

ESTABLISHING EXPECTATIONS, STRUCTURE, AND TIMELINES

The provision of structure by dissertation advisors is crucial at all stages of a graduate student's work, but it is particularly important during the initial phases of dissertation work. It is essential that advisors and students have a shared set of expectations. Each needs to understand the constraints that operate on the other and the effects that these may have on the mentoring relationship. Good advisors make their expectations clear to students on issues such as the need for regular meetings, mastery of methodological skills, conference publications and conference presentations, expected timelines for degree completion, etc. Once these expectations are clearly outlined, it is much easier to develop a positive, productive relationship.

The following are suggested topics to cover in initial discussions between a student and advisor:

- Frequency of contact.
- Preferred communication method (e.g., e-mail, phone calls, Zoom, in-person meetings).
- Timelines for each stage of the research, including publications and conference presentations.
- Type and frequency of feedback expected.
- Whether students should conduct research in the graduate group, lab, library, or at home.
- Hours of work.
- Nature of any directed reading program.
- Monitoring, evaluation, and reporting of progress.
- Additional training and/or fieldwork requirements.
- Expectations around shared authorship/collaboration, patent, or intellectual property issues.
- The establishment and membership of the dissertation committee.