

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 one another and to the broader scientific community. This includes both in person and online interactions (including social media).
- 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. This also includes communication via email; timely email communication is important for ensuring smooth communication within the lab (i.e., responding within a few hours to 24h during regular business hours). Also, prompt responses to Slack messages during regular business hours are also important.
- 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 member

- 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.

¹ This material has been adapted from Jennifer Williams, Amy Angert 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. These materials have been vetted by highly respected researchers with proven track records in successful graduate student advising.

- 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. Geography colloquium, EOAS or IRES seminars, ect).
 - Consider forming a reading group on a particular topic
- Maintain regular communication with me. This means:
 - Inform me of your research and course activities, particularly when (or preferably before) you find yourself overwhelmed. I want to help you, but I cannot 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 (weekly or bi-weekly). When one or both of us are in the field, send regular reports by email (daily to weekly depending on the nature of the fieldwork).
 - Stop by my office informally or email me/send a slack message 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. We can also schedule impromptu virtual meetings.
 - **Make sure to give me at least 1-2 weeks to review all important documents** (abstracts, thesis chapters, manuscripts, etc.), and remember that your committee needs at least 2-3 weeks to review any important documents. It's a good idea to set up a timeline together to make sure that I and your committee have enough time to review your documents.
 - **Copy me on all written communication with our research collaborators.** 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. Also, make sure to promptly respond to emails from collaborators (i.e., within a few hours to 24h but preferably not longer). If you're unsure about how to respond to a collaborator, please contact me as soon as possible.
- Treat grad school as your job. This means:
 - Keeping regular hours. You are free to set your hours, but I do expect you to be in during more or less regular business hours (or be available online) so that you can work with and help lab mates and myself. I do not expect you to be on campus every day of the week, but I encourage you to be on campus 2-3 days a week to help create a more dynamic lab environment and facilitate interaction with your peers and me (when there are no restriction about being on campus).
 - How many hours? This will vary according to other activities and commitments and fluctuating demands of your project. Hours dedicated to research may be as low as 15-20 hours/week when taking classes and TA'ing to more than 40 hours/week when meeting deadlines or in the crunch of the 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.
- **Make sure to attend all meetings with collaborators,** and communicate regularly with collaborators. If you cannot attend a meeting, it's your responsibility to let them and me know in advance.
- You are entitled to the same holidays as UBC staff, and can take about 4 weeks of vacation per year. *Holidays don't include semester breaks or spring break,* similar to UBC staff.
- Anticipated time away for vacation, fieldwork or conferences **should be posted on the Lab calendar (on Google).** Also, while I encourage you to take vacation, please make sure to confirm the dates with me first to make sure they do not interfere with planned fieldwork, lab activities or conferences.
- Work toward becoming an independent researcher
 - Time management is vital. Schedule your time and develop strategies for working efficiently. 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.
 - Keeping a to-do list or schedule can be very helpful with this. I strongly encourage you to keep track of your research activities using a **weekly calendar or to-do list** (see 'Schedule' Google doc in the 'Incoming graduate student information' folder). *We will go over your research schedule together during our weekly or bi-weekly meetings.*
 - 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.). A logically organized annotated bibliography is strongly suggested. 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 an independent researcher: 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 available but limited, so make sure to discuss which conferences you plan to attend. You are also strongly encouraged to apply for travel grants, attend local conferences or come to me to discuss other ways to pay for conference travel. All abstracts must be sent to me for review prior to submission.
- Use best practices for open, reproducible science

- Make sure to document information from field visits (e.g. 'Burns Bog field site Log.gsheets'). I also encourage you to take pictures during field visits and upload them to the appropriate folder in the Google drive.
- 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). I also expect you to share all your code with me (which can be copied to your folder under 'People' in the Google drive). I strongly encourage you to use software such as git for version control of your code.
- I will not be able to sign your thesis until the metadata, data and code files have been provided to me. Exceptions to this must be agreed upon in writing by all invested parties.

Grad school parameters:

- Be prepared to work hard to finish in a timely manner, 2 for MSc and ~4 yrs for a PhD.
- In general, 1 -2 publications are expected from a M.Sc., 3+ from a Ph.D. program; 1-2/yr from a Post-doctoral fellow, depending on the project.
- All thesis chapters should be submitted to committee members prior to submission to a journal. **Do not submit these chapters 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 there will be setbacks. You should have back up plans for your thesis chapters. Some thing(s) will fail, but that is okay if you are prepared.
- You are responsible for knowing and meeting the requirements of the 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.
- Make sure your acceptance and funding letter at the start of each semester. If you pay cheque does not match the stated amount, let me know as soon as possible so that we can fix any mistakes.
- 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 is expected 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.
- Graduate school is not only challenging intellectually, but it can be challenging from a personal and [mental health standpoint](#). This is something I have experienced first-hand as well. Don't hesitate to reach out to [resources available to you at UBC](#), to me, peers, friends and family when things are difficult. While I'm not a mental health professional, I do understand the challenges faced by graduate students, and can help you find the appropriate resources.
- If you have problems or concerns that you feel you can not 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 when 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 the 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 when necessary.
- Provide timely and constructive feedback to 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 the 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 student's 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 lots and lots of recommendation letters. Please let me know at least 3 weeks in advance and provide me with an email / document with the following info:
 - Opportunity for which are your 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.