

Graduate and Post-Doctoral Program Expectations¹

Graduate and post-graduate work is a mutual investment in the process of learning and producing peer-reviewed science. It is accomplished through the joint efforts of the advisor and the graduate student or post-doc. Like most relationships, it requires hard work and good communication. The following is a list of expectations and responsibilities that are meant to guide your journey.

Basic ingredients

- Professionalism and mutual respect –Your job is to produce high-quality science and develop into an independent researcher. My job as a supervisor is to foster successful research outcomes for everyone in the lab and to mentor you as you pass through this stage in your career. We are all colleagues and should be conscientious about our responsibilities to another.
- Communication – Keeping me updated is very important. Let me know early if you have any concerns. In turn, I will do the same for you.
- Commitment – Graduate school is hard, no doubt about it. I expect you to do well in your classes and to push yourself hard to accomplish research goals on time. This does not mean I expect you to live an unbalanced life; building in personal time is rejuvenating and necessary.
- Enthusiasm - Research is rewarding and many parts of grad school are fun. Step back every once in a while and remember that we have the incredible privilege of studying whatever we choose. Make sure you enjoy it!

Expectations of lab members

- Be a good lab citizen.
 - Participate *actively* in lab meetings. Come prepared to contribute to discussions with ideas and questions. Lab meetings are a safe space for the free exchange of ideas, at any stage of a project and no matter how well versed you are in a topic – no grading, no judgment. But this is not the same as coming unprepared. If you find that you are a dominant voice at lab meetings, make sure that others also have opportunities to speak.
 - Take on your fair share of responsibilities for maintaining common lab space and equipment.
 - Promptly report mistakes or problems. They happen to everyone and we can then try to fix it together.
 - Pitch in to help lab mates when they need it, whether it is a hands-on project or providing constructive feedback on an idea or draft. They will do the same for you.
 - Contribute positively to the social dynamic of the lab. Be present, be engaged, and suggest activities that will help us connect.
 - New students should consult with more experienced lab mates for advice and help with navigating their way through graduate school as well as on lab policies. Senior students and postdocs should mentor newer students.
- Be engaged in the broader research community of UBC.
 - Go to at least 1 seminar per week (e.g. BRS, BLISS).
 - Participate *regularly* in at least one weekly discussion group (e.g. BDG, EDG).
 - Consider forming a reading group on a particular topic.
- Maintain regular communication with me. This means:

¹ This material has been adapted from Jenn Williams and Sadie J. Ryan, who adapted it from the contract Jacquelyn Friar signed with her Ph.D. advisor, Dr. Evelyn Merrill at the University of Alberta.

- Inform me of your research and course activities, particularly when (or preferably before) you find yourself overwhelmed. I want to help you, but I can't help solve problems I am unaware of. Before asking questions or bringing forward a problem, please make the effort to research the topic. This way we can use our time together to discuss various ideas or options.
- Meet with me regularly (biweekly or weekly) when on campus. When one or both of us are in the field, send regular reports by email.
- Stop by my office informally to share cool results, report problems, get a signature, etc. If my door is open, I'm happy to see you. If my door is shut, I'm on a deadline, in a meeting, or just not there.
- Copy me on all written communication with our research collaborators. Also, inform me right away of any event or action that has the potential to cause concern among our collaborators or people outside our research group.
- Use direct messaging through Slack for quick logistics things or rapid back-and-forth about a project. Use email for things that require a longer or more thoughtful reply and things that I should earmark for later attention (e.g. requests for letters of reference).
- Treat grad school as your job. This means:
 - Keep regular hours. You are free to set your hours, but I do expect you to be in during more or less regular business hours so that you can work with and help lab mates.
 - How many hours? This will vary according to other activities and commitments and the fluctuating demands of your project. Hours dedicated to research may be as low as 15-20 hours/week when taking classes and TAing to more than 40 hours/week when meeting deadlines or in the crunch of a field season.
 - There are many responsibilities and activities you can and should take part in, but you must **schedule regular time for research** so you continue to make progress. If you wait to do research until you have nothing else on your plate, you will never get to it.
 - **Write early and often.** Set aside your sharpest time of day for daily writing. Aim for at least 30 min/day at every stage of your program. Form a peer support group to help set and enforce weekly writing goals.
 - You are entitled to the same holidays as UBC staff, and can take about 3 weeks of vacation per year. Holidays don't include semester breaks or spring break.
 - Anticipated time away for vacation, fieldwork or conferences should be posted in advance on the 'whereabouts' channel of the lab Slack group.
- Use best practices for open, reproducible science.
 - Keep physical lab notebooks for all wetlab and field work. Pages should be numbered and dated. Lab notebooks should stay in the lab (not be taken home). You can also record an overview of computational analyses in your notebook. Field notebooks should be photocopied, scanned, or photographed regularly.
 - Data deposition and open access after publication are the norm in this lab. I expect digital copies or archival access of all data with proper written descriptions (metadata).
 - All code should be annotated, version-controlled and archived in GitHub.
 - I will not be able to sign your thesis until the metadata, data, and code files have been provided to me. Exceptions must be agreed upon in writing by all invested parties.
- Work towards becoming an independent researcher
 - Time management is vital. Set short- and long-term goals and outline plans for how to achieve them by breaking them down into daily and weekly tasks. Revisit your goals lists regularly. Be realistic about how many hours/week you can dedicate to your research

(put blocks for it on your calendar, alongside all other commitments) and use this to schedule your time. Work hard to meet mutually agreed upon deadlines, even if they are informal.

- Read and stay abreast of the literature in your area. Expect to be asked questions at your defense on general knowledge in your area, reaching back to seminal papers and books. Find a good way to database and track what you read (e.g. annotated bibliography, Papers, Mendeley, etc). Keep me informed of cool things you find!
- Practice giving and receiving constructive criticism. Not everything you say or write is brilliant, same goes for me and everyone else. So be open to criticism, offer your opinions, begin developing your reasoning and argument skills. Don't be afraid to respectfully disagree with me, or let me know when I am wrong about something.
- Start practicing the financial aspects of being a PI: Seek out small grants to support your data collection and attendance at meetings and workshops. Prepare a budget for your project. Maintain an informal log of expenses and keep within the agreed upon budget.
- Be proactive on permits, agency reports, and other paperwork required for your research. Acquiring permits and permissions can take weeks to months to secure so plan accordingly. Please make sure that I have the opportunity to review documents *prior to submission*.
- Aim to give a presentation (poster and oral) at one conference per year. Funds are limited, so you will need to apply for travel grants, attend local conferences or come to me to discuss other ways to pay for conference travel. All abstracts on which I am co-author must be sent to me for review prior to submission.

Grad school parameters

- Be prepared to work hard to finish in a timely manner, 2-2.5 yrs for masters and ~5 yrs for a PhD.
- In general, 1-2 publications are expected from a M.Sc., 3+ from a Ph.D. program, and 1-2/yr from a Postdoc, depending on the project.
- All thesis chapters should be submitted to committee members prior to submission to a journal. Do not submit a thesis chapter to other committee members until we have mutually agreed it is ready for circulation or have agreed it is prudent to do so. This is to ensure we do not wear down our busy colleagues and that you get the very best feedback.
- Grad school is hard and inevitably there will be setbacks. You should have back up plans for your thesis chapters, and I will help you make them. Something(s) will fail, but that is ok if your are prepared.
- You are responsible for knowing and meeting the requirements of your department and the graduate school in a timely manner. Know the graduate forms that need to be filled out and deadlines for submission. Talk to the graduate secretary, to your lab mates and other experienced graduate students.
- Select a committee in consultation with me and set up yearly committee meetings.
- You should have a well-rounded research proposal with solid and obtainable research objectives by the end of the second term. This should be comprised of an introduction justifying the importance of the research followed by logical, well-researched methods for achieving the research objectives as well as a timeline of research and a discussion of the study limitations and potential pitfalls that may be encountered.
- If you have problems or concerns that you feel you can't discuss with me, I strongly encourage you to talk to the graduate adviser and/or trusted faculty members. There are additional resources outside the department to which they can point you if necessary.

Responsibilities of the advisor

- Provide a lab environment amenable to learning, open discussion of ideas, and producing credible research without discrimination or harassment.
- Along with your supervisory committee, guide you through your graduate studies program including courses and research.
- Meet with you regularly (biweekly or weekly) to discuss your research ideas, results, and progress. I will do my best to provide input and feedback, but I won't know the answer to all questions; you are likely working on new and exciting projects that require new techniques. Seek advice from fellow students, statistical experts, committee members or other faculty as necessary.
- Provide timely and constructive feedback on written research questions, proposals, progress reports, thesis chapters, and publications. I aim to give feedback within two weeks.
- With your help, provide reasonable resources and financial support to meet mutually agreed upon research objectives. I will not be able to provide financial support beyond the end of departmental, project, or scholarship support. I will do all I can and provide guidance and suggestions, but resources are finite.
- Acknowledge appropriately your contributions to research and other efforts in presentations and publications.
- Notify you in advance of any anticipated, prolonged periods of travel or leave and, in consultation with you, set up structures to support you during my absence (e.g., a faculty mentor on campus, alternate lab meetings).
- Assist you in transitioning to the next stage of your career in a reasonable manner, whether that is academic or non-academic. Some of the main ways I do this:
 - Encouraging and supporting networking opportunities (e.g. conferences and workshops).
 - Submitting oodles of reference letters. Please let me know at least 2 weeks in advance and provide me with an email with the following info:
 - The opportunity for which you are applying
 - The due date
 - Name (if known), institution, and address of the person/committee to whom the letter should be addressed
 - Instructions on how to submit the letter (email address, physical address, etc)
 - Any instructions on what the letter should discuss.
 - Send a reminder 3-5 days before the deadline.