

**Guidelines for Advisor-Graduate Student Interactions  
in the College of Arts and Sciences, Indiana University**  
Modified for the EEB Graduate Program by Spencer Hall, Oct 2022

**Purpose:**

This document summarizes the *College's Mentoring Guidelines*, as adapted for EEB. It describes a set of principles from which interactions of students, advisors, the EEB Program, and the Biology Department should follow.

*Written for:* EEB Graduate students, their advisors (in EEB or elsewhere), and administrators in the EEB Grad Program and Biology department. See also tips for graduate school ([faq](#))

**Introduction:**

The success of every graduate student in the College of Arts and Sciences and the EEB Program of Biology depends in part upon the role of the student's advisor. Whether they work together in a lab or a research team, meet in a seminar, or consult periodically in office hours or online, the advisor and the student together establish a plan for the graduate student's research, work to identify and remove obstacles to success, and ensure that the student has opportunities to develop professional experience. Most of these interactions take place outside the classroom, often in informal interactions. To ensure that these interactions are as productive as possible, the College and EEB offers these guidelines.

These guidelines embody many of the best practices used by other institutions and professional societies.<sup>1</sup> They are intended to provide principles for establishing an effective and productive advisor-student relationship that relies on trust, courtesy, clear communications, and shared expectations. These College/EEB guidelines provide a general framework for interactions. These guidelines supplement the IU Student Code, which addresses primarily formal academic matters, by attending to the faculty's role in the student's research process.

**Faculty Research Advisors should:**

- promote an environment that is intellectually stimulating and free of harassment;
- be supportive, equitable, accessible, encouraging, and respectful;
- recognize and respect the cultural backgrounds of students;
- be sensitive to the power imbalance in the student–advisor relationship while in the office, lab or the field, especially if there are different social, cultural, economic, or geographic differences involved; see [this guide](#) for concerns about field work
- set clear expectations and goals for students regarding their academic performance, research activities and progress;
- discuss policies and expectations for work, either as teaching assistants or research assistants, including work hours, vacation time, and health contingencies;
- establish mutually agreed upon expectations for frequency and format of communication that will provide students with regular, clear feedback on research activities, performance, and progress;
- promote and manage productive and collaborative relationships for students working in large research groups and collaborations;

---

<sup>1</sup> \* Much of this document is adapted from a website at Penn State: <https://science.psu.edu/future-students/graduate-students/guidelines-and-policies>

- provide students with training and oversight in all relevant aspects of research, including the design of research projects, the development of necessary skills, and the use of rigorous research techniques or procedures;
- provide and discuss clear criteria for authorship at the beginning of all collaborative projects and revisit authorship throughout project development as contributions may change;
- foster a safe work environment by discussing and mitigating potential hazards associated with a student's research activities;
- encourage participation in professional meetings and try to secure funding for such activities;
- ensure students receive training in the skills needed for a successful career in their discipline, including oral and written communication and grant preparation as appropriate;
- recognize that some students will pursue careers outside of academia and/or outside their research discipline and assist them in achieving their chosen career goals;
- be a role model by acting in an ethical, professional, and courteous manner toward other students, staff, and faculty.

### **Graduate Students should:**

- recognize that they bear the primary responsibility for the successful completion of their degree; hence, students should ask for meetings with their advisor (as needed, regularly, weekly, etc.) and committee members (as needed); students also are responsible for contents of the EEB Grad Guide (handbook) and must read all emails concerning program requirements, etc., from the EEB GPD, the Grad Office/Advisor, and the Biology DGS
- complete all tasks assigned by the department, including teaching, grading, and other assistantship responsibilities;
- know the policies governing graduate studies in the department and the graduate school and take responsibility for meeting departmental and graduate school deadlines;
- be proactive in communicating with the advisor and research committee about progress and challenges associated with research and program trajectory;
- recognize that in addition to their role as a student, they have rights and responsibilities as employees of the university, and expect that these are clearly conveyed to them;
- clearly communicate with their advisor(s) regarding their career preferences and any changes to them during the course of their program;
- be proactive about improving research skills, including written and oral presentation;
- be proactive about teaching professionalization and preparation through exploring workshops and training opportunities;
- seek out appropriate professional service opportunities and take advantage of career planning support in the Walter Center for Career Achievement;
- participate actively in departmental activities such as colloquia, brown-bags, reading groups, journal clubs, etc.;
- seek mentoring and support resources beyond their faculty advisor(s), including other faculty members and peers as well as individuals external to the university;
- inform faculty advisors of potential and/or existing conflicts and work toward their resolution, following departmental guidelines;
- obtain outside help from ombudsmen, graduate chairs, or other faculty if conflicts arise with their advisor;
- be aware that if they feel compelled to change advisors or research direction, they have options and should consult with their advisor, other mentors, or department officers, recognizing that such options may include changing programs;

- always act in an ethical, professional, and courteous manner toward other students, staff, and faculty, respecting the value of their time and responsibilities.

### **Departments (Biology) and Programs (EEB) will:**

- provide students with up-to-date information that includes policies, practices, resources, degree requirements, and expectations for progress;
- assist students with selection of their advisors as needed, providing general guidance on expectations for effective mentoring;
- ensure that all students have a faculty member with responsibility for advising them;
- proactively monitor graduate student progress toward their degrees and professional development, including mentoring meetings, committee meetings, exam completions, and other benchmarks toward the degree. Opportunities should be provided to examine the effectiveness of the student-advisor relationship and offer advice on addressing issues that arise.
- provide students and faculty with contacts, resources, and a clear process for potential conflict resolution (e.g., ombudsperson, director of graduate studies, or department head). EEB students can see the “How to get help” document describing all of this.
- assist students who wish to change advisors or research groups in identifying new advisors within the department or program who are receptive to accepting the student, and advising the student on options should no placement be found;
- provide appropriate infrastructure to allow students to complete their education and research in a timely and productive manner;
- provide opportunities for professional development that will be relevant to students seeking careers outside academia and/or their research discipline;
- promote an environment that is intellectually stimulating, safe, and free of harassment;
- provide students with contacts for campus resources that promote health and wellness;
- incorporate these guidelines and recommendations into their departmental policies or handbooks and actively promote their observance.