

Expectations of Ph.D. Advisors Supervising Duke Chemistry Students

It goes without saying that pursuit of a Ph.D. is challenging. A significant predictor of success in this endeavor is the relationship between a graduate student and their chosen advisor. This relationship evolves from mentee to peer over time, and a productive relationship is predicated on clear expectations, mutual respect, effective communication, and personal and professional integrity.

The very nature of pursuing a research degree can make it difficult to fit cleanly into prescribed timeframes, schedules, and generalized policies. Challenges include: unpredictable funding, ill-defined expectations, and variations between research groups. Addressing these challenges requires open and honest communication between advisors and advisees. The accompanying mentoring guidelines outline expectations on both sides of the advising relationship. Both advisors and advisees are encouraged to establish a framework for communication early in their relationship and revisit as needed.

The following outline the commitment of all faculty that advise Chemistry graduate students, including secondary faculty, to ensuring the growth/well-being and academic/research progress of their students. These expectations should be referenced when building the Shared Expectations Document: (<https://duke.app.box.com/file/904953503158?s=69deyiv9hrm6oy30g9nxlihed4eqkjwr>).

1. Students and advisors should clearly understand the timing, expectations, and requirements for the Ph.D. program in the Department of Chemistry. Advisors will assist their advisees in meeting these requirements, including providing meaningful and timely feedback on research progress, the student's annual report, and other degree milestone events.
2. Faculty will reply in a timely manner to formal student queries, generally within 3 business days. Students will be notified if their advisors will be "out of regular communication" for more than 3 business days.
3. Faculty will provide meaningful feedback on research-oriented documents (e.g., meeting abstracts, posters and/or oral presentations, manuscripts, dissertations), generally within 15 business days, or a mutually agreeable timeline should be established well in advance of deadlines.
4. Faculty will meet on a regular basis with their advisees, and this interval should be at least monthly. The frequency, substance and any expectations for documentation of these meetings should be communicated clearly, with more frequent meetings for early-stage students.
5. Faculty will make themselves available for student-requested meetings (in person or virtual), generally within 7 business days of the student's request.
6. Faculty will make themselves available within 15 business days for students' committee meetings during the academic year.
7. Faculty will not delay completion of a Ph.D. by creating expectations and requirements that are outside the guidelines in the Department of Chemistry. The Ph.D. is awarded by Duke University based on the student's original research findings. It is not based on time in the program, classroom performance, or other contributions to the department.
8. Providing guidance on scientific writing and other professional development skills is an important component of Ph.D. training. Faculty will work with students to enhance these skills and publish their research findings when complete.
9. Students seeking letters of recommendation from faculty should request them in a timely manner, preferably at least 30 days in advance. Faculty should inform the students within 3 business days if they are unable to accept the request. Students will be informed when recommendation letters are submitted.
10. Faculty will respect and uphold the vacation policies set forth by the Graduate School ([link](#)).
11. Faculty and advisees are responsible for ensuring a safe laboratory environment, in line with [Duke OESO](#) policies.

12. Mutual respect from the faculty and the student is expected in any form of interaction. Abusive treatment, including verbal abuse, is not tolerated from either party.
13. As Ph.D. committee members, faculty will be prepared for committee meetings, including by reading all documents that are formal components of the meeting. Committee members will meet with students as needed and work with the students as flexibly as possible to coordinate full committee meetings.
14. If a student feels these minimal expectations are not being met, the faculty encourage them to first raise the issue respectfully with their advisor. If the breakdown in communication is not addressed adequately through that discussion, students should bring the issue to the attention of the DGS and then the Department Chair, reach out to members of their committee, or consult with the student ombuds or members of the department's Diversity, Inclusion, & Community committee.