



## Quick Guide to Graduate Student Mentorship<sup>1</sup>

**Collaborate on and align expectations.** Work *with* your graduate student to design and communicate clear short term and long-term goals for their research and career trajectory. Make use of a written compact or an Individual Development Plan that can be revisited and adjusted over time to adapt to the students' (and your) needs.

**Communicate effectively.** Make use of active listening in your mentorship relationships. Check in with your mentee during conversations to be sure you are "on the same page." Be patient when there is a communication challenge. Be clear, honest, and sensitive when offering constructive feedback. Be self-reflexive about the ways personal or professional differences between you and your mentee might impact your relationship and communicate about and navigate those differences together. Respond to emails or phone calls promptly.

**Demystify graduate school.** Much of graduate education is navigating vague bureaucracy and acculturating to a new set of disciplinary and departmental rules, many of which are unwritten. This means many graduate students don't even know what questions to ask or what skills they should be actively working to cultivate. Clarify your personal and broader program and institutional expectations for your graduate students around coursework, qualifying/comprehensive examinations, lab work, teaching, and research topics. As the student progresses through the program, continue to discuss the prevailing norms and criteria used to define quality graduate work.

**Encourage the effective use of time.** Work with the student on developing their time management skills. Help them establish schedules and deadline/benchmark accountability. Share techniques that have been useful for you and those you have worked with, but be generous towards the students' own proclivities and tactics.

**Oversee and promote professional development.** Many activities that have become second nature to you need to be made explicit to students. This could be things like faculty service, conference networking and talks, campus administrative practices and policies, lab direction, grant procurement, budget design, and being able to communicate one's research to folks outside the discipline. Help your graduate student learn about and enter into these spaces and practices.

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<sup>1</sup> These competencies are adapted from the University of Michigan's "[How To Mentor Graduate Students: A Guide for Faculty](#)" and *Entering Mentoring* (2014).

**Address equity and inclusion.** Recognize the identity-based and cultural dimensions of power at play in the mentor-mentee relationship and work to dismantle conscious and unconscious biases and preconceptions.

**Model and cultivate ethical behavior.** Communicate with your mentee about the ethical issues which are at play in the mentor-mentee relationship, in the research work, and in teaching and other academic spaces. Be sure your graduate students understand the ethical standards of behavior in the discipline and model for them fair uses practices, responsible data collection, appropriate source citation, etc. in your own work.

**Assist with finding other mentors.** Be self-reflective about your own limits as a mentor, and be forthcoming about the kind of guidance and support you can provide. Introduce students to other faculty, staff, graduate students, or campus resources that can bolster your students' intellectual, emotional, and psychological support network.