

Introduction

Graduate education is designed to prepare students to become independent thinkers and researchers who will serve as the next generation of professional, scholarly, and educational leaders in the global society. As noted in “[Best Practices: Core Expectations for Graduate Education at Duke](#),” a successful graduate education encompasses at least four separate components: (1) development of an individual research agenda, (2) preparation for and experience in a variety of teaching roles, (3) opportunities for professional career development, and (4) active participation in a disciplinary or professional community.

Faculty advisors provide critical academic training during the students’ graduate career and introduce them to a professional society; thus, mentoring relationships with faculty are one of the most important elements of the graduate education experience. It is typical for a student’s primary research advisor to act as the primary mentor, but many others can and should serve as mentors as well, during the course of a student's time in the program.

The following sections briefly describe key features of the Duke Psychology & Neuroscience PhD program, with the primary focus on mentoring and the role of mentors. Detailed information on the [five training programs](#), [coursework overview](#), [teaching responsibilities](#), and more, can be found on the [website](#).

Role of the Mentor and Mentoring Teams

We use an apprenticeship model for graduate training, meaning that students are generally accepted directly into a specific lab and the emphasis is on working closely with one’s research advisor for the duration of training. Students typically do not complete rotations with the intention of selecting a lab, although it may be possible to switch labs and research advisors on a case-by-case basis, e.g. if research interests significantly shift. The goal of this document is to outline our mentoring philosophy and expectations for both mentors and mentees, along with resources for resolving potential conflicts. Each mentor-mentee pair should adapt these guidelines to more precisely align with the needs of their own training environment.

Core Expectations for Graduate Education at Duke University

As outlined [here](#), the primary mission of graduate education at Duke University is to prepare the next generation of professional, scholarly and educational leaders. In order to fulfill this mission, it is the joint responsibility of faculty and graduate students to work together to foster these ends through relationships that encourage freedom of inquiry,

demonstrate personal and professional integrity, and foster mutual respect. We outline some of those expectations here.

Expectations of Graduate Faculty within P&N

Mentoring is a key responsibility of the graduate faculty. Students have differing needs, and faculty have varying styles and priorities. Mentoring works best when both parties have common expectations and a shared commitment to communicating effectively in a cooperative spirit and being responsive to the needs of the other. Core expectations of faculty include:

Research and Training

- To provide intellectual guidance and rigor on students' educational programs and specific research projects
- To provide students with knowledge of the current frontiers and opportunities in disciplinary and inter- or cross-disciplinary research
- To ensure that a mutually agreed upon research plan with well-defined expectations and goals is established early in a student's training and to provide appropriate guidelines, including expected timetables, for completion of research projects.
- To provide timely feedback to students on written documents, project proposals etc, ideally within two weeks of delivery to the faculty member by the student, unless extenuating circumstances are clearly communicated and a plan for resolution proposed.
- To respect students' research interests/goals and to assist students in pursuing/achieving them, to the extent possible given funding constraints
- To commit to regular meetings (ideally a consistent standing meeting, e.g. weekly or biweekly) with students to provide feedback on research progress and honoring those commitments unless extenuating circumstances arise
- To help with the selection of students' thesis or advisory committee, to help ensure that students meet deadlines, and to intercede on the students' behalf, e.g. if problems with co-advisors or committee members arise

Professional Development/Program Progress

- To assist student participation in scholarly activities, including conference presentations, publications, professional networking, grant writing, oral and written communication, management and leadership, collaborative research, responsible conduct of research, teaching, and mentoring.

- To prepare students to enter the job market with requisite professional skills, with an appropriate range of professional contacts, and with a realistic view of the current state of that market, both within and outside of the academy
- To provide TA's and RA's with meaningful professional experiences and constructive feedback
- To avoid assignment of burdensome duties or activities that are outside the graduate student's academic responsibility or harmful to his or her timely completion of the degree

Community

- To maintain a relationship based on trust and mutual respect
- To provide an environment that is intellectually enriched, emotionally supportive, safe, equitable, and free of harassment
- To create, in the classroom or the laboratory, an ethos of collegiality so that learning takes place within a community of scholars
- To create an environment that openly discusses laboratory or departmental authorship policies and that prizes and acknowledges the individual contributions of all members of a research team in the publications or presentations of its research
- To avoid all situations that could put them or their students in positions of any conflicts of interest

Expectations of Graduate Students within P&N are:

- To familiarize yourself with the PhD program requirements and adhere to milestones and deadlines set by the Department and the Graduate School (TGS).
- To take responsibility for your own scientific and professional learning and development from the outset. You are on a path of lifelong learning and discovery. This means seeking guidance when needed, taking initiative on projects, papers, grants, and other professional development opportunities, and being aware of and meeting deadlines.
- To maintain a high level of professionalism, self-motivation, initiative, engagement, scientific curiosity, and ethical standards.
- To meet regularly with your PhD advisor to provide updates on the progress and results of your research, course work (if applicable), and professional and career development activities
- To be a good lab and departmental citizen. Take part in shared laboratory responsibilities and use laboratory resources carefully; maintain a safe and clean laboratory space; be an active contributing member to all team efforts and collaborations and respect individual contributions.

- To treat all persons in our environment, from the custodial staff to the provost, with respect, kindness, and compassion, as much as possible. We expect you to be respectful of, tolerant of, and work collegially with all laboratory personnel. We expect you to contribute to an environment that is safe, equitable, and free of harassment.
- To work with your advisor to develop a thesis project. This will include establishing a timeline for each phase of your project, a commitment to keep engaged with the work, and to meet the established goals and deadlines.
- To work with your advisor to select a thesis and/or advisory committee. You should commit to meeting with this committee at least annually (or more frequently, as needed or according to program guidelines). You should be open and prepared to discuss your progress to date and be responsive to advice and constructive criticism from your committee.
- To have open and timely discussions with your advisor concerning the dissemination of research findings and the distribution of research materials to third parties.
- To actively seek opportunities outside your primary research advisor's laboratory (e.g., professional development seminars and workshops on oral communication, scientific writing, collaborative research, grant writing, and teaching) to develop the full set of professional skills necessary for success in your chosen career.
- To be open to mentoring of undergraduate students or other trainees in alignment with the mentoring culture and guidelines established in this document and valued within our department.
- To provide robust and transparent data documentation so that others can replicate your work.

Additional mentoring resources:

Graduate students in P&N have created a wonderful resource especially for those of you interested in, or currently mentoring undergraduates in the lab. Check it out here:

[**P&N Mentoring Handbook**](#)

Duke Office for Research Mentoring Resource [**Page**](#) has a tremendous amount of useful information and resources and all community members are encouraged to enrich their own mentoring skills training using these resources.

Support Resources

We all need support! Here is a list of resources beyond your mentor and department that are always available to you.

- Any student experiencing discrimination or harassment can use this link for confidential reporting and support <https://projects.gradschool.duke.edu/reporting/>
- [DukeReach](#) (919-681-2455, dukereach@duke.edu) will help you identify support services from among the variety of resources across campus or in your local community. If you are worried about someone in our community, you can send a confidential request for DukeReach to check on them and connect them to resources.
- [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) offers many services to Duke students. Any student can call 919-660-1000 to speak with someone, or for assistance with referrals in your local community.
- [Blue Devils Care](#) provides Duke students with 24/7, no-cost virtual support for mental health needs.
- [Religious Life at Duke](#) offers a wide range of student supports. Visit their website to connect with clergy from any of Duke's diverse faith groups.
- The Office of Graduate Student Affairs (grad-gsa@duke.edu) is standing by to help graduate students and connect them with campus resources to provide the support they need.