

Graduate Student Guide to Mentorship Relationships

Seeking out and cultivating productive, supportive mentorship relationships is not only key to your academic and professional success as you navigate graduate school, but also enriches the culture of collaboration and scholarly enterprise in your discipline. While you are a graduate student, your mentors can help you feel empowered to identify and pursue your academic and career goals, counsel you in effective and innovative research and teaching practices, and offer psychosocial support in navigating the challenges and responsibilities of your specific graduate program as well as your broader discipline and the institution.

This toolkit offers an archive of resources for graduate students who are eager to learn best practices for pursuing and maintaining productive mentorship relationships with faculty members.

Identifying potential mentors is a process of self-reflection, communication, patience, and collaboration. Reflecting on your personal mentorship needs is a great way to begin this process.

[CITL's Graduate Student Mentorship Needs Checklist](#)

For more information and advice on identifying and selecting mentors, see:

- K.D. Shives, *Inside Higher Ed.*, ["Picking a Good Mentor"](#)
- Kerry Ann Rockquemore, *Chronicle Vitae*, ["When It Comes to Mentoring, the More the Merrier"](#)

Once you have identified a faculty mentor, schedule regular meetings with them to discuss your goals, your academic progress, and your professional development.

[CITL's Hot Tips for Meeting with Faculty Mentors](#)

Planning Tools and Agreements

Individual Development Plans

An Individual Development Plan (IDP) is an individualized planning tool used to identify and track academic and professional development goals. IDPs serve to: 1) identify and describe long- and short-term academic, career, and personal goals; 2) isolate the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve those goals; and 3) institute a timeline for tracking and measuring skills acquisition and scholarly activity. IDPs also serve as a useful communication tool between mentees and their mentors. [This video](#) from the University of Wisconsin-Madison Graduate Division overviews the uses and process of creating IDPs.

There are two widely used free online IDP tools: [MyIDP](#) (for those working in STEM fields) and [ImaginePhD](#) (for those working in the humanities and social sciences).

[CITL Sample IDP](#)

Mentorship Agreements

It can also be useful to develop, with your mentor, a practical mentorship agreement/compact that establishes how and when you will meet and overviews each of your responsibilities. These compacts

provide the structure for a conversation about shared goals, and create a sense of mutual investment and responsibility for the mentorship relationship. Mentorship compacts might include:

- List of your academic and career goals
- Steps for achieving those goals
- Expectations of you as the mentee
- Expectations of your mentor
- Frequency and location of meetings and scheduling practices
- Meeting topics
- Rules of engagement for in-person meetings
- Communication etiquette
- Agreement about confidentiality and disclosure
- Plan for addressing conflict
- Plan for evaluating the mentorship relationship
- Relationship termination clause

[CITL Sample Mentorship Agreement](#)

Other Sample Compacts and IDPs:

- University of Wisconsin [Mentorship Agreement Template](#)
- University of Michigan [Sample Mentoring Agreement](#)
- University of Washington [Sample Mentoring Agreement](#)
- Kentucky University [Mentoring Agreement Template](#)
- *Entering Mentoring: A Facilitator's Manual*, [Mentor-Mentee Contract](#)
- UCLA [Postdoctoral Student Compact](#)
- University of North Carolina [Postdoctoral Student IDP Worksheet](#)
- Florida State University [Individual Development Plan Template](#)
- USC Neuroscience Department [Individual Development Plan](#)

Other Resources for Mentees:

Guidebooks on Being a Mentee:

- University of Michigan's Mentorship Guide for Graduate Students ["How to Get the Mentorship You Want"](#)
- Council of Graduate Schools' ["Great Mentoring in Graduate School: A Quick Start Guide for Protégés"](#)

Other Articles of Interest:

- Katie Shives, *Inside Higher Ed.*, ["Managing Your Advisor"](#)
- Indira Raman, *Neuron* 81, ["How to Be a Graduate Advisee"](#)
- Michael Lanning, ["The Many Varieties of Mentors"](#)
- Hugh Kearns and Maria Gardiner, *Nature* 469, ["The Care and Maintenance of Your Advisor"](#)
- Brady Krien, *Inside Higher Ed.*, ["Chart Your Course"](#) (on IDPs and career planning)

Resources on Faculty's Role in Mentoring Graduate Students:

- Adrianna Bankston, *Inside Higher Ed.*, ["Making Mentoring Relationships Meaningful"](#)
- Claire Potter, *Inside Higher Ed.*, ["Why Faculty Advising Matters"](#)
- Colleen Flaherty, *Inside Higher Ed.*, ["If You Want to Be My Student"](#) (one Columbia professor on his frank approach to mentorship)
- Kendall Johnson, ["Mentoring Matters: How to Support Students of Color in Academia"](#)
- Marissa López, ["On Mentoring First Generation and Graduate Students of Color"](#)

- Harriet W. Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning, Brown University, [“Inclusive Mentoring”](#)
- Linda DeAngelo, Council of Graduate Schools PowerPoint: [“Supporting Students of Color on the Pathway to Graduate Education: Barriers and Supports to Mentoring”](#)