

Expectations for graduate and postdoctoral researchers in the Hecht lab

You can expect the following from Erin:

1. You can expect to meet with me regularly for at least 30 minutes at your request (roughly weekly to biweekly during the semester, and by appointment during the summer when I am not traveling). I think it's important that you have regular one-on-one time with me. You can expect me to be on time and let you know if I'm running late. Drop-ins and brief questions are fine too – as long as my door is open, you should feel free to stick your head in and ask a question.
2. You can expect me to ask for your honest feedback about the lab, your training experience, and your perception of me as a mentor. I can't improve something if you don't tell me about it (and I really do want to improve things).
3. You can expect me to give you my honest feedback about your progress. I am here to support you in every way possible and giving you feedback is one of the most important ways to promote your success.
4. You can expect me to help you set reasonable deadlines for making progress and set clear expectations regarding what that progress should be - what do we want and when do we want it. This might sometimes include saying "no" to new project ideas or analyses in order to maintain a reasonable workload.
5. You can expect me to provide timely feedback on your grants and papers. I always make your work a priority and will try to always have a 1-2 week turn-around time unless it is particularly complicated. I will also try to respond to emails within 24-hours during the work week.
6. You can expect me to listen to your concerns and help you solve problems. Some problems need to be strong-armed and when that is the case, I will gladly step in and advocate for you whenever necessary, whether with the department, the GSAS, or collaborators. It's my job.
7. You can expect me to write letters of recommendation for you, given advance notice. If it's a sort of letter I've never written before or the very first time I've written a letter for you, please give me two weeks lead time because I need to find a 3-4 hour block of time to write you a good letter. After I have written you a letter for something once, a week or two of lead time is sufficient to ask me to send another (I will tailor a letter I've already written). This said, I understand that sometimes opportunities crop up unexpectedly. I will do my best under rush circumstances but would not expect it to be the norm.

8. You can expect me to help you network. I will write emails to introduce you to people in the field and I will connect you to people at meetings. I will also guide you in knowing what to expect from these interactions (having an 'elevator speech', asking them questions...). These things are more important than you think in getting a position after your degree.

9. You can expect me to work very hard with you on your posters and talks. These are your face to the research community and if the audience is giving you their time, you want to make the most of it so I will give you my time to make your talk or poster effective and engaging.

10. You can expect me to keep a rough eye on your timeline. Ultimately, you are responsible for making sure you hit the deadlines, but I will help you plan things out so that there are no surprises.

11. You can expect me to help you find funding sources, ranging from research grants to teaching opportunities. I will send you all sorts of opportunities and you will decide what to pursue.

12. You can expect me to work as hard toward your success as you do. The harder you push, the harder I will push to help.

13. You can expect me to ensure that you have a safe and supportive environment in which to work. If you have any concerns about the climate in the lab, I want to know as soon as possible. In this context, it's important to know that, as a faculty member, I am a mandatory reporter, which means I must report any instances of harassment or abuse. However, all information remains confidential unless you choose to release it.

14. You can expect me to provide a model of professionalism in academia, and you can look to me for guidance on issues related to conflicts of interest, equity and fairness, ethical research, and mentoring.

15. You can expect me to help you find other resources and other mentors when you need additional support beyond my abilities. Your advisor cannot possibly provide all the advice and support you will need in your career, so developing a robust mentoring network early on is very helpful.

Erin will expect the following from you:

1. I expect that you will usually respond in a timely fashion (24-48 hrs if during the work week) when I email you. I also expect that you will tell me when you will be out of town for extended periods, in case lab issues come up and we are looking for you. I would also prefer if we communicate by email or Slack rather than text. I do not expect work communication outside of

work hours (roughly 9-5 on weekdays), except in specific situations where it is necessary, such as a weekend MRI scan. You can expect me to explain why my advice is “no” in these situations.

2. I expect that you will seek my advice on your professional and academic development (like classes, teaching, research directions, funding opportunities, conferences, job applications) and that you will seriously consider that advice.

3. At the same time, I expect that you will use your own judgment about taking my advice. It's your career, you are in charge!

4. I expect that you will pursue research that has some overlap with my expertise and interests. Otherwise, I will not be in a good position to mentor you. If your interests shift away from the themes of the lab, I expect that you will inform me and we can discuss options, which could include switching to another lab. You should always be open to considering that possibility - again, it's your career, moving to a different lab isn't a problem.

5. I expect honesty from you. I will not judge you for not knowing something, making a mistake, or for breaking something in the lab. You're here to learn and ask questions, and everyone makes mistakes or breaks something from time to time. It is unlikely that you will make a mistake that I haven't made myself.

6. I expect you to be resourceful. I don't know all the answers and you may learn more effectively if you figure things out for yourself. So by all means, ask questions, sometimes I'll have an answer, and sometimes I will point you to useful paths for answering those questions.

7. I expect that you will respect my time as I respect yours. If we have a meeting scheduled, I expect you to be on time or to let me know if you will be late.

8. I expect you to be a full participant in this lab community. That includes being at lab meetings on time, fully participating in those meetings (by presenting, asking questions), coming to at least some lab social events, taking part in at least some of our outreach events, helping to host visiting speakers, etc. I also expect that you will be supportive of each other -- say hello to your labmates, help when they ask (if you can), be welcoming to newcomers, etc.

9. I expect you to tell me when you can't do one of these things. You are typically juggling just as many things as I am and sometimes have to say no. This is fine and I don't expect you to do everything.

10. I expect that, normally, you will be in the lab most days of the week for part of the day, but also to work at home or in a library whenever that is best for you. I, for example, like to write at home in the morning. So use your judgment, but I do expect to see consistent progress in line with working ~40 hours a week, taking into consideration other commitments like teaching and coursework. I would note that part of the benefit of working in a lab is the ability to learn from other people as part of a scientific community and if you're rarely here or only here when everyone else is gone, you will be losing out on that.

11. I expect you to alert lab members and/or appropriate staff if you are encountering difficulties in your research and education or if you see something wrong in the lab. I am here to support you and I hope you will come to me with any concerns sooner rather than later, so that I can address them. Most students and postdocs encounter some type of problem during their training. I certainly encountered my fair share. I will not think less of you for coming to me to ask for help.

12. I expect you to help keep the lab running in a timely manner. The lab only works if everyone pulls their weight. I will know and I will appreciate your efforts. That also includes basic lab cleanliness and common consideration in regard to using shared equipment. If you don't have time to clean up after yourself, you don't have time to do the experiment. If you do notice that certain things aren't getting done, please let me know about it. I don't expect you to monitor or admonish your colleagues. Let me be the enforcer!

13. I expect that you will discuss issues of authorship of publications, presentations and talks with me before presenting/submitting. Typically, PIs contribute intellectually and monetarily to student projects and are listed as senior authors. However, if a project did not involve my effort in these ways, I would not expect authorship (and in fact if you do side projects that don't involve me, that's great, but see #3 above.) Our framework for determining authorship within the lab is located here:

14. I expect you will actively pursue funds to support your research, even if it is in line with ongoing projects in the lab. This is easily one of the most important aspects of your training -- learning how to sell your ideas -- and it takes lots of practice. Your success in obtaining grants will also be one of the main features (beyond your publications) that any future employers will consider, at least in research-related careers. This does not mean that I won't help with paying for your research — I will! — but it is valuable for you to put in an effort to support yourself.

15. I expect you to mentor an undergrad or other trainee at least once during your tenure. If you've made it this far in science, there's a good chance that someone mentored you while you were an undergrad, and this is the time to return the favor (and also to figure out if you want to advise students as part of your career). However, I expect you to keep an eye on your time and not donate it all to undergrad mentoring or forms of outreach. It can be a hard balance, but that's academia. If you would like to recruit a student, come talk to me about it. Often, I will know about students who have already expressed interest, or we can make a plan for how to recruit someone.

16. I expect you to confer with me prior to inviting others to collaborate on the collection or analysis of data within my lab. Managing collaborations is an important and sometimes delicate task for scientists. It is important to make sure that new collaborations are not introducing a conflict of interest with existing or prior collaborations, and that the needs of all parties involved in the research are respected. This is an important skill to learn as a scientist and I am here to help you learn it.