

Discussing Expectations with your PI

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- 1. Communication.** How often should you meet in-person? How should you send updates and how often? Do you need to schedule meetings or can you drop by their office? Are there other lab personnel you need to meet with or send updates? Will there be lab meetings and what will they cover? Are you allowed to or encouraged to go to other lab meetings?
- 2. Training.** What training is required and who is in charge of the training (i.e. lab safety and lab specific training, animal training, etc.)? Are you required to train others in the lab? How often do you need to complete training? Who do you need to go to when you need help? How many and what classes will you be taking? What kind of publications should you be reading and how many should you read each week? Will you or can you discuss articles with the PI or others in the lab?
- 3. Research.** What is your project(s)? Are you expected or allowed to help on other projects? Do experiments need prior approval and by whom? How much time should you spend on reading, planning, or performing lab work each week? Are you expected or encouraged to write or help write protocols or grants? What is the procedure for proposing new research or experiments? How will you determine if you are making progress on the research and what will happen if progress is no longer being made (due to failed experiments, etc.)? This is one of the biggest issues for graduate students. Science is hard and sometimes doing a novel experiment means it may fail, and you may not know why. You do not want to get stuck in a project that is not working for years and not have anything to graduate. Discuss what will happen if it is not working and have a back-up plan so you can still graduate in a timely manner.
- 4. Milestones.** What are the milestones you should plan to reach and how will these be met? What is the process for selecting a committee and who gets to decide who is on the committee? When should your committee be decided? What is the expected timeline for passing exams, completing coursework, submitting a proposal, etc.? What is your expected graduation date? What is the policy if you are not reaching milestones as expected?
- 5. Funding.** How are you financially supported or are you expected to fund yourself? Is there a limitation or requirement to continue receiving your funding (time, GPA, etc.)? Are you encouraged to apply for fellowships and will your PI help you identify and apply?

6. Lab Responsibilities. What duties are there in the lab (checking incubators, making media, filling water, checking equipment, etc.) and who is in charge of each task? Are any tasks shared? Who is in charge of ordering supplies? If you are in charge- how it is done (budget, how to pay, etc.)? What to do when equipment needs repair?

7. Work Hours and Extra Curricular Activities. Are you expected to be in the lab at specific days and times? Will you be working at different locations? How many hours per week are you expected to work and how do those hours need to be spent? Are you allowed to participate in other activities (student organizations, seminars, workshops, etc.)? What constitutes professional development and what professional development activities should you plan to complete? What seminars are you required to attend? What is the policy for vacations, sick time, personal days, etc.?

8. Conferences and Presenting. Are you required or encouraged to present your research and how often? Where are you able to present and how will travel be funded (local, national, international?) Are conference costs covered (or only covered if presenting)?

9. Managing Experiments, Data, and Samples. What is the policy on having a lab notebook or tracking your experiments (physical notebook, online, electronic document)? What is the policy on sharing protocols or experiments (for past, present, and future research)? How should data and results be stored? How often should data be saved? Who will collect your samples and how will they be stored? Do you need to take inventory of all your samples (and how)? Who else may be using your samples?

10. Manuscripts and Other Publications. What constitutes authorship on a paper? How is the order of authors determined? What other ways, besides authorship, would student contributions be acknowledged? Are you encouraged to write review papers? Are there expectations for the number of manuscripts published (how many first-authors)? Is publication a requirement to graduate? Are you encouraged to publish other ways (blogs, Op-Eds, etc.)?

11. Conflicts. How should certain types of conflicts be handled? How should conflicts be handled with people in the lab, outside of the lab, etc.? Who can you go to in your department, college, or university for help with a conflict?