meetings continue regularly until the thesis defense. The student may additionally request to meet with any member of the Mentorship Committee or convene their Scientific Advisory Committee at any time if they feel it is necessary.

Mentees are responsible for providing the completed forms to each committee at least one week prior to the meeting. The two meetings differ in their focus, as described next.

Fall semester: check-in with a Member of the Mentorship Committee (MMC)

Prior to the meeting:

- The student will choose which MMC they will meet with. The student should try to choose an MMC based on the affinity reduction principle, to minimize conflicts of interests (COIs) with the mentee and their mentor(s) to the greatest extent possible (within reasonable limits). This could include avoiding MMCs who are active or past collaborators of the mentor, who are on the student's scientific advisory committee, or have a close personal relationship with the mentor. At the very least, these potential COIs should be disclosed to both the mentee and the mentor.
- The student will reach out to the MMC to schedule a meeting.
- The student provides the MMC with the Mentor-Mentee Agreement and the most recent ISP (including the most recent Report of the Scientific Advisory Committee) at least one week prior to the meeting.
- The MMC and the student will independently review the student's most recent Mentor-Mentee Agreement and ISP.

During the meeting:

- The MMC will assess whether the student feels that the Mentor-Mentee Agreement is being adhered to, whether any changes to that agreement are desired by the student, and whether the student would prefer help in achieving these changes. This can include questions about whether the student is satisfied with their progress in the program. The MMC will also assess whether the student requires any follow-up or support.
- The student should raise any concerns with their mentor and/or academic and research progress.
- The content of this meeting will not be shared outside the mentorship committee without the student's explicit permission.
- If concerns arise, next steps or potential solutions should be discussed with the student. The MMC may take further action as outlined under "[Holding ourselves accountable: The Mentorship Committee](#)". Within the limits of the university policies and guidelines, the MMC will not take actions without first clearing them with the student.

Spring semester: update ISP, meet with the scientific advisory committee, and receive feedback

Prior to the meeting:

- The student will complete all parts of the ISP (except for the Report of the Scientific Advisory Committee).
- The mentor and the student will meet to discuss the ISP and any updates to the Mentor-Mentee Agreement.
- The student will reach out to their Scientific Advisory Committee and schedule the meeting.
- The student will send the updated ISP to the Scientific Advisory Committee at least once prior to the meeting.

During the meeting:

- The student will provide an overview of the work they have done in the last year.
- The student should discuss the progress made towards the goals set out in the previous year's ISP, any challenges in making progress, as well as goals for the upcoming year.

After the meeting:

- The chair of the committee will draft the Report of the Scientific Advisory Committee, and circulate it among the members of the committee for feedback. This process should be started within one week of the meeting.
- Once the committee has reached a consensus, the form is signed by all members of the committee and sent to the student. This process should be completed no later than three weeks after the meeting.
- The student can ask clarification questions, and then signs the document (within one week), and forwards it to graduate program coordinator (with cc to all committee members), who will upload the document to the student's Box folder.

Mentor-Mentee Agreement¹

How to use this form

- Mentees and mentors should electronically fill out their respective columns, and then schedule a meeting to discuss the agreement. The form comes pre-filled with examples: these are suggestions, not rules, and may not be applicable in every situation. If you need more space, feel free to expand any of the form components.
- In the meeting, the mentee and mentor will work together to create a final agreement. When both parties are satisfied, they will electronically sign the agreement.
- The mentee should send the completed form to the graduate program coordinator, who will upload it to the department's Box folder for the mentee.
- The completed agreement will serve as important input for annual meetings the mentees are expected to have. See [Meeting Requirements and Timeline for Graduate Students](#) for detailed information on timelines mentees *and* mentors should be aware of.

When to fill out this form

- This agreement is first completed when the mentorship relationship begins, within one month of the student entering the program or within one month of the start of a mentorship relationship. It is the mentor's responsibility to ensure that this agreement is discussed within this time frame.
- As individual preferences and expectations can change over the period of mentorship, the agreement should be revisited at least yearly when the ISP is updated, but may be updated as the need arises.
- Rotation students should complete this agreement with their mentor when they commit to the lab for their dissertation.
- Students who are co-mentored are required to complete this form with their primary mentor, but may complete it with their co-mentor as well. For extended joint projects with multiple mentors, it is recommended to fill out one instance of this form together with all mentors.
- Thereafter, the form should be updated every year before July 1st.

Where to find the completed form

- The completed form is meant for departmental internal use. It will be stored in a Box folder, which is accessible only to the mentee, their mentor, members of the department's mentorship committee, and department administrators. It can be shared with other parties, provided that both mentor and mentee agree.

¹ This agreement was adapted from the UMN CTSA Mentor-Mentee contract.

Goals of Mentee	Goals of Mentor
Describe your goals for this relationship Examples: Obtain new research skills, training/career advice, authorship on publications, networking with other experienced researchers and recommendations for future training or employment positions.	Describe your goals for this relationship Examples: Teaching mentees how to be an independent scientist and facilitating achievement of the research, professional and communication skills detailed below. Make progress on research funded under Grant “XYZ”. Learn from you (the mentee)!
General Breakdown of Financial Support for Mentee	
How will funding be secured to support the educational, research-related and professional expectations laid out below? Be sure to distinguish between funding in the form of a stipend for personal expenses and funding for research/travel. (This section should be filled in by the mentor.) Examples: • The department guarantees 5 years of support for Ph.D. students, subject to satisfactory academic progress • Grants (from both the major advisor(s) and mentee) will support the mentee’s research program • Pending available funding, mentors(s) will financially support the mentee in attending national or international conferences • Mentee will need to find funding to attend additional conferences and workshops each year • The mentee is not expected to self-fund their research activities using personal money. If no grant/scholarship/fellowship funding is available, it is up to both the mentee and mentor(s) to come up with an alternative project plan • The mentee is expected to apply for external funding when possible/appropriate each year (e.g. NSF GRFP, NIH fellowship, other small grants, etc.)	
Communication Preferences of Mentee	Communication Preferences of Mentor
Examples, day-to-day: • I prefer to communicate [in person, via email, via Slack, etc.] • I will respond to emails within 24 hours on weekdays but will not respond to non-urgent email on the weekends • I prefer to work/focus primarily in the morning- during this time, I will be less responsive to email and interruptions. *See “Projects, Authorship, etc.” section below for mechanisms of communication <i>between</i> lab members and co-mentors	Examples, verbal and written communication: • I prefer to communicate [in person, via email, via Slack, etc.] • I have an open door policy / I prefer to meet in person by appointment • I respond to email between 9am and 5pm • I expect you to respond via email within 24 hours • If you need my feedback or signature on an application, I would like materials 2 weeks in advance. • I expect this amount of type of work in order to be considered an author for a paper (authorship policy) • I encourage reaching out/collaboration (collaboration policy)
Expectations of Mentee <i>Meetings</i>	Expectations of Mentor <i>Meetings</i>
Examples: • I would like to schedule weekly 1:1 meetings during my first semester with the option to meet less	Examples: • I meet with my mentees weekly or biweekly. • I expect the mentee to take part in lab meetings.

frequently in future semesters. • I may want to meet more or less frequently in the weeks leading up to a deadline. • I would like to take an active part in lab meetings. • I would like to attend relevant seminars and talks in the University.	• I expect the mentee to attend relevant seminars in our department and other departments in the University. • I need my mentee to communicate clearly and reach out when they are struggling, as I cannot reliably pick up on nonverbal cues. • If frequent feedback is needed, then more frequent meetings and “check-ins” should be organized.
Expectations of Mentee <i>Education and Training</i>	Expectations of Mentor <i>Education and Training</i>
Describe your specific research expectations and the academic skills you need to develop Examples: support you will need to complete your project (time, materials, software, access to equipment, etc.), interactions with your committee, ethics in research, critical thinking, evaluating the scientific literature, interpreting results, writing an abstract or paper, presenting results, leadership Describe any additional education and training you need for your research development Examples: conferences, internships, protocol specific training, workshops, seminars, lab meetings, etc.	Describe how you will assist the mentee with developing their research and academic skills Examples: guidance on committee formation, access to research materials and supplies, ethics in research, critical thinking, evaluating the scientific literature, interpreting results, writing an abstract or paper, presenting results, leadership Describe how you will assist the mentee with obtaining additional education and training for research development Examples: recommending conferences, seminars, hosting lab meetings, networking help, finding collaborators, etc.
Expectations of Mentee <i>Career Development</i>	Expectations of Mentor <i>Career Development</i>
What career options are you considering? What might help advance you to those paths? Examples: research career in academia at an R1, career in teaching and research at R2 or small liberal arts college, research in industry, etc.	Describe how you will support the mentee’s career development, exploration and preparation Examples: networking, career panels, etc.
Expectations <i>Projects, authorship, co-mentorship, lab service, etc.</i>	
<i>This section should be filled in by the mentor but students can make suggestions and request clarification. Some points might not apply to every lab.</i> Are there hierarchies within the lab that the mentee is expected to be aware of, and respect? (e.g., can mentees ask lab technician for assistance or should they first clear this with the PI?) Are there responsibilities that the mentee is expected to fulfill, such as administrative services or technical	

assistance provided to other lab members? (e.g., maintenance of lab website, IRB protocols, data management, ordering supplies, animal care, food orders for lab meetings)

Are there any ways in which the mentee is expected to assist the mentor? (e.g., help editing grant applications, teach a guest lecture in the mentor's class)

Is the mentee expected to train or mentor other lab members? Should the mentee expect to receive mentorship or training from other lab members? (e.g., the mentee is expected to mentor between 1 and 3 undergraduate RAs per semester, depending on the project's needs. This may include training on X equipment, etc. The mentee should meet with these RAs once a week and loop in the faculty mentor as needed. The mentee will receive training on Y equipment from So-and-So.)

If the mentee is involved in projects in the lab other than their primary projects listed in the ISP, what is the mentee responsible for? What are the expectations for authorship? (e.g., the mentee will contribute approximately X hours a week to So-and-So's project doing... [specify procedure, analysis, etc.] The mentee will be a middle author on the resulting paper.)

If the mentee is co-mentored, how often should the mentee meet with the co-mentor? Should they meet with the co-mentor separately, or jointly with the primary mentor? (e.g., the mentee will meet with the co-mentor once a month jointly with the primary mentor, and will attend the co-mentor's lab's meetings)

Expectations | *Looking beyond the period of training*

We encourage mentors and mentees-especially during the final year of training—to think about the time after the mentee leaves the lab. Once the mentee takes another job, it is often unrealistic to proceed with the same expectations as during training. On the other hand, mentors have a responsibility (and career needs) to disseminate the findings of research conducted in their lab in a timely manner. This section should be filled in by the mentor but students can make suggestions and request clarification. While we encourage discussion about these issues as early as Year 1, this section is required no later than Year 3 of the PhD.

e.g., To what extent will the mentee continue to have control over the project, including decisions about who else to include in the project, the pace with which the project should proceed, or when/where to disseminate findings from the project? Will the trainee have the choice to continue the project? What about authorship? How do expectations about timelines, frequency of communications, etc. change after the mentee leaves the lab? If the mentee starts their own lab after leaving this lab, how will overlap in the research areas be navigated (e.g., does the mentor plan to continue this line of research, does the mentor consider any of the ideas developed in the lab proprietary, etc.)?

Space for other notes

Mentee signature

Mentor signature

Date

Date

Individual Study Plan for Graduate Students

The Individual Study Plan consists of three parts, in the following order:

- a. Degree Requirements and Milestones, Planned and Completed Research Goals: A comprehensive guide and progress tracker for the program milestones as well as the research conducted by the mentee.
- b. Self-Evaluation and Reflection: An annual self-evaluation for the mentee, which the University requires of all Ph.D. students.
- c. Report of the Scientific Advisory Committee: The feedback to the mentee following the scientific advisory meetings.

How to use this form

- The “Degree Requirements and Milestones” and “Planned and Completed Research Goals” sections are to be filled out by the mentee. The mentee is expected to schedule a meeting with their mentor when filling these sections to discuss relevant coursework, projects, specific goals, and future plans.
- The “Self-Evaluation and Reflection” section is to be filled out by the mentee, and also serves as the annual self-evaluation required by the University. It will also be shared with their mentor for feedback.
- The “Report of the Scientific Advisory Committee” is to be filled out by the members of the students’ Scientific Advisory Committee, following annual meetings.
- The mentee should send the completed sections to the graduate program coordinator, who will upload it to the department’s Box folder for the mentee.
- The completed sections will serve as important input for annual meetings the mentees are expected to have. See [Meeting Requirements and Timeline for Graduate Students](#) for detailed information on timelines mentees, mentors, and members of Scientific Advisory Committees should be aware of.

When to fill out this form

- The sections of this form to be filled out by the mentee must be submitted along with an updated curriculum vitae (CV) every year before July 1st. The corresponding reporting period encompasses July 1st of the previous year to June 30th of the current year.
- Mentors, mentees, and members of Scientific Advisory Committees should refer to the [Meeting Requirements and Timeline for Graduate Students](#) section regarding timelines for the “Report of the Scientific Advisory Committee”.

Where to find the completed form

- The completed form is meant for departmental internal use. It will be stored in a Box folder, which is accessible only to the mentee, their mentor, members of the department's mentorship committee, and department administrators. It can be shared with other parties, provided that both mentor and mentee agree. The responses from the "Self-Evaluation and Reflection" section are also shared with the required university channels (as per university guidelines).

Degree Requirements and Milestones

Course Completion Status

- Core Courses:
 - Perception and Action (Term: _____)
 - Cognition (Term: _____)
- Ethics and Professional Development:
 - Professional Development and Career Plan (Term: _____)
 - Grant Writing (Term: _____)
 - Ethics (Term: _____)
- Advanced Courses:
 - Stats/Methods: _____ (Term: _____)
 - Elective 1: _____ (Term: _____)
 - Elective 2: _____ (Term: _____)
 - Elective 3: _____ (Term: _____)
 - Elective 4: _____ (Term: _____)

Teaching Requirements

(Fill in the name of the class and the semester)

- 1: _____ (Term: _____)
- 2: _____ (Term: _____)
- 3: _____ (Term: _____)

Milestone Completion

Third Year:

- Master's Program of Study (Date: _____) *submitted by administrator
- Qualifying Exam (Date: _____)
- Third-Year Lunch Talk (Date: _____)

Fourth Year:

- PhD Program of Study (Date: _____) *submitted by administrator
- Thesis Proposal (Date: _____)
- Fourth-Year Lunch Talk (Date: _____)

Target graduation date: _____

Planned and Completed Research Goals

Ongoing project(s) and plans for the coming year

Template for projects (make copies for each project)

Project title:

Project description:

<i>Goal(s) from last year</i>	<i>Progress made towards goal(s)</i>	<i>If goal(s) were not achieved, why?</i>
Example: implement experiment, collect data	Example: all goals were met, collected data	Example: N/A
<i>Immediate goal(s) (next 3-6mo)</i>	<i>Goal(s) for this year</i>	<i>Long-term goal(s)</i>
Example: finish analyzing the data	Example: submit to X conference, start writing manuscript	Example: manuscript submitted by end of XXXX

Other research-related goals or notes

(if applicable; feel free to use the table from above to structure your goals)

Examples: familiarize yourself with the data analysis pipeline of your lab; attend summer school on XXX; submit NIH F31 in April/August/December

Completed and paused project(s)

Completed project(s)

Copy projects from previous ISPs that have been completed here.

Project title:

Project description:

How was this work disseminated:

Abandoned or paused project(s)

Copy projects from previous ISPs that have been abandoned or are being put on pause here.

Project title:

Project description:

Why this work is being abandoned or paused:

Self-Evaluation and Reflection

Leave fields blank that do not apply to you during this reporting period.

Evaluate your own performances in the courses:

If you feel that any of your course performances was less than what you are capable of, then explain. If you feel that any of your grades is not a fair estimate of your course performance, then explain.

Evaluate your own research progress during this time period:

If you feel as if you did not make as much progress on your research as you believe you should have, then explain.

Evaluate your own performance on the BCS qualifying exam:

If you feel as if you did not perform as well on this exam as you believe you should have, then explain.

Reflect on your teaching responsibilities (which should also be listed on your CV):

For instance, how much time (if any) did you spend on teaching? What did you spend this time on (e.g., development of new course materials, grading, etc.). What did you gain from these experiences? How did your commitment interact with your research and learning goals?

Reflect on any distinctive service activities (which should also be listed on your CV):

For instance, how much time (if any) did you spend on department, university, or other academic services (including committee work, workshop organization, reviewing, outreach, etc.)? What did you gain from these experiences? How did your commitment interact with your research and learning goals?

Report of the Scientific Advisory Committee

Date of committee meeting: _____

Committee chair: _____

Primary advisor: _____

Other committee members: _____

Evaluation:

The committee will evaluate the student's performance and assess whether they are making satisfactory progress towards their degree. The student's goals and progress are summarized in the ISP. If applicable the committee is encouraged to explicitly mention relevant external factors (from family crisis to global pandemic to reduced/increased funding opportunities, etc.)

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Satisfactory progress: Yes / No

If "No", the committee should set expectations for graduate work by a specified date. If the committee determines that failure to make the required progress will result in the student being put on probation, this should be stated here. (probation is a required step before a student can be separated from the BCS program).

Committee signatures:

Signature (chair of scientific advisory committee) Date

Signature (primary advisor) Date

Signature Date

Signature Date

Signature Date

Student signature:

Signature Date

Meeting Requirements and Timeline for Postdocs

Postdocs are expected to meet with a member of the Membership Committee (MMC) within the first 3 months after the initial appointment, and then annually, two months before the renewal/expiration of the contract. The Mentor-Mentee Agreement serves as an important input for this meeting.

Mentees are responsible for providing the completed form to the MMC at least one week prior to the meeting. The focus of the meeting is described below.

Check-in with a Member of the Mentorship Committee (MMC)

Prior to the meeting:

- The postdoc will choose which MMC they will meet with. The postdoc should try to choose an MMC based on the affinity reduction principle, to minimize conflicts of interest with the mentee and their mentor(s) to the greatest extent possible (within reasonable limits). This could include avoiding MMCs who are active or past collaborators of the mentor, or have a close personal relationship with the mentor. At the very least, these potential Conflicts of Interest should be disclosed to both the mentee and the mentor.
- The postdoc will reach out to the MMC to schedule a meeting.
- The postdoc provides the MMC with the Mentor-Mentee Agreement at least one week prior to the meeting.
- The MMC and the postdoc will independently review the postdoc's most recent Mentor-Mentee Agreement.

During the meeting:

- The MMC will assess whether the postdoc feels that the Mentor-Mentee Agreement is being adhered to, whether any changes to that agreement are desired by the postdoc, and whether the postdoc would prefer help in achieving these changes. The MMC will also assess whether the postdoc requires any follow-up or support.
- The postdoc should raise any concerns with their mentor and/or research progress.
- The content of this meeting will not be shared outside the mentorship committee without the postdoc's explicit permission.
- If concerns arise, next steps or potential solutions should be discussed with the postdoc. The MMC may take further action as outlined under "[Holding ourselves accountable: The Mentorship Committee](#)". Within the limits of the university policies and guidelines, the MMC will not take actions without first clearing them with the postdoc.

Mentor-Mentee Agreement for Postdocs

How to use this form

- Mentees and mentors should electronically fill out their respective columns, and then schedule a meeting to discuss the agreement. The form comes pre-filled with examples: these are suggestions, not rules, and may not be applicable in every situation. If you need more space, feel free to expand any of the form components.
- In the meeting, the mentee and mentor will work together to create a final agreement. When both parties are satisfied, they will electronically sign the agreement.
- The mentee should send the completed form to the graduate program coordinator, who will upload it to the department's Box folder for the mentee.
- The completed agreement will serve as important input for contract renewal discussions and periodic evaluation meetings. See [Meeting Requirements and Timeline for Postdocs](#) for detailed information on what dates mentees *and* mentors should be aware of.

When to fill out this form

- The department expects this agreement to be regarded as an appendix to the offer letter. The PI and the postdoc applicant should engage in a thorough discussion of the rubrics outlined below prior to signing the offer letter.
- During the interview or following the decision to proceed, the PI and the postdoc candidate are expected to discuss their respective goals and expectations. The PI is encouraged to give the postdoc candidate this agreement as a framework of discussion.
- Once a PI decides to offer the position to the postdoc candidate, the PI should fill in their sections in this agreement and share it with the postdoc candidate. A time window of one week is given to the postdoc candidate to fill their part, request clarifications, and discuss changes.
- The offer letter issued by the PI should reflect the key ideas and points from this agreement.
- The agreement is to be signed by both parties along with the offer letter.
- Prior to the contract renewal (typically on an annual basis), this agreement is reviewed, discussed and updated, in a time window that would allow for contract renewal. Discussion is recommended to be initiated a month before the current contract expiration and to be completed a week before the deadline for contract renewal to allow for smooth procedures.
- It may be updated more frequently, if the need arises.

Where to find the completed form

- The completed form is meant for departmental internal use. It will be stored in a Box folder, which is accessible only to the mentee, their mentor, members of the department's mentorship committee, and

department administrators. It can be shared with other parties, provided that both mentor and mentee agree.

Project	
Specific aims, methods, timeline. Current state of the project, postdoc's role in the project.	
General Breakdown of Financial Support for Mentee and Project	
PI: Salary, benefits, travel budget, and independent research budget (if any); duration of committed funding; funding sources (fellowship, research grants). Expectations (if any) to apply for additional outside post-doc funding. Date for renewal discussion.	
Past obligations of Mentee	
PI: Analysis and publications from previous research. Expected timeline, schedule, workload etc.	
Communication Preferences of Mentee	Communication Preferences of Mentor
For example: • communication preference • meeting preference • reachability • working hours See the "Projects, Authorship, etc." section below for communication <i>between</i> lab members and co-mentors	For example: • communication preference • meeting preference • reachability • working hours • authorship policy • collaboration policy
Expectations of Mentee <i>Meetings</i>	Expectations of Mentor <i>Meetings</i>
Preferred ways and frequency of receiving feedback. For examples: • meeting frequency • lab meeting involvement • seminars attendance	The expected frequency of one-on-one meetings, participation in group meetings and department seminars is outlined. The form and frequency of feedback are also to be determined. For examples: • meeting and feedback frequency • lab meeting involvement by the postdoc • seminars attendance from the postdoc • open/clear communication from the postdoc on the project to make sure things are on track
Expectations of Mentee <i>Education and Training</i>	Expectations of Mentor <i>Education and Training</i>

Grant Writing: Expectations and goals regarding acquiring grant writing skills.	Grant Writing: Involvement of the postdoc in writing research grants for the PI; support from PI for applications to post-doctoral fellowship or research funding. Workshops and classes available in the department or online.
Reviewing: Expectations and goals regarding acquiring peer review skills.	Reviewing: Common practice regarding engaging postdocs in the peer-reviewing process.
Expectations of Mentee <i>Career Development</i>	Expectations of Mentor <i>Career Development</i>
What career options are you considering? What might help advance you to those paths? Examples: research career in academia at an R1, career in teaching and research at R2 or small liberal arts college, research in industry, etc. Please also see a prompt at the end of this form about plans beyond the training period.	Describe how you will support the mentee's career development, exploration and preparation Examples: networking, career panels, etc.
Expectations of Mentee <i>Collaborations</i>	Expectations of Mentor <i>Collaborations</i>
Goals and expectations regarding out-of-group collaborations for career development	Collaborators from external institutions, including but not limited to other universities, research institutes, and industry partners. Participation in conferences and workshops outside the university and overseas. Training in methods necessary for the project that lie outside the expertise of the lab.
Expectations <i>Projects, authorship, co-mentorship, lab service, etc.</i>	
<i>This section should be filled in by the mentor but mentees can make suggestions and request clarification.</i> Clarifying Roles: Related to the Project Collaboration relevant to the project is to be considered in addition to the PI-postdoc relationship. The roles of each team member involved in the project and, if necessary, routines must be defined. The transfer of knowledge, the provision of guidance, the delivery of training, the provision of technical support, and the provision of assistance. The nature of relationships between project members and the postdoc is also examined. Clarifying Roles: Beyond the Project Administrative services or technical assistance provided to other lab members, ways in which the postdoc is expected to assist the PI, training/mentoring of other lab members, training/mentoring by other lab members, and involvement of the postdoc in other projects. Are there responsibilities that the mentee is expected to fulfill, such as administrative services or technical assistance provided to other lab members? For example: maintenance of lab website, IRB protocols, data management, ordering supplies, animal care, food orders for lab meetings, etc. If the mentee is involved in projects in the lab other than their primary projects listed in the ISP, what is the mentee responsible for? What are the expectations for authorship? For example: the postdoc will contribute approximately X hours a week to So-and-So's project doing... [specify procedure,	

analysis, etc.]. The postdoc will be a middle author on the resulting paper.

If the mentee is co-mentored, how often should the mentee meet with the co-mentor? Should they meet with the co-mentor separately, or jointly with the primary mentor?

For example: the postdoc will meet with the co-mentor once a month jointly with the primary PI, and will attend the co-mentor's lab's meetings.

Time allocation

Expectations regarding time management regarding the rubrics mentioned above: main project, collaborations, lab meetings and department seminars, conferences, grant applications, past obligations etc. This could be expressed in terms of percentage work time spent on XYZ.

Expectations | *Looking beyond the period of training*

We encourage mentors and mentees-especially during the final year of training—to think about the time after the mentee leaves the lab. Once the mentee takes another job, it is often unrealistic to proceed with the same expectations as during training. On the other hand, mentors have a responsibility (and career needs) to disseminate the findings of research conducted in their lab in a timely manner. This section should be filled in by the mentor but mentees can make suggestions and request clarification.

For example: To what extent will the postdoc continue to have control over the project, including decisions about who else to include in the project, the pace with which the project should proceed, or when/where to disseminate findings from the project? Will the postdoc have the choice to continue the project? What about authorship, and order of authorship? How do expectations about timelines, frequency of communications, etc? Change after the postdoc leaves the lab? If the postdoc starts their own lab after leaving their current lab, how will overlap in the research areas be navigated (e.g., does the PI plan to continue this line of research, does the PI consider any of the ideas developed in the lab proprietary, etc.)?

Space for other notes:

Postdoc signature

PI signature

Date

Date

Holding Ourselves Accountable: The Mentorship Committee

Mentors and mentees typically have the best intentions while they conduct research and communicate. However, it is not uncommon that differences in preferences, disagreements, and even conflicts arise throughout the course of mentorship. In order to help identify areas for improvement, simmering conflicts, and other issues in mentorship relations as early as possible, and to help us learn from recurrent patterns in our community, the BCS community has decided to introduce a new standing committee. This new **mentorship committee (MC)** is responsible for overseeing mentorship relations between graduate students, postdocs, and faculty in BCS.

The MC consists of 3 faculty and/or staff that are [elected by the BCS community](#). The mission of the mentorship committee is to monitor mentorship relations in the department with the goal to:

- systematically improve our mentoring in the department in a feasible and sustainable way
- increase our chances as a community to detect mismatches in expectations between mentees and mentors before they rise to the level of serious concerns
- implement a more systematic approach to the resolution of conflicts when they arise

There are two types of expectations that are of relevance to the MC:

- expectations that we as a community have explicitly agreed on, as spelled out in the BCS Mentorship Handbook
- expectations that the mentee and mentor have agreed on as part of a mentor-mentee agreement (see [Structuring the Mentorship Relationship](#))

This section does *not* replace the University of Rochester Code of Conduct or Guidelines. In cases of sexual harassment, academic misconduct, discrimination, and such the Guidelines should be followed directly. See [Other Reporting Resources](#) for further information.

The remainder of this section describes:

- When you can/should reach out to the MC.
- What other activities the MC engages in to support the goals described above.
- How the MC is structured and how it is elected by the BCS community.

When to reach out to the Mentorship Committee?

The members of the Mentorship Committee (MMCs) serve as point of contact for all mentorship related questions in the department.² This includes regular and ad-hoc one-on-one meetings with mentees, as well as ad-hoc one-on-one meetings with mentors. If desired, MMCs can also organize mediation to help resolve conflicts. This subsection describes these different ways to draw on the MC in more detail.

Regular (annual) meetings with mentees

The members of the Mentorship Committee are expected to meet with mentees at least once annually:

- **Ph.D. students** are required to meet with one MMC once a year during the fall semester.
- **Postdocs** are expected to meet with an MMC within the first 3 months of initial appointment. Thereafter, postdocs are expected to meet with an MMC once a year, before contract renewal/expiration.

The mentee is free to choose any of the MMCs for the meeting. The mentee and the MMC should be mindful of the affinity reduction principle while making this choice and before proceeding to meet, to minimize Conflicts of Interests (COIs) with the mentee and their mentor(s) to the greatest extent possible (within reasonable limits). This could include avoiding MMCs who are active or past collaborators of the mentor, who are on the mentee's scientific advisory committee, or have a close personal relationship with the mentor. At the very least, these potential COIs should be disclosed to both the mentee and the mentor.

For more details about the timeline and focus of these meetings, please see the Meeting Requirements and Timeline for [graduate students](#) and [postdocs](#).

Ad-hoc one-on-one meetings with mentees or mentors

In addition to the regular meetings, mentees and mentors can request ad-hoc meetings with an MMC at any time. Meetings can be requested to discuss mentorship-related questions, to seek advice, or voice a concern and to discuss options available to mentees/mentors to resolve potential mismatches in expectations.

Mediation between mentees and mentors

In cases in which an issue/conflict that was identified by an MMC or that was raised by a mentee or mentor has not significantly improved within a reasonable time period, the MC will decide on an appropriate plan. This section outlines the course of action in cases of disagreements and conflicts inside BCS that are not covered by law or the University's Code of Conduct and Guidelines.

² This includes some of the roles previously seen as the responsibility of the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) or the department chair.

The procedures outlined below apply to faculty, graduate students, and postdocs of the BCS department. Staff, graduate students from other PhD programs working with BCS faculty, and department visitors can appeal to the same mechanisms covered here.

The mediation plan will include:

- an assignment of the mediator: an MMC or BCS faculty member external to the MC (see below) who will be responsible for helping to mediate the relevant issue/conflict between a mentor and mentee
- an action plan and timeline of action execution (e.g., plan for the Mediator to meet with relevant parties, suggest a new tactic to resolving the problem)
- follow-up plan (i.e., timeline in which the Mediator will report back to the MC)

When to move to mediation

When an issue/conflict has been identified (e.g., during a mentee's annual one-on-one meeting with an MMC or during ad-hoc meetings) and persistent attempts to resolve the problem have not improved within an established timeline, the MC will move to mediation. Issues or conflicts that necessitate this step could range widely in terms of their severity, but they will generally be situations that are negatively impacting the mental state, productivity, and/or career plans of the people involved.

While annual one-on-one meetings are a common mechanism for raising such issues, any member of BCS is strongly encouraged to contact the MC with questions or concerns outside of annual meetings as well.

Choosing a Mediator

The choice of Mediator will adhere to the same affinity reduction principle as the choice of an individual mentee's MMC (see section on [regular meetings](#) above).

For special cases in which no MMC would be suitable (e.g., due to unreasonable COIs), the MC may call upon other faculty outside the committee (including the BCS Department Chair) to serve as Mediator. This person would need to receive training in conflict resolution either from a current MMC or through one of the courses listed below. The mentor and mentee involved in the conflict would both need to agree to involve this person as Mediator and consent to share information about the case with this person (consistent with the guidelines under "[Collection of Information and Record Keeping](#)"). If either party feels that it would be beneficial to include an advocate in the discussion, it is encouraged. Advocates can be anyone from the department or outside, as long as all parties agree to their inclusion.

A Mediator will be assigned in the following cases:

- All of the parties involved actively choose to pursue (and agree to take part in) this Mediation step
- All parties agree on the candidate Mediator
- The candidate Mediator agrees to take the role

Mediator Duties, Authorizations, and Limitations

The role of the Mediator is to identify the source(s) of the issue/conflict, assess the current state and level of the issue/conflict, take steps toward facilitating successful resolution of the problem (including meetings with one or both parties), and report progress back to the other MMCs within an established time frame.

Any violation of the [Regulations and University Policies](#) and the law are outside the scope of the Mediator capacity. If a case rises to the level of warranting university-level action, it will be submitted to the relevant authorities.

What else does the Mentorship Committee do?

As described in more detail next the MC also:

- collects information about possible disagreements, conflicts and violations of the expectations of the mentorship code described in the BCS Mentorship Handbook: Expectations
- reports the activity (anonymized summary of patterns) to the community

Collection of Information and Record-Keeping

The BCS Mentorship Committee will collect information through:

- mentor-mentee agreement (for [students](#) and [postdocs](#)) and ISP (for [students](#)), shared with the MMC during annual one-on-one meetings
- content of discussions during annual one-on-one meetings
- anonymous mentorship feedback form (available throughout the year):
<https://forms.gle/5cC6KZmgjL5nyTUh8>
- mentee town halls (mentees will submit meeting summaries to the MC)
- ad-hoc meetings with BCS department members

Records of the above items will be kept in a secure database on Box, organized and maintained by the Secretary of the MC. Access to these records will be not granted to any third party outside the committee without the consent of the mentee and the mentor (as long as not required otherwise by law or university policy). If, for some reason, the requirement of consent is delaying the process of resolution, the Mentorship Committee has the right to convey information through a high-level summary (i.e., to a third-party Mediator or another stakeholder).

Communication of Feedback to the Community

In order to make the process accessible, the MC will:

- report on its activity to the BCS members **at least annually** (ideally, at least two weeks prior to the MC elections). The goal of these reports is two-fold: to provide a high-level summary of the issues that were encountered, and to identify lessons that can be learned from them. Great care should be taken to strike an adequate balance between maintaining confidentiality and using informative descriptions

- encourage existing and new members of the BCS community to openly communicate with the MC

The MC's Communication Chair is responsible for these activities.

Revision of the Mentorship Handbook

The MC is also responsible to review and revise this handbook, so that it evolves according to the changing demands and stays relevant to the BCS community. Revisions and suggestions from the BCS community are incorporated into the handbook following a review process concurrent with the [annual elections](#), as described in the “[Document Ownership and Maintenance](#)” section.

Annual Nomination and Election Process

The MC consists of 3 positions (MMC: member of the Mentorship Committee) that are filled by BCS faculty and staff through a nomination and election process. Specifically:

- 2 MMC positions are nominated and **elected by the faculty**
- 1 MMC position is nominated and **elected by trainees**

Core considerations that the community is encouraged to keep in mind during nominations and elections:

1. It is recommended (but not required) that all MMC have at least 1 year of experience in the BCS community.
2. Power asymmetry between tenured/untentured faculty (which can go both ways). It is recommended that the committee consists of a mix of more junior and more senior members.
3. Overlap of research areas. It is recommended that MC reflects the various research areas represented in the department. This also is important when MMCs need to recuse themselves in order to avoid conflicts of interest.
4. Approachability of MMCs, as perceived by mentees.

Who is eligible to vote: All Ph.D. students in the BCS program, all postdocs employed by primary BCS faculty, and all primary BCS faculty (instructional track and non-instructional track), as well as any affiliated faculty who are currently serving as a primary advisor to a student in the BCS PhD program.

Who is eligible to serve as an MMC: Any primary BCS faculty (instructional track and non-instructional track) and any department staff member. At least two MMCs have to be tenured professors.

Terms: Annual elections should be completed during the summer before the start of each academic year, so that newly elected MMC have time to familiarize themselves with the new role before the start of the academic year. Each MMC is elected for a 2-year period. Whenever an MMC position becomes available, e.g., because the MMC's term ends or the MMC steps down before the end of their term, that MMC position is filled by electing a new MMC for the remainder of the 2-year period. Positions that were faculty-nominated always remain faculty-nominated; positions that were trainee-nominated always remain trainee-nominated.

The first time the MC is formed, all MMCs are elected at the same time: 1 member is chosen for a period of 1 year, and 2 members for a period of 2 years.

Roles

The MMCs will elect a Secretary and a Communications Chair annually (or as needed) from among themselves.

The Secretary

The responsibilities of the Secretary are:

- maintaining the database of records (see [Collection of Information and Record-Keeping](#))

- scheduling MC meetings every two months for house-keeping

Communications Chair

The responsibilities of the Communications Chair

- report the (anonymized) activity of the Committee to the BCS community
- maintaining the channels of communication (see [Communication of Feedback to the Community](#))

Mentorship Committee Meetings

The Committee will gather at least every two months in person or virtually to discuss:

- which MMC will serve as the Secretary and the Communications Chair (if applicable)
- initiation of actions based on collected information (e.g., progress and follow-up in individual cases requiring mediation)
- preparation of progress report for the BCS community
- opportunities for reaching out to the BCS community

Requirements for MMCs

Since the MMCs sometimes have to serve as Mediators, they are required to educate themselves in mediation and conflict resolution (within the first six months of a term). The following are a list of online courses and resources that can help MMC to receive training in conflict resolution:

- [Conflict Resolution - UR Center for Student Conflict Management](#)
- [Online Certificate in Mediation and Arbitration - Monroe Community College](#)
- [Conflict Resolution / Management Training in Rochester, NY](#)
- [Conflict Management and Mediation - Udemy](#)
- [Mediation and Conflict Resolution - Coursera](#)
- [Conflict Resolution - eCornell](#)

Document Ownership and Maintenance

This Mentorship Handbook is a shared living document that belongs to the entire BCS community. It represents our collective intentions and commitment to fostering meaningful mentoring relationships that benefits everyone.

Shared Ownership

This handbook is not owned by any single individual or group but rather represents a collaborative resource maintained through community input and collective stewardship. The [Mentorship Committee](#) serves as the primary steward of the document, but its evolution depends on the insights and contributions from everyone in the BCS community.

Living Document

This handbook will be a living document, that is maintained as a [Google Doc](#), accessible to all community members at. This format allows for easy access, distribution, and the ability to provide comments and suggestions throughout the year.

Guiding Principles for Revisions

When considering changes to the handbook, the Mentorship Committee will be guided by:

- Inclusivity of all community members
- Evidence-based practices in mentoring, especially the experiences and findings by the Mentorship Committee
- Feedback from mentors and mentees about what works in practice
- Alignment with our community's values and goals

We believe this collaborative maintenance process ensures the handbook remains a relevant, effective, and community-owned resource that evolves with our collective experience and knowledge.

Annual Review Process

The handbook is updated based on an *at least* annual review cycle, that depends on community input and support. If more urgent changes are required any community member, including the Members of the Mentorship Committee (MMCs), can call for a vote on those changes. This mechanism should, however, be used rarely so as to not inundate the community with such requests.

1. Ongoing Feedback Collection (Year-round)

- Community members, including the MMCs, are encouraged to provide suggestions, comments, and feedback on the handbook at any time through comments in the [Google](#)

[Doc](#). This can also include suggestions to the presentation of the content, including language and formatting.

- Community members may add on to or comment on suggestions by other members.
- Any and all feedback is welcomed and valued as we strive to make the handbook as useful and inclusive as possible.

2. Committee Review Period (Summer)

- The Mentorship Committee will review all collected suggestions from last summer to the current, and use their judgment to incorporate valuable additions and revisions.
- The committee may reach out to suggestion providers for clarification or additional information.

3. Community Review Period (Two weeks prior to annual report)

- The Mentorship Committee will announce a two-week period when all incorporated changes will be highlighted for community review.
- This two week period should be prior to the annual report by the committee (see [“Communication of Feedback to the Community”](#)).
- During this time, community members may reach out to the MMCs regarding clarifications, or concerns, or offer further refinements to the proposed changes.

4. Final Consideration (Following community review)

- The Mentorship Committee will discuss any concerns raised during the community review period and make final adjustments as needed.
- A final version of the revised handbook will be prepared.

5. Referendum on suggested changes (Concurrent with annual elections)

- The final revised handbook will be put forward for a community referendum, held simultaneously with the [annual MMC elections](#).
- The referendum process is described [below](#).
- This process ensures that major changes to the handbook have broad community support.
- If the referendum passes, the handbook will be updated and the changes will be adopted and implemented. If it fails to pass, the changes will not be adopted and the MC will continue to work on it and, depending on the urgency, may call for another referendum after incorporating feedback from the previous referendum process.

Referendum

Once the MC has incorporated changes according to the review process described above, the handbook with revisions will be put forward for a referendum to the BCS community. The referendum process ensures that significant changes to the Mentor Mentee Handbook have strong support from both mentors and mentees, reflecting our commitment to shared governance and community consensus.

Who is eligible to vote: All Ph.D. students in the BCS program, all postdocs employed by primary BCS faculty, and all primary BCS faculty (instructional track and non-instructional track), as well as any affiliated faculty who are currently serving as a primary advisor to a student in the BCS PhD program. The mentees (Ph.D. students and postdocs) will form one voting block, while the faculty will form another voting block.

How is voting conducted: The voting will be organized by the MC, and anonymous votes will be collected through a Google form. The voting is anonymous to ensure the integrity of the process and to encourage participation.

The outcome of the referendum: The referendum will pass, if:

1. Participation threshold: At least a 3/4th (75%) participation is achieved in both the trainee and faculty voting block, and
2. Approval threshold: At least a 2/3rd (66%) majority of the votes are in favor of implementing the handbook in both the trainee and faculty voting block.

If the referendum passes, the revised handbook will be adopted and implemented. If the referendum fails to pass, the proposed changes will not be incorporated, and the existing version of the handbook will remain in effect. The MC may use the feedback received, call for town halls to further discuss persistent issues, and depending on the urgency of the proposed changes, call for another referendum after addressing concerns and making appropriate modifications.

Other Reporting Resources

The BCS department is committed to providing a supportive environment for all members of our community. This guide outlines the various resources available to address mentorship-related concerns and other issues that may arise during your time in the department. These channels are designed to help address concerns efficiently and effectively. You may also report/comment on anything through anonymous channels and they will be seen by members of the relevant committee (MC or DEI). Note that it is often difficult to take steps to address concerns if no specific details are mentioned (e.g., “my PI is being disrespectful to members of the lab”). Most issues can be resolved more comprehensively when specific details are provided, though we respect your decision if you prefer to remain anonymous .

In case of an issue regarding mentorship:

The Mentorship Committee (MC) serves as an accessible resource for mentors and mentees to formally check in with on a regular basis and come to as issues arise.

To anonymously report an issue, you can use this form: <https://forms.gle/5cC6KZmgjL5nyTUh8>

In case of more general issues regarding the BCS graduate program:

To report/discuss an issue relating more to general procedures of the graduate program (e.g., curriculum, admissions policies) than to mentorship, we recommend reaching out to the graduate program coordinator or the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS).

If uncertain which of the above categories your issue falls into:

When there is uncertainty about whom to involve, the DGS and MC may sometimes collaborate to resolve an issue. So, you can initiate the process through either channel.

In case of a DEI related issue:

To anonymously report DEI-related issues or to provide feedback to the BCS DEI committee: <https://tinyurl.com/3x6r96uz>

If requiring guidance outside the BCS department:

Contact University Ombudsperson

<https://www.rochester.edu/college/gradstudies/support-resources/ombuds.html>

To report sex-based discrimination, sexual assault, etc:

You may use the University sexual misconduct report form: <https://www.rochester.edu/sexual-misconduct-report-form/>

References