

NC STATE GENETICS, GENOMICS, AND BIOINFORMATICS PROGRAMS
STATEMENT OF MUTUAL EXPECTATION (SME) FOR
GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANTS AND FACULTY MENTORS
XX Lab

Part 1: Expressed Expectations from GGB Programs for Mentors and Students

To ensure mutual understanding of expectations and responsibilities between a graduate student and faculty mentor, the Genetics, Genomics, and Bioinformatics programs (GGB) require that a Statement of Mutual Expectations (SME) is prepared at the start of every graduate research assistantship and updated annually (with completion of the student annual report). Specifically, the SME aims to:

- Assist the student in understanding their responsibilities and how to meet their mentor's expectations.
- Assist the mentor in providing a safe, mutually respectful, and productive training experience for the student.
- Establish a clear mechanism for the student and mentor to resolve conflicts should they arise.

Students Can Expect From Their Mentor:

Respect

- Respect as a person, student, and professional employee including acknowledgement and acceptance of differences in culture, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and other dimensions of diversity. Mentors will attend a workshop on implicit bias every four years.
- Commitment of time, effort, and assurance that their funding status (stipend, tuition, and health insurance) will be maintained either through mentor project funds or through concerted efforts to identify external funding either in the form of fellowships or teaching assistantship.
- Ability to communicate and express concerns without fear of retribution.
- Understanding of the student's commitments to course work and RA/TA responsibilities outside of research commitments.

Communication and work environment

- Mutually agreed upon expectations about the frequency and format of communication.
- Clear communication about project timelines, availability and nature of funding, level of effort and research expectations.
- Timely review of and feedback on research and academic progress.
- Acceptance of feedback and discussion of difficulties without retribution.
- Willingness to resolve potential conflicts that arise including academic, research, financial or interpersonal issues.
- Regular and clear discussion about work done by their student and how it may relate to authorship
- A safe physical work environment that complies with all relevant institutional requirements (e.g., safety inspections).

Guidance on research and degree completion

- Guidance on planning and managing the expectations and timing of research projects from conception to designated goals (e.g., publication, thesis defense).
- Understanding of setbacks (e.g., mental health issues, health issues, major life changes, global pandemics) and the ability to adjust expectations and training accordingly.
- Appropriate training and resources to successfully complete research projects.
- Rules for how research records and results should be maintained.
- Guidance on professional and ethical standards.

Guidance on professional development

- Support to participate in career development activities such as conferences, workshops, and other activities that may take the student away from research for a reasonable amount of time (such as several days or a week intermittently).
- Provide guidance on building professional networks.
- Advice on advancing professional goals compatible with the student's desired professional path and career goals.

Teamwork

- Clear expectations about interpersonal communication and behavior among members of the research group that minimally assumes inclusivity, collaboration, and mutual respect.
- Understanding that the mentor will help to ensure that the work environment is collegial, inclusive, equitable, and safe for all members of the research group.

Mentors Can Expect From Their Student:

Respect

- Respect as a professor and person; recognition of the value of their time and responsibilities within and outside the university and acceptance of differences in culture, ethnicity, gender, etc. Students will attend a workshop on implicit bias at the beginning of the assistantship.
- Understanding that mentoring is tailored for each individual student and adjusted for progress in the degree program.

Communication

- Mutually agreed upon expectations for frequency and format of communications.
- Regular progress reports including what has and has not been accomplished.
- Reasonable, mutually agreed upon expectations of the time frame necessary to give feedback and review results.
- Willingness to resolve potential conflicts that arise including academic, research, financial or interpersonal issues (see conflict resolution resources below).
- Notification, as soon as possible, if the student decides to leave the lab or program sooner than expected including temporary leave-of-absences.

Commitment & Productivity

- Understanding of the expectations of the degree program, mentor and research team, and RA/TA responsibilities.
- Learning and progressing through the program, with progressively more independence as the student advances.

- Commitment and steady effort to make progress towards mutually agreed upon results and deliverables, adhering to timelines and deadlines.

Responsibility

- Maintain scientific rigor and avoid any scientific misconduct, particularly in publications, presentations, and funding proposals.
- Safe, ethical, and efficient use of resources.
- Adherence to professional and safety standards.
- Taking feedback seriously and revising research plans in response, as appropriate.
- Maintaining research records according to the mentor's guidance.
- When graduating or leaving the team, leaving behind organized research materials, and data.

Teamwork

- Working collaboratively with other members of the research team including supporting and mentoring others in the research group.
- Sharing responsibility for laboratory upkeep and maintenance.
- Adhering to deadlines.

Conflict Resolution

It is the goal that mentoring relationships will be safe, inclusive, and productive; however, it is possible that conflicts may arise. Mentors and students are encouraged to resolve conflicts and reach mutually agreed upon resolutions directly. In cases in which the student or mentor does not feel comfortable working directly with the other party, they are encouraged to seek other assistance. The following contacts can be leveraged, not necessarily in this order or in a mutually exclusive manner, to help navigate the conflict:

- **Program Graduate Student Coordinator (GSC):** Tyler DeAtley, tdeatle@ncsu.edu
- **Director of Graduate Program (DGP):**
 - Dr. Reade Roberts (Genetics), rrober2@ncsu.edu
 - Dr. Spencer Muse (Genomic Sciences), muse@ncsu.edu
- **Graduate School Liaison:** Annette Adkison, aadkiso@ncsu.edu
- **University Counseling Center:** (919) 515-2423, <https://counseling.dasa.ncsu.edu>
- **Ombuds:** The Ombuds office is available for faculty, students and staff to discuss concerns related to any aspect of an individual's NC State experience. An independent, neutral, confidential, and informal office at NC State, Ombuds Services are available as a personal guide for conflict management, prevention and resolution while advocating for fair processes and empowering individuals to successfully navigate NC State. Plans to resolve conflicts can be developed confidentially with the help of the Ombuds office.
 - Student Ombuds: 919-513-3401, <https://ombuds.dasa.ncsu.edu>
- If a conflict involves discrimination, harassment, or abuse based on identity (sex, gender, race, color, height, disability, religion, sexual orientation, country of origin, age), contact the Title IX Office at NC State: 919-515-0574, <https://diversity.ncsu.edu/title-ix>

- For support with finances, or housing/food security, contact Feed the Pack Food Pantry (as well as your program’s leadership; e.g., GSC, DGP, Head): <https://feedthepack.dasa.ncsu.edu/>

Part 2: Crafted Expectations between Mentor and Student

**NC STATE GENETICS AND GENOMIC SCIENCES PROGRAM
STATEMENT OF MUTUAL EXPECTATION (SME) FOR
GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANTS AND FACULTY MENTORS**

Student name _____
Mentor name _____
Work period for this SME _____

This Statement of Mutual Expectations (SME) is intended to outline student and mentor responsibilities and operational procedures that will ensure a safe, inclusive, mutually respectful, and productive research experience. Please provide the following details for the designated work period covered by this SME. The SME should be updated at the beginning of a new contract between the Mentor and Student, or annually (whichever comes first).

Below please take the time to together craft expectations that are more specific to the lab and relationship between this Mentor-Student pairing.

Responsibilities of the student. Outline specific duties, goals, deliverables, reporting structure and timing among any other relevant details. The level of detail may evolve as the research program progresses. This information can be revised annually.

Responsibilities of Supervisor. Outline details about a training schedule (if applicable), supervision and style (e.g., frequency of meetings and feedback), project design and prioritization process, research budget, and procedures for getting approval for and ordering reagents/supplies.

Scheduling: Provide details about expected student work hours (aligned with graduate school guidelines), allowances for remote work (if applicable), mentor’s office hours, regularly scheduled mentor-student meetings, degree of flexibility in the work schedule, and vacation/holiday expectations with respect to duration and lead time for such requests.

Procedures and Best Practices: Provide details on lab expectations, including but not limited to required trainings, standard laboratory methods, preferred suppliers for lab elements, sharing of reagents in the laboratory, key contacts, required recordkeeping (e.g., type of lab notebooks to be used and how they will be provided), safety and security protocols, and procedures for ordering supplies.

Professional Development and Individual Development Plan: Include skills to be learned during the appointment (if any), training resources other than those provided directly by the supervisor, expectations regarding publishing (e.g., what contributions merit authorship), travel, and presenting at meetings (e.g., conferences that the trainee is expected to attend and how participation will be covered financially).

Organizational Culture: Provide details about office/workspace assignments, dress codes per institutional requirements (e.g., laboratory safety), appropriate titles and means of address, and other cultural and social expectations that will ensure an inclusive work environment for all members of the research group.

We met in person to review this agreement on the date noted below. We agree to the terms outlined including leveraging available resources to resolve any conflicts that may arise.

Student

Mentor

Name:

Name:

Signature:

Signature:

Date:

Date:
