

An aerial photograph of a large, multi-story university building with a red roof and several towers with blue conical roofs. The image is overlaid with several large, semi-transparent geometric shapes in shades of blue and grey, creating a modern, abstract design. The text is positioned on the left side of the page, which is white.

Worden School of Social Service

# MENTORING GUIDELINE

FOR FACULTY & STUDENTS

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Worden School of Social Service mentoring guideline is adopted from Case Western Reserve University's *A Mentoring Guidebook for Faculty* and *A Mentee Guidebook for Students*, as well as University of Michigan's *How to Mentor Graduate Students: A Guide for Faculty*. These mentoring guidelines proved to be popular over a decade and has been adopted by universities around the country. We thank Case Western Reserve University and University of Michigan for creating the guidelines to provide resources for productive and rewarding mentoring relationships.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

What is Mentoring	1
Why be a Mentor	1
Why be a Mentee	2
<b>PART I: GUIDELINES FOR MENTORS</b>	
What Mentors Do?	3
General Guidelines for Mentors	4
Before You Start	6
The Basics of Good Mentoring	7
Clarifying Expectations	8
First Meeting	12
General Advice to give Graduate Students	13
<b>PART II: GUIDELINES FOR MENTEES</b>	
How to Select Potential Mentors	17
Relationship with Mentors	19
Dissertation Chair	21
How to be a Good Mentee	22
Changing Advisors	23
<b>PART III: GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE PROGRAMS</b>	
References	28
Appendix A A Worksheet for a Mentor's Expectation	29
Appendix B A Worksheet for a Student's Expectation	31
Appendix C Planning for First Meeting: A Mentor's Checklist	33
Appendix D Planning for First Meeting: A Student's Checklist	34

## WHAT IS MENTORING?

Mentoring is a close, individualized relationship that develops over time between a graduate student and a faculty member. Mentoring involves an ongoing intellectual engagement between two individuals. In addition to contributing to one's academic and professional growth, the relationship can develop into one of mutual care and respect. Although there is overlap between the role of mentors and that of advisors in graduate education, not all mentors are advisors and not all advisors are mentors. Each department and school employs particular practices for academic and research advisors, and the focus of this guidebook is to address mentoring more generally. Mentors, as described by The Council of Graduate Schools, are:

*Advisors, people with career experience willing to share their knowledge; supporters, people who give emotional and moral encouragement; tutors, people who give specific feedback on one's performance; masters, in the sense of employers to whom one is apprenticed; sponsors, sources of information about and aid in obtaining opportunities; models of identity, of the kind of person one should be to be an academic (Zelditch, 1990).*

Mentoring involves a constellation of activities that transcend just advising or simply guiding a student through a project. It also involves supporting students throughout all aspects of their graduate careers and beyond. This is not meant to suggest that a mentor should try to fulfill all the roles described herein for every student. In fact, one of a mentor's responsibilities is to help students cultivate *multiple* mentoring relationships, and to do so both inside and outside the University's community of scholars.

## WHY BE A MENTOR?

Your role as a mentor to graduate students is one of the most important and potentially rewarding relationships you will have as a faculty member at Our Lady of the Lake University. You are encouraged to dedicate yourself to providing the best mentorship possible to your graduate students, as it will not only benefit your students, but you as well. Strong mentoring helps students

develop into successful and productive professionals – professionals who, with good memories of their advisor, will bolster the mentor’s long-term success in return. Not only are you likely to gain a valuable colleague, but you may also gain a trusted friend and engaged alumnus. Research shows that students who have good mentoring relationships have higher productivity levels, a higher level of involvement within their departments, and greater satisfaction with their programs (Green & Bauer, 1995).

## WHY BE A MENTEE?

Mentoring can help facilitate your transition from a student to a colleague. Unlike your undergraduate experience, where classes encouraged you to obtain knowledge, in graduate school your goal should also be to contribute knowledge to your field of study. Your coursework and the professional relationships you foster in graduate school with faculty and fellow students facilitate your entry into the scholarly community.

Mentoring goes beyond issues of professional competence. Many aspects of professional socialization and personal support are central to mentoring as well as to your professional life after graduation. In this latter stage, the mentoring cycle comes full-circle, and you may find yourself in the role of mentor—an opportunity to repay the benefits you received in your own former mentoring relationships.

# PART I

## GUIDELINES FOR MENTORS

### WHAT MENTORS DO?

The mentor's responsibilities extend well beyond helping students learn what is entailed in the research and writing components of graduate school. First and foremost, mentors socialize students into the culture of the discipline, clarifying and reinforcing—principally by example—what is expected of a professional scholar.

Let us start with the basic responsibilities mentors have to those graduate students who seek their guidance.

### MODEL PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

It is crucial that the mentor consciously act with integrity in every aspect of their work as teacher, researcher and author. Students must see that their mentors recognize and avoid conflicts of interest, collect and use data responsibly, fairly award authorship credit, cite source materials appropriately, use research funds ethically, and treat animal or human research subjects properly. This list is not meant to be exhaustive: never compromising the standards that bestow validity on the discipline is not a suggested guideline but essential to the profession.

### DEMYSTIFY GRADUATE SCHOOL

Many aspects of graduate education are unwritten or vague, and the ability of new students to understand them is hampered by the fact that they frequently do not know what questions to ask or what certain terminology means. You can help by adjusting your conversations accordingly and clarifying your program's expectations for coursework, comprehensive exams, research topics, and teaching. For each stage of the student's program, discuss the prevailing norms and criteria used to define quality performance.

## ENCOURAGE THE EFFECTIVE USE OF TIME

Work with the student on developing schedules and meeting benchmarks. Share techniques and practices that have been useful for others but do not insist there is only one way. Rather, help them blaze their own trail and devise a plan that keeps them on it. For many students, the shift from the highly structured nature of undergraduate education to the self-direction that is expected in graduate school presents a significant challenge.

## OVERSEE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Activities that have become second nature to you need to be made explicit to students, such as faculty governance and service, directing a lab, procuring grants, managing budgets, and being able to explain your research to anyone outside your discipline. Mentors help their students become full-fledged members of a profession and not just researchers.

## ASSIST WITH FINDING OTHER MENTORS

One size does not fit all, and one mentor cannot provide all the guidance and support that every student needs. Introduce students to faculty, emeriti, alumni, staff and other graduate students who have complementary interests. Effective mentoring is a community effort.

## GENERAL GUIDELINE FOR MENTORS

Clarity is the foundation upon which such a relationship is built. Be transparent about your expectations concerning the form and function of the relationship, and about what is reasonable to expect of you and what is not. Pay particular attention to boundaries, both personal and professional, and respect theirs just as you expect them to respect yours.

Within mutually agreeable limits, mentors have an open door. Because your time is so valuable, it is often the most precious thing you can give. What lies behind that door, literally and figuratively, should be a haven of sorts. Give students your full attention when they are talking with you, and

the time and encouragement to open up. Try to minimize interruptions. Consider scheduling an occasional meeting away from the office or department to help create more personalized time.

Use concrete language to critique students' work. What the mentor communicates with the students must be timely, clear and, above all, constructive. Critical feedback is essential, but it is more likely to be effective if tempered with praise when deserved. Remind students that you are holding them to high standards in order to help them improve.

Mentors keep track of their students' progress and achievements, setting milestones and acknowledging accomplishments. Let your students know from the start that you want them to succeed and create opportunities for them to demonstrate their competencies. When you feel a student is prepared, suggest or nominate him or her for fellowships, projects, and teaching opportunities.

Encourage students to try new techniques, expand their skills, and discuss their ideas, even those they fear might seem naive or unworkable. Let students know that mistakes are productive because we learn from our failures. These practices nurture self-sufficiency. As tempting as it can be to dictate paths, the person in front of you has different strengths and aspirations.

Provide support in times of discouragement as well as success and be mindful of signs of emotional and physical distress. Do not assume that the only students who need help are those who ask for it. If a student is falling behind in his or her work, resist concluding that this shows a lack of commitment. Perhaps the student is exhausted, or unclear about what to do next, or is uncomfortable with some aspect of the project or research team. Although it is ultimately the responsibility of students to initiate contact with you, it may make a difference if you get in touch with those students who are becoming remote. Let them know they are welcome to talk with you during your office hours, and that the conversation can include nonacademic as well as academic issues.

Being open and approachable is particularly important when a student is shy or comes from a different cultural background. Many new students suffer from the impostor syndrome – anxiety about whether they belong in graduate school – so it is important to reassure them of their skills



and abilities to succeed. The enthusiasm and optimism you show can be inspirational. Make sure that students understand not only the personal consequences of their commitment to their work, but also its value to the professional community and to the general public.

Share what you have learned as both a scholar and a member of a profession. You might think things are obvious to students that are not. At the same time, tell your students what you learn from them. This will make them realize they are potential colleagues. Identify professional workshops and networking opportunities for students. Involve students in editing, journal activities, conference presentations, and grant writing.

Of course, it is not necessary to embody all of these attributes in order to be a successful mentor. Individuals have relative strengths in their capacity for mentoring, and mentors should be clear about what they can and cannot offer. Part of effective mentoring is knowing when to refer someone to another resource that might be more helpful.

Most important, and more than any particular piece of advice or supportive act, your students will remember how they were treated. The example you set as a person will have a profound effect on how they conduct themselves as professionals.

## BEFORE YOU START

The most important aspects of a strong mentoring relationship are clear, efficient communication and the establishment of expectations. By communicating your expectations and concerns to your students—and by listening and responding to their expectations and concerns—you will lay the foundation for a productive and rewarding working relationship.

Before beginning any mentoring interaction, you may find it useful to begin by thinking about your days as a graduate student and the mentoring you did or did not receive. Consider the following:

- What kind of mentoring did you have? If you didn't have a mentor, what aspects of graduate school were difficult for you? How did you cope with them? Would you have found your time as a graduate student more productive and satisfying if you had a good mentor?

- If you are a new faculty member and did not have a mentor in graduate school, consider speaking with a current faculty member who has already successfully mentored several graduate students. You might also consider interviewing graduate students in your department and asking them what they like most about their mentors.
- What did you like and dislike about the mentoring you received?
- How well did your mentors help you progress through your graduate program?
- How well did your mentors prepare you for your career?
- Are you still in contact with any of your former mentors? In what way(s)?
- What did you not receive in the way of mentoring that would have been helpful to you?
- What could your mentor have done differently to be more effective?
- Additionally, you may want to think about what you want from your graduate student so that your own expectations are established. The following questions are examples of what you might consider thinking about:
  - What sort of mentor do you want to be?
  - What are your expectations of your students? 3
  - What are your communication preferences (email, phone, etc.)?
  - What do your students need to know to succeed in your program?
  - What are the national and international organizations (publishers, journals, resources, etc.) in your field that students would benefit from knowing?

Answering these two sets of questions can help you develop a vision of the kind of mentor you want to be as well as consider the most appropriate ways you can mentor students both inside and outside your field.

## THE BASICS OF GOOD MENTORING

While advising graduate students on the progress and development of their academics, research, and/or creative projects is a key role of a good mentor, there is much more to a successful mentoring relationship. In fact, both faculty and students are encouraged to cultivate mentoring relationships beyond the traditional student-advisor relationship that is the norm of academia. Having mentors who are outside their immediate field of study can be extremely valuable in providing students with a broad perspective and a source of fresh ideas. If you find yourself mentoring students from outside your field, department, school, or even university, feel free to adjust your mentoring style and the advice from this handbook to meet the unique needs of each circumstance.

Ultimately, the goal of mentoring graduate students is to give them the instruction and support they need to develop into professionals and colleagues. In other words, mentoring requires a balance of guidance and authority. This means responding to the many academic and, sometimes, non-academic issues that students may face. One of the largest challenges facing mentors today is to maintain the delicate balance between treating students as intellectual and professional partners on the one hand, while asserting the degree of authority needed to motivate them and help them become successful on the other. The following suggestions can help establish just such a balance.

- A simple ‘hello’ in the hallway makes a big difference. Take the time to ask a student about his or her courses or current work.
- Let students know they are welcome to talk with you at any time.
- Be in touch with the students you mentor multiple times each semester.
- Knowing that the mentoring relationship is a ‘two-way street’, it may make a big difference if you contact those students who seem to be remote or whose behavior changes in some way.
- Some professors invite students out for coffee or to their homes for dinner so that discussions can take place in more informal settings and away from the distractions of the office.

## CLARIFYING EXPECTATIONS

Most problems in mentoring occur due to poorly defined expectations between the faculty advisor and the graduate student. To avoid this, you and your student need to discuss your respective roles and responsibilities. Although you do not necessarily have to set up a formal written agreement, some mentor/student partnerships benefit when mutual agreements are specified in writing. As a part of the mentoring process, it is normal to revise the expectations you and your student have of one another. You may also need to adjust your mentoring style according to the unique needs of your students. Below are some suggested areas of expectations you may want to discuss with your student (See *Appendix A*).

## STUDENT POINT OF VIEW

Be sure to give your student a chance to add his or her input on topics of discussion. The mentor/student dialogue needs to be such that both parties are willing and able to “meet halfway” when discussing their expectations.

## TIME COMMITMENT

Be explicit about the time commitments that you expect from your students. For example, let students know how often you expect them to work nights, weekends, etc.

Many research projects require domestic or foreign travel to off-site research facilities or professional conferences. Make sure that students understand these obligations and will be able to meet them.

## FEEDBACK

Discuss how often you will give the student feedback about his or her general and specific progress, and clearly characterize your feedback style so the student knows what to expect. If you tend to give a lot of criticism, tell them in advance, and let them know that it is to further their professional growth. If you tend to give sparse criticism, let them know that as well.

Also tell students how long it will generally take you to review and critique their work. Let them know how they can best remind you about receiving feedback if they do not hear from you within a specified timeframe. For instance, perhaps you would appreciate a polite reminder via e-mail or telephone a few days before the agreed-upon date. Each time students submit something to you, let them know when they can expect you to return it.

## MEETINGS

Talk with your students about how frequently you will be able to meet with them. Be explicit if you have a heavy travel schedule, are about to take a sabbatical, or will be assuming an administrative position. If you will not be able to meet often enough to satisfy a student’s needs, discuss

alternative means of communication such as e-mail, and/or give them the names of others with whom they can consult.

It is also helpful to talk to students about the kinds of issues that you feel require a face-to-face meeting and the kinds that can be dealt with in other ways. Let them know whether you use e-mail and what types of issues you think are best dealt with electronically. Also let students know if they may contact you at home, under what circumstances that might be appropriate, and during what general times it is appropriate to call.

Most professors want students to take the responsibility to arrange and lead their meetings. If this is true for you, make it very clear. Emphasize that students need to be prepared with an agenda of discussion items, and that it is up to them to make the most out of your allotted time together.

## PROGRAM/CAREER ROADMAP

Ask each of your graduate students to develop and share with you—preferably in writing—a roadmap that includes short- and long-term goals, as well as the timeframe for reaching those goals. This roadmap will need to be revised periodically, so it is a good idea to schedule times to revisit these plans with students.

Make sure that the student's roadmap meets your program's requirements and that it can be accomplished reasonably. Ask the student to be in contact with you periodically each semester to update you on progress made and obstacles encountered. Discuss any additional training and/or experiences the student needs in order to achieve his or her goals. If modifications to the timeline are necessary, agree upon a new chronology for the roadmap.

## DRAFTS

Discuss your expectations of what first drafts of abstracts, papers, protocols, presentations, etc. should look like before they are submitted to you. For example, if you do not want students to hand in rough drafts, suggest that they first share their work with a trusted peer or a writing group.

If a number of successive drafts are submitted, ask students to highlight the new or revised sections to save you from unnecessarily rereading the full document.

Take the time to sit down with your students and help them develop the style of writing that is professional and appropriate for your field. Not only will this help students improve the effectiveness of their communication, it will also make reading and editing their writing easier for you.

## PUBLISHING AND PRESENTING

Discuss your philosophy and expectations about co-authorship and your ability to help your students prepare work for submission to journals, conferences, presentations, and/or performances. This should be done before a project is started, rather than when you reach the finish line. In some disciplines, particularly those in the humanities, authorship is a solitary endeavor. Explain your own philosophy of graduate student publishing and offer guidance as to how students in these disciplines might approach getting their work published.

## RECOMMENDATION LETTERS

Let students know how much lead time you need to write letters on their behalves. Be completely open with how comfortable you feel about writing a letter for the student. If you do not feel that you can write a strong, positive letter, explain this to the student. A weak letter of recommendation can be a potential career-killer.

Discuss when and in what way(s) you prefer to be reminded of an upcoming deadline for a recommendation letter. Let students know that they can help you by providing information about the fellowship, grant, or program for which they are applying and by providing updated copies of their curriculum vitae. You may also find it helpful if they provide details about how they are structuring their applications and what points they want you to emphasize.

## INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Before working with students on a project, clarify who owns the data that is being collected and whether or not others will have access to it. Also discuss the ownership of any copyright and/or patent agreements that may result from a project.

## FIRST MEETING

In Part II of this guideline catered to graduate students, it is suggested that students undertake a critical self-appraisal before they meet with potential mentors. Students will be better able to assess whom they should add to their “mentoring team” if they have first identified their own needs and the type of people with whom they work best. The following questions are part of the student self-appraisal process. They are presented in this context with bulleted suggestions for you, the prospective mentor. We encourage you to review them as potentially useful points of discussion for your early meetings with students; and if you feel comfortable doing so, let students know that you once wrestled with these questions yourself (See *Appendix C*).

### *What are the student’s goals for graduate school and beyond?*

- Find out about the student’s previous educational experiences and why s/he decided to attend graduate school. What does the student hope to get out of his/her graduate education?
- Discuss your own research or creative projects and point out how they complement and/or diverge from the student’s interests.
- New graduate students are often unsure of exactly where their academic interests lie. Try to help students identify their interests by recommending courses, projects, lectures, books, or other materials that will expose them to a range of topics within their field.
- Offer suggestions about other training and/or work experiences the student should seek that will help him/her achieve his/her goals.
- Refer the student to other people inside or outside the University whom s/he should meet. If you know such a person well, offer to send a letter of introduction on the student’s behalf.

### *What are the student's strengths and weaknesses?*

- Ask students about their prior academic, professional, or personal experiences.
- Ask students about their skills (creative, analytical, statistical, etc.), and offer ideas about courses or experiences they could take in order to improve those skills.
- If you know students from classes or projects, share your impressions about their strengths, as well as the areas in which you think they need to improve.

### *What is the student's work style?*

- Discuss with the student what type of guidance s/he seeks. How much independence does the student want?
- Discuss your work style and the ways in which you interact with your graduate students. This might include the level of independence that you expect of your students and how much time and attention they can expect to receive from you.
- Ask the student about people in his/her past who have been important mentors. Inquire about how these people were effective in helping the student.

## GENERAL ADVICE TO GIVE TO GRADUATE STUDENTS

What do graduate students need to know about finding mentors? You may find it helpful to discuss some of these concepts with your students and let them know that these things truly are important to their success.

### BE PROACTIVE

Graduate students should not take it personally if they find that faculty members are not approaching them. Encourage your students to be proactive and initiate contact with other faculty members; often the most appropriate time for this kind of contact is during professors' regularly scheduled office hours. Be sure to let your students know if you use your office hours exclusively for course-related concerns.



## FIND MULTIPLE INFORMAL MENTORS

Rather than trying to find one perfect mentor, graduate students will often benefit from having multiple informal mentors, each of whom can provide something the students need. By carefully selecting multiple mentors, students increase the likelihood that they will receive appropriate assistance and support. Mentors for graduate students can include faculty within or outside of the Worden departmental faculty; staff and even other graduate students can serve as mentors. On the other hand, it is also important to remember that, in some cases, having multiple mentors is not the best option for a student. For example, in some programs where research is specialized and highly focused, having multiple mentors could potentially create mixed signals regarding the nature and direction of the student's research program. As such, there should always be a balance between the number of mentors and the level of their input into a student's program.

## HAVE REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS OF MENTORS

Students should identify what they need from an individual mentor and explicitly ask for those things; this goes back to the crucial principles of clear communication and the establishment of expectations. It is easier for a mentor to respond to specific requests for assistance than to general, more vague requests for mentorship. Try to make your students feel comfortable asking you for specific things.

## BE VISIBLE

Students need to understand the importance of being seen in their departments. Students should be told that office and hallway conversations are an important means for building and maintaining relationships. In addition, students who have a visible presence are more likely to be perceived as being committed to their program. If students have a departmental office, they should use it. Students should also attend departmental lectures, meetings, and social events.

## TAKE THEMSELVES SERIOUSLY

Graduate students need to make the transition from thinking of themselves as bright students to seeing themselves as potential colleagues. Ways to facilitate this include attending departmental lectures and other activities; joining professional associations and societies; attending conferences and networking; and seeking out opportunities to present their work inside and outside of their departments or programs.

## BE RESPONSIBLE

Students should show up for scheduled meetings on time and be prepared with an agenda of what they need to accomplish. They need to take responsibility for periodically updating their mentors about the progress they are making and the difficulties they are encountering. As one faculty member says to her students: “Take charge and own your education.”

Additionally, departments and advisors often invest many resources (e.g., money and time) in their graduate students. Students should be aware of these investments made on their behalves and be responsible members of the University community. Because their work is often part of a greater whole, progress on projects should be made in a timely fashion so as not to delay others' efforts.

## BE ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN THE PROFESSION

Students should demonstrate that they are involved in their programs, courses, and research. If you have specific expectations for this (e.g., such as being up-to-date on the literature), this should be explicitly conveyed to the student. Encourage and help them join international, national, and local groups or societies that share similar project interests.

## RECEIVE CRITICISM IN A PROFESSIONAL MANNER

Students need to accept criticism of their work in a professional fashion. This does not mean they have to agree with everything that is said, but they do need to show a willingness to consider

other points of view. If students disagree with a critique, they should demonstrate their ability to defend their ideas without becoming argumentative.

### LET MENTORS KNOW THEY ARE FOLLOWING THEIR ADVICE

Faculty members want to know that the time they spend with their students is being put to good use. For example, after reading books or articles a faculty member suggests, students should share their reactions with them. Indeed, these interactions frequently turn into valuable learning experiences.

## PART II

# GUIDELINES FOR MENTEES

Being a mentee is one of the most important roles you will have as a graduate student at Our Lady of the Lake University Worden School of Social Service. We encourage you to dedicate yourself to fostering a strong mentoring relationship with faculty members. Doing so will not only enhance your academic experience, but also your professional career. Research shows that students who have good mentoring relationships have higher productivity levels, a higher level of involvement within their departments, and greater satisfaction with their programs (Green & Bauer, 1995). This only underscores the importance of developing strong mentoring relationships early in your graduate career.

Mentoring goes beyond issues of professional competence. Many aspects of professional socialization and personal support are central to mentoring as well as to your professional life after graduation. In this latter stage, the mentoring cycle comes full-circle, and you may find yourself in the role of mentor—an opportunity to repay the benefits you received in your own former mentoring relationships.

### HOW TO SELECT POTENTIAL MENTORS?

Consider it *your* responsibility to seek out interactions with faculty members. It is unrealistic to expect a professor to approach you and offer to serve as your mentor. As you get started in your search for faculty mentors, try to look for a balance of both junior and senior faculty members. Each can be of assistance to you, although possibly in different ways. For example, while senior faculty might have more resources to assist you with networking, junior faculty might be more recently familiar with the stresses and strains associated with being a graduate student. Also, it is probably advantageous for you to find faculty members outside of your department with interests related to yours to act as additional mentors. This can serve a dual purpose, as your department will most likely require you to have someone outside your department to be on your dissertation committee.

It is not unusual for graduate students to feel hesitant about initiating contact with a faculty member to form a mentoring relationship. Especially in the early stages of graduate school, students often feel that they need guidance about how to choose possible faculty mentors. The following considerations should be helpful to you whether you are just starting to form a mentoring team or whether you already have one.

## CONDUCT A SELF-APPRAISAL

Start the mentor selection process by first conducting a critical self-appraisal. Reflect on what will help you to thrive as a graduate student. Use this information later on to match yourself with faculty or others who can provide you with what you need. The following are types of questions you should ask yourself.

- What are my objectives in doing graduate level studies?
- What type of training do I want and/or need?
- What are my strengths?
- What are my weaknesses?
- What skills do I need to develop?
- What kinds of research or creative projects do I want to explore?
- How much independent versus guided work do I want to do?
- What type of career do I want to pursue?

## IDENTIFY POTENTIAL MENTORS

You can identify potential faculty mentors within or outside your department using a variety of formal and informal strategies. Here are some suggestions.

- Familiarize yourself with professors' work to gain a sense of their past and current interests and methodologies.
- Immerse yourself in departmental academic and social activities. Observe how faculty members interact with colleagues and graduate students.
- Enroll in or audit classes taught by the faculty members who most interest you. Attend their public presentations.
- Ask advanced graduate students about their advisors and mentors. Share your interests with other students and ask them for suggestions about whom you should meet.

## CLARIFY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Problems in mentorship most often develop because of misunderstandings about the expectations each side has of the other. Although you do not need to set up a formal contract, some people find it helpful to specify mutual agreements about their respective roles and responsibilities. Some of the expectations you will need to discuss and clarify, especially if your mentor is also your advisor and/or dissertation chair, include the following: availability (in person or in other ways), goals, meetings, feedback, reminders, and publishing. These are discussed in more detail in next section: *How Do You Develop a Relationship with Potential Mentors?*

Before your first meeting with your mentor you should take time to clarify your goals. Develop a work plan that includes both short-term and long-term goals, as well as a timeframe for reaching those goals. At least once each semester (but preferably more often), contact your mentors to discuss your progress, as well as any additional training and experiences you need in order to achieve your goals (See *Appendix B*).

## RELATIONSHIP WITH MENTORS

Finding a clear, open, and honest way of communicating with your mentor is key for a successful mentor-mentee relationship. This section addresses often underestimated details that form the foundation of a successful mentoring relationship (See *Appendix D*).

### HOW TO INITIATE CONTACT WITH A POTENTIAL MENTOR?

The first meeting with a potential mentor can be daunting, and some graduate students are reluctant to take this step. Remember, your insights will guide you if you have a good understanding of your own academic and professional goals and if you have familiarized yourself with the professor's past and current work. The goals of your initial meeting are to make a positive impression and to establish a working rapport. You also want to assess whether a particular faculty member is a good fit for you. When considering a potential mentor, however, it is important to remember that this relationship is a two-way street, so your potential mentor will also be

assessing you. Both you and your mentor have responsibilities that, if met, will ensure a healthy and productive professional relationship.

Keep in mind that a mentoring relationship is often one that evolves over time and one that often begins because of a particular need. Your initial meeting with potential mentors is to gauge mutual interests and possible interactions. View this initial conversation as simply the first step in a process, an exploration that will help you decide if you really want the person to be your mentor.

The lists in the following section will give you a better understanding of how to present yourself and what topics to discuss with faculty. That said, don't limit yourself to just what is in these lists. Instead, use them to trigger ideas about what topics are most important to you.

## WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD CLARIFY WITH A MENTOR?

### General Availability

Ask your potential mentors how often they will be available to you. Consider the following questions.

- How often does the potential mentor meet with students in general?
- What are the mentor's current projects, and how much time can that person commit to assisting you? Will that amount of time be sufficient for you?
- Is the mentor planning to go on sabbatical or be away for extended periods of time during your time at the university? If so, what arrangements can be made to keep you in communication with this mentor?
- Does the mentor offer additional ways of helping students? Does s/he delegate some of her/his mentoring tasks to other students or staff?

### Communication

Meetings and feedback are crucial to establishing good lines of communication between you and your mentor. Take time to clarify and address the following.

- How often does the mentor like to meet one-on-one?

- Will e-mail contact be suitable for certain issues or questions that might arise between meetings? Does the mentor regularly answer his/her e-mails?
- What are the circumstances, if any, in which the mentor feels that it would be appropriate to be called? Establish rules for calling each other.
- How often will the mentor give you feedback about your general work and your progress?
- Promise that, in advance of actually handing the mentor a paper or project to review, you will inquire about his or her current workload and whether timely feedback is still possible.

## DISSERTATION CHAIR

Often your mentor will be your dissertation committee chair. Whether or not you select your mentor as your dissertation chair, it will be important to clarify the following expectations with your dissertation chair.

### *Workload and Funding*

- What does the dissertation chair consider to be a normal workload?
- How many hours does he or she think you should be spending on your research project per week?
- Does the dissertation chair have funds to support you? Will these remain available until you complete your program? It is very important that the timeline for available funding for a specific project be well understood by both you and your advisor.
- Does the dissertation chair prefer or require her/his students to apply to scholarships/fellowships and will those scholarships/fellowships suit your academic interests?
- Is there potential for developing a dissertation topic that you would find interesting from the dissertation chair's research project?

### *Publishing*

- Does your dissertation chair offer co-authorship? If so, what are the guidelines for authorship?
- Does your dissertation chair have a specific requirement for number of publications or other scholarly work that exceeds your department requirements for graduation?
- Is your dissertation chair willing to advise you on your own articles for publication?
- What publishing contacts does your dissertation chair have who might be of assistance to you?



## *Professional Presentations*

- Does the dissertation chair collaborate with students in professional presentations?
- Does the dissertation chair have time available to work with you to help you prepare your projects for professional presentations?

## HOW TO BE A GOOD MENTEE

Here are some suggestions that will help your interactions with mentors and other faculty members go smoothly while also helping you to become the strongest mentee that you can be.

### BE SERIOUS ABOUT YOUR ACADEMIC WORK

There are many ways to demonstrate your commitment to your studies and to your field. Here are just a few.

- Make the transition from thinking of yourself as a student to seeing yourself as a future colleague.
- Attend departmental lectures, seminars, and other departmental activities. Ask intelligent questions and contribute to thoughtful discussion.
- Network at professional meetings in your field and join the sections related to your dissertation.
- Seek out opportunities to present your work (in your department or through outside conferences and publications).

### RECEIVE CRITICISM IN A PROFESSIONAL WAY

Accept critiques of your work in a professional manner. If you disagree with a specific criticism, show your appreciation in a respectful manner but assert your reasoning for why you think differently. Rather than responding on the spot, it is often best to take some time to think about the critique in order to provide the best response.

## TAKE OWNERSHIP OF YOUR DEGREE

While your mentors will be helpful and will aid your success, you must remember that you are ultimately responsible for the progress of your degree. Therefore, remember to:

- Investigate and understand your academic and research requirements for graduation.
- Consistently work hard and responsibly throughout your project.
- Demonstrate independent thinking.
- Show your initiative and motivation to succeed.

## CHANGING ADVISORS

In the course of your graduate study, it may become appropriate to change advisors. This process may be more common in some fields of graduate work and less common in others. It can be a difficult process in either case, especially where financial support is involved. If you are working with multiple faculty members, it is easier for the students to change advisors. In these instances, changing advisors is often a fluid process and can be viewed positively. For example, some students may begin their graduate work with one advisor who specializes in one field and then complement this work by changing to another advisor who specializes in a different area. In order to maintain a smooth transition between advisors, you should remain professional with your previous advisor. Check formal policies and procedures for changing advisors, so it is important to follow the appropriate course of action they suggest. That said, here are some general guidelines.

### GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR CHANGING ADVISORS

- Reflect on the pros and cons of changing advisors before you start the process.
- Seek advice from your other faculty mentors to assess your needs and determine if changing advisors is the best course of action. This advice may be especially important if you are attempting to change advisors toward the final phase of your graduate work.
- Try to resolve any differences with your advisor before you make a final decision.
- Approach another faculty member who you feel is the best fit to be your new advisor. Your attitude in this conversation should be positive, outlining new interests, goals and possibilities.

- Be professional. Do not make negative comments about your previous advisor, place blame, or discuss specific difficulties or incidents. It is important to avoid saying anything that could have a detrimental impact on your future.
- Express your decision to change advisors by outlining your reasons for wanting the change in the most diplomatic and sensitive manner possible, especially concerning anything you need to say about your previous advisor and others involved in your graduate work. Try to be general; don't bring up small details or petty incidents.
- Discuss a reasonable timeframe for completing any work you owe your previous advisor.
- Complete your department's requirements for changing advisors.

## PART III

### GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE PROGRAMS

Effective mentoring cannot be done in a vacuum. A successful relationship between a graduate student and mentor is built upon a foundation of commitment at the institutional as well as at the program level. The institution must be committed to ensuring that its programs are of the highest quality, producing professionals who are both ethical and accomplished. The department, in turn, is responsible for setting clear expectations and supervising progress. Each department should be responsible for creating an environment in which mentoring is valued and both students and faculty have access to resources that promote graduate student success. The following are examples of practices known to reinforce the efforts of faculty as they work with their students.

#### PROVIDE AN ORIENTATION SESSION

This helps faculty get a head start with new graduate students by introducing them to program policies, practices, and resources, preferably at the beginning of the academic year. This should be followed up with a refresher session in the second term. Students should also be furnished with a departmental guide that acquaints them with its expectations, benchmarks, and milestones.

#### ASSIGN A FIRST-YEAR TEMPORARY ADVISOR

To facilitate graduate student engagement with faculty immediately upon entry into graduate school, assign incoming students a temporary faculty advisor. Students and faculty can be paired based upon stated interests. Each advisor should be required to meet with their advisees at least twice during the academic year to review course selections and departmental requirements, and to answer questions that arise. After this first year, it should be viewed positively if graduate students want to change advisors. Encourage the recognition that developing relationships with other faculty is a signal of a student's growth and progress.

## DEVELOP A SET OF CORE EXPECTATIONS

Departments can affirm that mentoring is a core component of the educational experience for graduate students by developing a compact or agreement, relevant to the discipline or field of study, for use by faculty and the students with whom they work. Such a document would list the essential commitments and responsibilities of both parties, set within the context of the department's fundamental values. This could be included in the departmental handbook and reviewed—or even signed—by both parties to acknowledge the mentoring relationship.

## PROVIDE AN ANNUAL REVIEW OF STUDENT PROGRESS

The objective of a periodic review—annual, at least—is to identify ways in which faculty can more effectively help students make progress in their graduate studies by routinely documenting and sharing with each student a constructive critique of that individual's efforts across the entire spectrum of mastery that the student is expected to achieve. This extends beyond course grades to offer feedback on whether the student is acquiring the full set of experiences, methods, and professional experiences that the faculty think are critical to success in the field of study. While a wide range of formats can be used, the one common feature is that faculty share the results of the review with each student in writing and include a copy in the student's file. The intention is to provide a framework for constructive discussion of student progress toward the degree and to document suggestions, guidelines, and benchmarks provided to the student.

## CREATE STRUCTURED ACTIVITY FOR FACULTY AND STUDENTS

These events could be academic in nature, such as brown bags, colloquia, and workshops, or more socially oriented events like pot lucks, movie nights, and picnics. To establish a collegial atmosphere, it is helpful to designate a space, such as a lounge. Many departments also use this space to host social events to which graduate students, faculty, staff, and families are invited.

## PROVIDE PEER MENTORING OPPORTUNITIES

In order to ease the transition to doctoral program, pair first-year graduate students with more advanced students who share similar interests. Peer mentors can familiarize incoming students with departmental culture, strategies for success in the first year, and resources at the university and in the local community.

## PROMOTE SUCCESSFUL MENTORING PRACTICES

Some departments have found it useful to hold annual seminars that update faculty on the latest employment trends and internship opportunities, as well as issues such as appropriate faculty-student relations, professional standards, research responsibility, and balancing career and personal life. New faculty often benefit from formal guidance in mentoring, which can include briefings, workshops, the assignment of senior mentors, and information about campus resources.

## REWARD EFFECTIVE MENTORING

Mentoring performance and outcomes are worthy of inclusion in faculty evaluation for salary and promotion. An additional means for rewarding mentoring is to factor in teaching credits for faculty who assume heavy mentoring responsibilities. Another way of honoring good mentors is through public recognition.

## REFERENCES

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- Zelditch, M. (March 1990). *Mentor roles*. Proceedings of the 32nd Annual Meeting of the Western Association of Graduate Schools. Tempe, AZ.

## APPENDIX A

### A WORKSHEET FOR A MENTOR'S EXPECTATIONS

Use this worksheet to develop an understanding of what you, as a faculty mentor, expect to gain from your mentoring relationship. By clarifying your own expectations, you will be able to communicate and work more effectively with your students. Add items you deem important.

#### *The reasons I want to be a mentor are to:*

- Encourage and support a graduate student in my field
- Establish close, professional relationships
- Challenge myself to achieve new goals and explore alternatives
- Pass on knowledge
- Create a network of talented people
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### *I hope that my student and I will:*

- Tour my workplace, classroom, center, or lab
- Go to formal mentoring events together
- Meet over coffee or meals
- Go to educational events such as lectures, conferences, talks, or other University events together
- Go to local, regional, and national professional meetings together
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### *The things I feel are off-limits in my mentoring relationship include:*

- Disclosing our conversations to others
- Using non-public places for meetings
- Sharing intimate aspects of our lives
- Meetings behind closed doors
- Other \_\_\_\_\_



*I will help my student with job opportunities by:*

- Finding job or internship possibilities in my department, center, lab, or company
- Introducing my student to people who might be interested in hiring him/her
- Helping my student practice for job interviews
- Suggesting potential work contacts to pursue
- Teaching him/her about networking
- Critiquing his/her resume or curriculum vita
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

*The amount of time I will spend with my student will be, on average:*

1      2      3      4      hours every:    week    other week    per month    (circle one)

Worksheet adapted from: Brainard, S.G., Harkus, D.A., and George, M.R. (1998). *A curriculum for training mentors and mentees: Guide for administrators*. Seattle, WA: Women in Engineering Initiative, WEPAN Western Regional Center, University of Washington.

## APPENDIX B

### A WORKSHEET FOR A STUDENT'S EXPECTATIONS

Use this worksheet to develop an understanding of what you, as a student, expect to gain from your mentoring relationships. By clarifying your own expectations, you will be able to communicate them more effectively to your mentors. Add items you deem important.

#### *The reasons I want a mentor are to:*

- Receive encouragement and support
- Increase my confidence when dealing with professionals
- Challenge myself to achieve new goals and explore alternatives
- Gain a realistic perspective of the workplace
- Get advice on how to balance work and other responsibilities, and to set priorities
- Gain knowledge of the “do’s and don’ts” in my field of study
- Learn how to operate in a network of talented peers
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### *I hope that my mentor and I will:*

- Tour my mentor’s workplace and explore various teaching or work sites
- Go to formal mentoring events together
- Meet over coffee, lunch, or dinner
- Go to educational events such as lectures, conferences, talks, or other University events together
- Go to local, regional, and national professional meetings together
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### *I hope that my mentor and I will discuss:*

- Academic subjects that will benefit my future career
- Career options and job preparation
- The realities of the workplace
- My mentor’s work
- Technical and related field issues
- How to network

- \_\_\_ How to manage work and family life
- \_\_\_ Personal dreams and life circumstances
- \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

*The things I feel are off-limits in my mentoring relationship include:*

- \_\_\_ Disclosing our conversations to others
- \_\_\_ Using non-public places for meetings
- \_\_\_ Sharing intimate aspects of our lives
- \_\_\_ Meeting behind closed doors
- \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

*I hope that my mentor will help me with job opportunities by:*

- \_\_\_ Opening doors for me to job possibilities
- \_\_\_ Introducing me to people who might be interested in hiring me
- \_\_\_ Helping me practice for job interviews
- \_\_\_ Suggesting potential work contacts for me to pursue on my own
- \_\_\_ Teaching me about networking
- \_\_\_ Critiquing my resume or curriculum vita
- \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

*The amount of time I will spend with my mentor will be, on average:*

1      2      3      4      hours every:    week    other week    per month    (circle one)

Adapted from: Brainard, S.G., Harkus, D.A., and George, M.R. (1998). *A curriculum for training mentors and mentees: Guide for administrators*. Seattle, WA: Women in Engineering Initiative, WEPAN Western Regional Center, University of Washington.

## APPENDIX C

### PLANNING FOR FIRST MEETINGS: A MENTOR'S CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to plan initial meetings with your students in light of what you hope to help them achieve over the long term.

\_\_\_\_\_ Arrange first meetings with potential students.

\_\_\_\_\_ Explain the goals for meetings and discuss how confidentiality should be handled.

\_\_\_\_\_ Discuss what each of you perceives as the boundaries of the mentoring relationship.

\_\_\_\_\_ Review the student's current experience and qualifications.

\_\_\_\_\_ Discuss and record the student's immediate and long-term goals; explore useful professional development experiences in light of these goals. Record these on a professional development plan. Discuss strategies and target dates.

\_\_\_\_\_ Discuss and record any issues that may affect the mentoring relationship such as time and financial constraints, lack of confidence, new to the role, etc.

\_\_\_\_\_ Arrange a meeting schedule (try to meet at least once a quarter). Record topics discussed and feedback given at each meeting. Ensure that all meeting records are kept confidential and in a safe place.

\_\_\_\_\_ Discuss the following activities that can form part of your mentoring relationship:

- Giving advice on strategies for improving teaching.
- Organizing observation(s) of teaching and providing constructive feedback.
- Organizing a session of work shadowing.
- Consulting on issues or concerns the student has with colleagues or study and research groups.
- Providing feedback from other sources (students, faculty, administrators, and other mentors in or outside the University).

\_\_\_\_\_ Create a mentoring action plan that reflects different professional development needs at different stages of the student's graduate program.

\_\_\_\_\_ Encourage your student to reflect regularly on his or her goals, achievements, and areas for improvement. Ask the mentee to compose a brief reflection essay (e.g., 1/2 page) prior to each meeting.

\_\_\_\_\_ Amend the mentoring action plan as needed by focusing on the student's developing needs.

Adapted from: *Mentoring towards excellence*: Section 4: Handbook and guidelines for mentors and mentees. Association of Colleges and the Further Education National Training Organization, Learning and Skills Council: Coventry, England.

## APPENDIX D

### PLANNING FOR FIRST MEETINGS: A STUDENT'S CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to plan initial meetings with your mentors in light of what you hope to achieve over the long term.

\_\_\_\_\_ Arrange first meetings with a prospective mentor.

\_\_\_\_\_ Explain your goals for meetings and ask how confidentiality should be handled.

\_\_\_\_\_ Discuss what each of you perceives as the boundaries of the mentoring relationship.

\_\_\_\_\_ Review the current experience and qualifications.

\_\_\_\_\_ Discuss and record your immediate and long-term goals. Explore useful professional development experiences in light of these goals. Record these on a professional development plan. Discuss options, strategies, and target dates.

\_\_\_\_\_ Discuss and record any issues that may affect the mentoring relationship such as time and financial constraints, lack of confidence, being new to the role, etc.

\_\_\_\_\_ Arrange a meeting schedule with your mentor (try to meet at least once a quarter). Record topics discussed and feedback given at each meeting. Request that all meeting records are kept confidential and in a safe place.

\_\_\_\_\_ Discuss with your mentor the following activities that can form part of your mentoring relationship:

- Getting advice on strategies for improving teaching or research.
- Organizing observation(s) of teaching and providing constructive feedback.
- Organizing a session of work shadowing.
- Getting advice on issues or concerns with colleagues in study and research groups.
- Providing feedback from other sources (students, faculty, administrators, and other mentors in or outside the University).

\_\_\_\_\_ Create a mentoring action plan that reflects different professional development needs at different stages of your graduate program.

\_\_\_\_\_ Encourage your mentor to reflect regularly with you on your goals, achievements, and areas for improvement. Compose a brief reflection essay (e.g., 1/2 page) prior to each meeting.

\_\_\_\_\_ Amend your mentoring action plan as needed by focusing on your developing needs.

Adapted from: *Mentoring towards excellence: Section 4: Handbook and guidelines for mentors and mentees*. Association of Colleges and the Further Education National Training Organization, Learning and Skills Council: Coventry, England.