PhD student expectations

July 2025

Adapted from Dr. Danielle Benoit's lab manual

As a PhD student in the lab, you are expected to:

- Always follow our lab values and lab handbook.
- Cultivate your curiosity and creativity. Select a research topic that excites you and will lead you to new knowledge. If you're funded by a particular project, your work will be closely associated with that project.
- Conduct your teaching and research with openness and integrity.
- Take training in EHS, lab rule, assays, etc., seriously and as soon as appropriate.
- Represent the lab with pride and show respect for others. You are now an ambassador for the lab as well as a member. How you interact with our colleagues will shape our reputation.
- Each PhD student is expected to produce 5-8 peer-reviewed publications during their PhD, including at least 3 first author research articles. In general, this should take 4-5 years. For the first 1st author manuscript, you will learn from me how to prepare manuscript and go through the whole process. It's expected that you will be able to prepare your second and third manuscript independently. NOTE: Not every PhD is created equal. A PhD with high productivity (8-10 publications) will get you much further in your career than one with 1-2 publications. I want everyone to be as successful and happy as you can and want to be.
- Actively participate in all laboratory group functions (group meeting, subgroup meetings, seminars); this means paying attention, asking questions, offering feedback, and using phones and computers only for work that is directly related to the meeting at hand.
    - Attend Seminars. There are both in person and virtual seminars available. It's a great resource to expand your knowledge and get new ideas.
    - Progress reports in the one-on-one meetings. See more from **Our Values** on the website.
- Maintain and treat all lab equipment and lab space with care; if we are running low on a necessary supply, if software licenses are set to expire, if computers need updating, etc., alert me or the one who is responsible for lab ordering/management.
- Review the literature. Read all the literature I suggest and a boatload more! Learn to use google scholar (and set google scholar alerts!), Elicit, PubMed, Web of Science, Scopus. Read outside of your discipline (Science/Nature are good places to start) to get some perspective and maybe new ideas too.

- Actively seek out fellowship/grant/award proposals and apply for those you are a good fit for. Remember that providing letters of recommendation and feedback on drafts take time and effort from those writing them; do not apply for opportunities for which you do not meet the requirements.
- Present your work at conferences – contingent on progress measured by publications. Usually smaller sized conferences, like GRCs, are recommended.
- Be familiar with and meet the deadlines and benchmarks in your Departmental Graduate Student Handbook. Meeting these are entirely your responsibility, not the PIs.
- Manage research challenges. Perform research! Plan experiments well, don't forget about necessary controls, keep good notebooks, and record everything! Make sure these experimental outcomes would be acceptable figures/tables/data for a publication!
    - Sit down and carefully think about the solution yourself
    - Look for answers in the literature
    - Solicit advice from your lab mates
    - Please seek advice from the PI; I am always happy to discuss issues, but it is in all of our best interest if you work on the problem yourself first.
    - If we're still struggling, we'll go outside of the lab for advice (e.g., to collaborators or colleagues), but please talk to the PI about this first.
- Share your expertise, experience, and materials with others in the lab. There are significant rewards for being generous with your time and knowledge.
- Share responsibility for mentoring undergraduates working in the lab.
- MS Office/Endnote/Prism/Biorender/Zotero/Adobe Illustrator software will be used for writing, figure making, statistical analysis, etc. Learn them now and it will save you lots of time!
- Back up data: Google drive and physical hard drive.
- Get/keep a life! Something that took me some time to learn. Get a hobby, love someone, be passionate about things other than research. A must in this equation is a balance – to keep yourself sane and give your brain time to process experiments and come up with innovative ideas and ways to circumvent problems you're having.
- Exercise and eat right. It does your body and mind good and is worth the time in rewards.