

# Lab Expectations

(updated 07/23)

The goals of mentoring in this lab are for each trainee (postdocs, graduate students, lab managers, research assistants and visiting students) *to receive theoretical and technical training, to work productively on interesting research projects, and to best prepare themselves for their future career.* Here I list some explicit expectations and descriptions to help you understand how the lab operates and how we can achieve these goals together. If you have any comments or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me.

## What trainees can expect of me:

1. Provide you guidance and resources to conduct research projects we are both interested in
2. Provide you guidance and resources for your career development
3. Treat all equally
4. Reply promptly to the materials you send me (e.g., emails, drafts and slides)
5. Respect your time and work, and give you credit appropriately
6. Provide advice on other issues, if you choose to engage me

## What I expect of trainees:

1. Maintain good progress on research and training-related activities
2. Conduct all research and training-related activities responsibly
3. Respect other lab members
4. Share your expertise with other lab members
5. Use English as working language

Below are more detailed descriptions of the expectations.

**Interaction with me.** Lab members are welcome to contact me for work- or non-work-related (if you feel comfortable) issues. During business hours, feel free to come to my office, email, text or message me. During non-business hours, I prefer emails or messages (e.g., via Slack). In case of an emergency (e.g., adverse incident during experiment), contact me using whatever method that works.

**Research projects.** I expect all trainees to maintain good progress on their projects. This includes: keeping updated on the literature and research methods, actively thinking about the best ways to conduct your research projects and applying them, regularly discussing your research progress with me, following the plans based on our discussions, and presenting (conferences, presentations, and/or journal articles) the findings at a satisfactory level.

Before you start, we will have meetings to discuss the research project(s) you find interesting and also meet the lab's needs. I always welcome new ideas and project proposals, so please come to me if you want to discuss new projects.

**Research ethics.** In this lab, we work hard to do the best science we can. During the process, obstacles and frustrations are inevitable, and sometimes more common than you would imagine. It is my hope that we will work together to tackle these challenges and to build up your resilience. To this end, please keep me updated on your progress (both the good and bad sides).

Mistakes are also inevitable and are part of your training, so don't feel bad about making mistakes. As your mentor, I am also responsible for your research and training. So please do let me know if such things happen and we will work together to recover from them. Usually the earlier you inform me, the less damage there will be. Being frank about your mistakes will be greatly appreciated. However, things like intentionally faking data and intentionally covering mistakes are unacceptable and will lead to severe consequences.

**Time in lab.** The most important thing is that you get the job done. For most lab members, you have the flexibility to decide when and how long you want to be physically present in the lab. That said, I expect all trainees to attend lab meetings and one-on-one meetings (see below). Also, to facilitate collaborations, it is recommended that each trainee spends at least 15 hours a week in the lab during normal office hours (i.e., 9-5, M-F). Again, how long you spend in the lab will not affect my evaluations on your performance.

There are two exceptions, though. One is the lab managers. Because they have administrative duties, they are expected to have regular office hours (9-5, M-F) or a schedule we both agree on. The other is the performance improvement plan (see below).

It is okay to take a day off to decompress from time to time. However, if you will be out of town or take a longer break, please let me know so I won't be worried about not having seen you in a while. Each lab member can usually take up to 3 weeks of vacation time each year. In addition, I don't expect lab members to work between 12/15 and the first week of January. Please inform me your vacation plans before booking your trip.

**Meetings.** There are two types of meetings: lab meetings and one-on-one meetings. Lab meetings occur weekly during the semester. All lab members are expected to attend. Typical forms of lab meeting are journal clubs (led by one lab member), project presentations and talks given by guest speakers. Questions and comments are especially welcome during lab meetings. There are no "dumb" questions or comments in lab meetings. Truth is, if you think something is unclear or wrong, others may think the same.

One-on-one meetings are 45-min, weekly meetings between each trainee and me. You can also schedule one-off one-on-one meetings with me. These meetings are designed for us to discuss any training and research-related issues in detail and to form

plans for the near future. To keep track on our progress, I ask each trainee to maintain a shared document with me to record the decisions and action items after each meeting and follow-ups. I expect trainees to attend all their one-on-one meetings. I understand that sometimes there is nothing to report, so occasional cancellation is fine. To cancel a meeting, please email me at least a day before. That said, note that even if you have nothing to report, sometimes meeting in person can still be advantageous and it may be worth our time to still check in.

Lab members are strongly encouraged to regularly participate in joint lab meetings hosted by the Cognitive Control research group (<https://psychology.uiowa.edu/research/cognitive-control>) and the Human Perception and the Visual Perception research group (<https://psychology.uiowa.edu/research/visual-perception>). Please let me know if you are interested in attending.

**Open science.** The lab values and strives to contribute to open science. As such, all lab members are expected to conduct research transparently. This includes, but is not limited to, preregistering studies, sharing analysis scripts and data, and providing support for other labs' attempts to replicate and reproduce our findings.

**Collaborations.** All lab members are encouraged to explore collaboration opportunities both within and outside of the lab. I ask trainees to (1) respect your collaborators' time and resources, and (2) inform me if you are seeking collaborations with or are collaborating with researchers (e.g., finishing your projects in your previous lab) outside of the lab.

**Training.** I expect all trainees to comply with their respective training plans (e.g., training plans of your degree program), such as taking required courses, maintaining good grades, fulfilling TA duties and organizing committee meetings. We will have at least one meeting (usually at the beginning of each semester) per semester to discuss training and career development plans (see below).

**Career development.** I strongly believe that the lab grows better with each trainee achieving their career goals. I respect and support each trainee's career choice and understand that things can change over time. We will discuss your career development plans and how I can best support them. I also expect you to inform me if there is any change in your plans so that your lab activities can be better aligned to your new goals. In addition to academic careers, I support plans for non-academic careers (e.g., data science, software engineering and consulting). You are welcome to get the training you need, provided that you maintain good progress on your degree-related training and research. To ensure your progress in lab is on schedule, please discuss with me if you plan to take a summer internship or bootcamp.

**Interactions with others.** We succeed (and fail) as a team. I expect all lab members to respect each other. This lab has a zero-tolerance policy for harassment or discrimination of any kind. Please talk to me if you think you have an interpersonal issue with another lab member. If you think there is an interpersonal issue involving me, you

can talk to me, the director of graduate study and/or the chair of the department.

**Performance improvement plan.** I hope no one will need this. But in the rare case that your progress is unsatisfactory for an extended period, we need to discuss and implement a plan to improve your performance, which eventually will be helpful for your career plan, too. The performance improvement plan will likely involve closer monitoring of your progress and research activities until a predefined goal is reached (e.g., publishing a paper).

**Mental well-being.** Last but not least, your mental well-being is very important. I went through the process and understand how stressful things can be from my own experiences. If you feel down for any reason, please talk to me or anyone you feel comfortable talking to. You are also encouraged to seek professional help – it is not a sign of weakness; it is a sign of you taking care of yourself.