# Reflections for Research Mentors

The Duke URS office is piloting the use of these documents to support effective mentoring relationships between undergraduate students and their mentors. Research shows that intentionality in the mentoring relationship can promote positive outcomes for both parties (1). The following reflection questions are designed to help mentors identify their priorities, motivations, and goals for a mentee in preparation for a conversation with them, who will also complete their own reflection questions. Not all questions will seem directly relevant, so it is perfectly acceptable to focus on those that best align with the type of research being conducted. Mentors and mentees should then meet to discuss their responses and complete the “Mentor-Mentee Expectations Agreement” to align expectations and foster a productive research experience.

# Research Mentor Expectations

1. Why do you want to mentor an undergraduate researcher?

1. What are your goals for your research? How can this research experience and the mentor–trainee relationship help you achieve them?

1. What would success in this research experience look like to you?

1. How many hours per week and at what times/days do you expect your trainee to work on your research?

1. Assuming a good fit, how long would you like your trainee to remain with the group? Are you supportive of their completion of a senior thesis if they would like to do so?

1. What, if any, specific communication skills do you expect your trainee to learn as part of the research experience (writing, poster presentation, oral presentation, etc)?
2. What role will you play in the development of your trainee’s skills as a writer? Are you willing to help them with research-related writing along the way or do you only want to read it after its in its final version? Is there someone else that you recommend that is available to help your trainee with their writing?
3. Discuss the institutional training that is required for your trainee to work on your research project and establish a deadline by which they should complete it.
4. How often and in what format do you like to provide feedback to your mentee about their overall progress?

In addition to the responses to the questions above, be prepared to discuss the following topics with your mentee:

* Expectations for the mentee’s attendance at group or departmental seminars
* The best mode/way to communicate with each other and expected response time
* The best way to agree on action items
* Other preferences your or your mentee have for your working relationship

**Additional Prompts for Lab Research**

1. What level of independence do you expect your trainee to achieve, once basic techniques are learned? How will you let your trainee know when he/she has reached this level?

1. What is your mentoring approach? Once your trainee has learned the techniques and procedures used in your lab do you prefer to watch your trainee closely, walking him/her through all the steps or do you prefer a more hands-off approach?
2. How do you expect your trainee to prepare for doing an experiment?
3. What expectations do you have regarding the intellectual engagement that your mentee has in the project? Do you have expectations with regard to reading the primary literature?

1. How will your trainee document research results? Is there a specific protocol for keeping a laboratory notebook in your research group?

1. To whom should your trainee go if they have questions about your research project? Do you expect them to come to you solely (or first), or should they feel free to ask others in the research group? If others, who would be good resource people for your project?

1. What are your expectations for your trainee’s level of comfort with the methodology used in the lab? For example does your research involve working with animals, lengthy field trips, or working in isolation with other researchers, and is your trainee comfortable with this?

1. Is the research that your trainee will be involved in confidential? Are they allowed to discuss your project with other individuals outside of your laboratory? What are your expectations?

1. If a student has previous research experience, is there anything that you need to share about this research group that is unique and that the student should be aware of?