

Mutual Expectations of Research Advisors and Advisees

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The relationship between advisor and advisee is central to the experience of students in research-based graduate programs. Both partners in this relationship must contribute for it to succeed. Successful advisor-advisee relationships enhance the careers of both partners. The relationship can take on three forms: advisor-advisee; supervisor-employee; and mentor-mentee. In the best cases, the three forms work together. This document articulates key contributions from each partner to an advisor-advisee relationship that leads to mutual benefit.

The Advisor

Advising graduate students in research-based programs is part of the job expectation for almost all Georgia Tech faculty members. Graduate students build the faculty member's research record and reputation by contributing to the advisor's research program. This situation carries an inherent tension. Although the faculty member's success depends at least in part on the student's success, the faculty member may also be responsible to outside sponsors, whose goals may not directly match those of the student. As an educator, the advisor must always protect the student's interests as well as the sponsor's and his or her own in the research relationship.

The Advisee

The student's motivation is to earn a degree, which requires the acquisition of scholarly knowledge and research competence. Participation in the research process is an essential requirement for all Georgia Tech doctoral students and many master's degree students. In this part of their education, the student's duty is to put a best faith effort into his or her assigned contribution to the research process. At the same time, Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs) are also employees who help the advisor and research group meet the requirements of a contract or grant; while, Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) and Graders are also employees of the school or program who help the school or program meet their educational requirements. As such they are employees with a set of job responsibilities that may not align with their research objectives or those of their advisors. As with the faculty advisor, this situation sets up an inherent tension between the student's educational goals and his or her employment responsibilities.

Mutual Expectations

Students Expect from their Advisor:

Respect

- Respect as a person, student, and professional employee
- Recognition and respect for differences in culture, ethnicity, gender, and other dimensions of diversity
- Commitment of time, effort, and financial support; advising only as many students as resources permit
- Ability to communicate and express concerns without the fear of retribution
- Understanding of the student's commitments to course work and GRA/GTA/Grader responsibilities

Open and clear communications

- Mutually agreed upon expectations for frequency and format of communication
- Clear communication about project timelines, availability and nature of funding, level of effort and research expectations
- Timely review and feedback on the student's research and academic progress
- Notification of and appropriate resolution of issues that arise within the program, be they academic, research, financial or interpersonal in nature

Guidance on research and degree completion

- Guidance on planning and managing research projects from conception to publication
- Reasonable, mutually agreed upon expectations of the time frame necessary to produce results and complete the dissertation/thesis
- Proper training and resources to successfully complete research projects
- Guidance on professional and ethical standards

Guidance on career

- Advice on advancing professional goals in the direction most desired by the individual student
- Opportunities to participate in career development activities
- Help building professional networks

Advisors Expect from Advisee:

Respect

- Respect both as professor and person; recognizing the value of their time and their responsibilities within and outside the Institute
- Understanding that mentoring is tailored for each individual student and adjusted for progress in the degree program

Open and clear communications

- Mutually agreed upon expectations for frequency and format of communications
- Regular progress reports including what the student has and has not done, including setbacks
- Reasonable, mutually agreed upon expectations of the time frame necessary to give feedback and review results
- Discussion of difficulties with advisor first, before turning to other means for conflict resolution
- Notification as soon as possible if planning to leave program or advisor sooner than expected

Commitment & Productivity

- Understanding of the expectations of the degree program, advisor and research team, and GRA/GTA/Grader responsibilities
- Learning and progress 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

- Safe, ethical, and efficient use of resources
- Abiding by professional and safety standards
- Taking feedback seriously and revising in response
- Maintaining good records and documentation that would allow replication of results
- When graduating or leaving the team, leaving behind the organized research materials

Teamwork

- Working well with others; supporting and mentoring others in the team
- Carrying a fair share of the responsibility
- Understanding the common intellectual property principles involved in teamwork
- Meeting deadlines
- Thoughtfully reviewing the work of others, including the advisor