

Mentoring Statement

Dr. Amy Greer, University of Guelph

Revised: May 2022

Purpose

It is important to make an informed decision when choosing a research mentor. The goal of this document is to identify some of the key components of my mentoring style and approach and to provide some insight into how our team collaborates and works together to support each other's goals. This document will help you to understand how I view my role as a mentor as well as the expectations that I have for members of our team.

This document is under constant review and revision. As I (and others in our team) learn about new approaches to mentorship, we often make edits to this document in response to that new knowledge. Sometimes we try something new that just doesn't work that well and so we change the document back. It is a constant work in progress (as it should be). It is also important to recognize that each person's mentorship and training needs are unique. I work hard to ensure that each mentoring relationship is tailored to each person's individual needs and goals. At the same time, it is important to know that you are also responsible for ensuring that you are receiving the mentorship that you feel you require. If something is not working, it is critical that you let me know so that we can correct course.

Your mentorship network

It is important to recognize that I am not an expert in all areas in which you wish to receive mentorship. However, I do consider it my responsibility to ensure that when I cannot meet your needs in a specific area that we work together to connect you with a mentor that can. During your time in graduate school, you will meet many people who will have an impact on your career path. I encourage you to seek out their expertise and advice. You should not view me as the person central to your mentoring network. **You are the central person in your mentoring network.** Over the course of your training, you will require different types of mentors. People to provide you with feedback, individuals who can help you to access opportunities, connections to professional development, emotional support, role models, accountability buddies, and an intellectual community. Cultivating a thriving mentoring network is an important part of your research training and I will work to help you get started and identify your specific needs and how those needs can be met either by myself or others.

Our team

My goal is to train carefully and generously. What this means is that your previous academic and research experience is less important than a proven ability to learn new things and the personality to persist and excel in a research environment. As a team, we are committed to excellence in our work and are very fortunate to be supported by a tight-knit department which makes this an enjoyable place to work and learn. Our success as a team is a function of our

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team culture. We enjoy working together and communicate with kindness, good humour, and respect. We often work together while having serious conversations, and while engaging in witty banter about something not at all work related. We also know when to put our heads down and work hard without distractions. If this seems like the sort of environment where your skills could shine, and where you could contribute to the team and grow as an individual, we would love to meet you.

My mentorship commitment to you when you join our team

Some of these items have been modified based on writings from Matthew Rechs (@MrEchs)

1. At the bare minimum, we will have a biweekly 1:1 meeting. I will never cancel this meeting unless necessary. If that happens it will be rescheduled for as soon as possible. You can cancel this meeting whenever you like. It is your time.
2. Our 1:1 agenda (wellness, readiness, obstacles, recognition, feedback). should be added to the meeting invite (and/or tagged in Asana). This is important so we remember important topics, but you are free to use the time for whatever is on your mind.
3. When I schedule a meeting with you, I will always tell you what the meeting will be about when it is scheduled. I will not schedule meetings with you without an agenda.
4. When I send you an email. I will always tell you Hi and why. No suspense, no small talk while you wonder what I want.
5. News or announcements that significantly impact you or your work will always come from me directly in a 1:1. Info relevant to you and/or your work will never be revealed in a group setting (unless you win a big award and we need to plan a surprise celebration...)
6. You will always get feedback from me when it is fresh. You will never get feedback from me when we discuss your overall performance that will be a surprise. We will always try to talk about small issues that come up so they don't turn into big issues.
7. I trust you to manage your own time. You don't need to clear with me in advance your time. You do not need to ask my permission to attend important appointments during business hours.
8. Your work gets done your way. My focus is on outcomes not output. Once we're clear on where we need to go, how you get there is up to you (with support from me and your committee as required). If I ever find it necessary to suggest a specific approach, I will supply an example.
9. A team is strongest when it is working together, looking after each other, and taking care of one another. Please look to your left and to your right for opportunities to help other members of our team. Please ask for help when you need it. Nobody works alone.
10. I trust you to skip over me and talk to other colleagues (like your committee members/mentors) about anything you feel is relevant. You don't need to clear it with me and I'm not going to get weird about it when you do.

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11. I will attribute credit appropriately to you. I will never exaggerate my own role or minimize your contribution. I will be especially certain to nail down attribution when people want to hear about our accomplishments.
12. If this sounds good to you, please reciprocate by giving me in return what I need most. The truth. Give me your feedback, say when I am wrong, and tell me about your ideas for how we can do better. If we trust each other, we can learn and grow together. That's how I want to work with each of member of our team.

I am working hard to be good mentor and generally a good human, but I recognize that sometimes I get it right and sometimes not so much. I believe that leaders (including research leaders) need to be emotionally aware especially when working in a team environment. There are a lot of things happening in the world right now (pandemics, war, social unrest, economic uncertainty) and that means that many people are struggling and rely on their workplace to be a safe place. I am committed to ensuring that is true. In short, I commit to showing you empathy, kindness, courtesy, and respect and I expect that you will do the same for me and for other members of our team.

Availability

I will be upfront about my availability in terms of mentoring. I have many commitments that impact the amount of time I spend with you such as teaching, committee work, research, advising and mentoring in addition to my commitments outside of work. I will be upfront with you about my availability and will not take on more graduate students than I feel I can effectively mentor. I post my schedule in our lab Asana website so that you know if I am going to be out of the office, at meetings, or traveling.

Communication

I will communicate with you on a regular basis. We will communicate using a variety of methods depending on the circumstances including using our team Asana group. I prefer to meet in person (virtually during a pandemic) for our 1:1 meetings and handle smaller issues or simple questions via email and/or Asana.

Expectations

I expect you to work within the broader umbrella of my area of expertise although I am open to helping students who have interests that overlap several areas if we are able to identify an appropriate co-supervisor and mentorship network.

Publishing

It is important for you to build a publication record. I will help you to do this in several ways including having you co-author papers with me when opportunities arise as well as helping you to prepare your own work for publication in the peer-reviewed literature (see section below on publications).

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Funding

All students in our team receive base stipend salary funding from my research grants that is in excess of our departmental minimums. The cost of living in Guelph is going up and does not change based on your graduate program (e.g. it costs the same to live if you are an MSc student or a PhD student). For this reason, I am committed to supporting all research members of our team with a consistent and equal amount of base funding regardless of program of study. I am committed to helping you revise and strengthen your independent scholarship applications for submission to external funding agencies. If you choose to apply for teaching assistantships (TA's) you will receive that income in addition to your base stipend funding (I will not "claw back" your stipend funding). TA-ships typically add an additional 10 hours of teaching related work each week. It is also my responsibility to cover the expenses associated with your research (see second part of this document).

Problems or Concerns

It is impossible for me to know if you are having problems or feel lost unless you bring the problem to my attention. I fully embrace an open-door policy. If you need to meet with me for any reason, please drop in. If I am not available immediately, I will try to arrange to meet with you sometime that same day.

Feedback

I will provide all feedback to you in a timely manner. I do expect that you will give me advance warning if you know that you have something that will need to be reviewed so that I can plan accordingly and give it my full attention. I aim to return all written work that you provide to me for written feedback within 2 weeks (and typically do so in less time). Please remember that if you are facing an external or departmental deadline you need to be sure to leave me enough time to be able to get it returned to you.

Finish degree in a timely manner

I will provide you with the support and infrastructure to finish your degree in a timely manner.

What I expect from you when you join our team

Take yourself Seriously – This is your job

When you accept a position in our team it is my expectation that you will treat your graduate training like a job. I encourage you to make the most of your time here to best prepare yourself to move on in your career after leaving our group. I fully support trainees who would like to pursue careers both within and outside of academia. Please let me know about your long-term goals so that I can ensure that you gain the experience and skills you will require to achieve those goals.

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Receive Feedback in a professional manner

Part of learning to be a scientist is to learn from the experience and expertise of others in the field. You will receive a lot of feedback from myself, other faculty, colleagues, and students during your time in graduate school. It is important to receive those comments, concerns and possibly criticism in a mature and professional manner. Should you experience feedback from someone that you feel is not in the spirit of constructive feedback to improve your work please let me know so that we can decide on a best course of action together.

Be responsible and demonstrate your commitment

I expect that you will be committed to your studies and research during your time here. Being “in the office” for only a couple of hours a day, neglecting deadlines, and just generally not getting your work done demonstrates a very low level of commitment to your degree. I welcome students to work in a way that best suits their needs and schedule and that includes having flexible hours and/or work from home arrangements as long as your work is progressing well.

Finish your degree in a timely manner

I expect that you will be self motivated and driven. It is your responsibility to proceed at a reasonable pace (as defined by the Department guidelines and/or myself) towards your degree completion.

General team organization, policies and procedures

Publishing

In general, if a paper is written regarding a part of your research project and you conducted the research and prepared the manuscript you will be named as the first author. This policy is the same for all trainees. If other members of the team were involved in the work, they will also be listed as authors based on their contributions or alphabetically if their contributions were equal. The majority of the research we do is supported by taxpayers and there is an expectation that our results and findings are publicly available. The final stage of the research process is the publication of peer-reviewed manuscripts. Completing your degree requirements is separate from this expectation.

Although it has never happened before, it is important to be transparent about what the process would be if the research is not carried through to completion (which includes revision and resubmission of manuscripts over time). In most cases, my trainees submit their manuscripts as they are completed in order to establish a documented record of publication over the course of their training and so we try not to leave manuscript submission to the end of the degree timeline.

Exceptions to the general rule related to manuscript authorship (outlined above) would apply in cases where the trainee has not completed the work within 3 months of completing their degree and has not made any additional

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arrangements for preparing the work for publication by consulting with me regarding a need for more time. If this exception needs to be implemented, I will contact the first author to discuss a strategy for moving the manuscript forward. If I do not hear back or the trainee states that they are unable to complete the work, the person who takes on the manuscript revisions, additional analysis and writing will be listed as the first author followed by the name of the person who completed the initial research.

No manuscripts will be submitted to any journal, conference etc. without the prior review and consent of all co-authors (this includes student co-authors).

Conferences & Professional Development

I fully support trainees attending and presenting posters or oral presentations at conferences. I will do my best to help you secure funding to attend professional development events such as conferences with priority being given to students presenting their own data. I am committed to providing funding support for MSc students to attend and present their work at a professional conference in their second year of study. For PhD students and postdocs, I am committed to providing funding support for students to attend and present their own work at a conference or professional development event once per year. No conference abstracts will be sent to conferences without the prior review and approval of all co-authors.

Conflict Resolution

It is my expectation that if you are having a problem with someone else in the team that you will begin by approaching that person to discuss the problem openly. If the problem is not resolved to your satisfaction, then you are free to speak to me about the problem and I can help to mediate a remedy. If your problem is with me, please schedule an appointment so that we can discuss your concerns and try to remedy the problem. If you keep the problem to yourself there is no way for me to know that you are unhappy with the way things are going and, in my experience, most problems are easily remedied with an open discussion.

Intellectual property

Intellectual property issues are handled according to the University of Guelph policy on intellectual property. Please make yourself aware of this policy as it relates to issues such as developing new techniques, and models, as well as ownership of data and any research outputs generated in the course of your work.

Relationships with students/faculty

As in any work environment, it is expected that you will deal with other students, faculty and staff in a professional manner. It is also expected that you will abide by the university policy on appropriate behaviour in the workplace. If

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you are unclear about what is or is not appropriate, please contact human resources.

Academic honesty

Part of my job as your mentor is to train you to be a responsible member of the scientific community. It is expected that you will abide by the student code of conduct regarding academic honesty, which includes plagiarism, inappropriate use of the literature, falsifying data and other types of inappropriate academic conduct. Please familiarize yourself with these policies as violating any of them will result in a termination of our mentorship agreement and potentially expulsion from your program of study.