

Advising Expectations Template
Department of Engineering and Public Policy
Carnegie Mellon University
Revised: October 2019

This is a list of suggested questions and topics that students should discuss with their advisors. We have broken them up into several areas, and see the discussion topics as areas that students and advisors should address when the student begins the Ph.D. program. Students and advisors should also revisit them periodically (e.g. once a semester) and at important milestones of the Ph.D. program such as the qualifying exam and the thesis proposal. Faculty may consider writing up an advising statement that answers the most common questions, leaving denser topics for in-person discussion. It is expected that some faculty may vary their answers to some of these questions based on the needs or situation of a particular student and that some of these answers may change over time.

Research, Output, and Collaboration

- What is the general timeline for research milestones (e.g. qualifying exam, first publication, proposal, defense)?
- How many publications do you expect from a Ph.D.?
- What is your philosophy on co-advising? How do you choose collaborators and those to co-advise students with?
- How do you view collaboration with other principal investigators (PI) or students? How should co-authorship on publications be addressed with collaborators?
- Do you organize your advisees into a research group with weekly meetings or do you prefer one-on-one interactions between you and students
- When giving students tasks, how much lead time do you usually give to complete it?
- Do you have preferred tools for research? (e.g. LaTeX vs. Word, R vs. SPSS, etc)
- How do you prefer to receive research outputs (e.g. plots, manuscripts, abstracts), by email, or hard copy?
- Do you have expectations for how students should manage their time? E.g. 50% coursework, 30% research, etc.
- What is your project management style? Do you have resources on formulating research plans?
- What is your approach and philosophy to advise students for qualifying exams?

Mentoring

- What are some of your best practices to ensure graduate student success?
- How do you define success for your students?
- What kind of career paths do you expect for your students (e.g. academic only, non-academic research, private industry, government, etc)?
- What support do you provide to your students seeking academic careers?
- What support do you provide to your students seeking non-academic careers?

Work/Life Balance

- What is your philosophy on maintaining a healthy work/life balance?
- How many hours per day and per week do you expect students to work?
- Are there any hours of the day or days of the week that are off limits unless its emergency? (for both the student and the advisor)
- Do you expect students to work on university holidays?
- How many days of vacation can students take per year? Per semester?
- If I need to take a day off due to illness, how should I communicate that to you?

Communication/Scheduling

- How often do you prefer to meet with your students? Once a week, once a month, etc
- What is your policy on canceling meetings? How much lead time do you expect?
- What is your preferred mode of communication: email, in-person, text messages or phone calls?
- Do you have any thoughts on working or communicating remotely?
- Do you expect me to reach out to if I'm stuck between meetings?
- Do you have a "Stop by" policy?
- Is there a staff member who is responsible for your calendar?
- Can I see your calendar?

Feedback

- How do you deliver feedback?
- Do I need to ask for feedback or will you provide it to me?
- Do you use GS-Audit to deliver feedback to students?
- How do you support students who many need to improve certain skills like presentations, writing, etc?
- Research grades: how do you decide what is "A"? "B"?

Funding

- Where is my funding coming from? How many years will it last?
- Are there any restrictions or stipulations from the funding source?
- In case I need funding, what are each of our expectations to secure it?