

Research Advisor / Graduate Student Discussion Worksheet

This worksheet is intended to facilitate communication and constructive feedback between graduate students and their research advisors. We suggest that student and advisor arrange to each fill out the sheet separately and then meet to compare notes and discuss. This worksheet is divided into three sections. Part I focuses on the student's skill development (not all skills are expected to be fully developed early in grad school, but they should be discussed starting early to establish common expectations), Part II discusses advisor/student interactions, and Part III encourages both parties to discuss and/or clarify the motivation and context of current projects.

Part I: All students have strengths and weaknesses. Advisor and student should each fill out this section having in mind the question "In terms of improvement, where could the student focus more effort?" Note: "+" signifies that the student already does well in this area, "-" that he or she could usefully focus on improving skills in this area.

	-		+	N/A	Don't Know Yet
Does the student					
Manage time efficiently?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spend enough time/energy on research?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communicate effectively with the advisor?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work effectively with others?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Show initiative?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Request appropriate guidance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comment on the student's ...					
Mentoring or teaching skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Laboratory/technical skills (as applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Understanding of theory	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Understanding of experiment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Understanding of relevant literature	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Publication frequency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing style	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Oral presentation skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Computer proficiency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creativity/originality in tackling problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ability to define/choose interesting problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Part II: The working relationship between the student and advisor is important. Each should review this section with this question in mind: "In terms of improving my relationship with the student/advisor, in which categories would I seek change and in which direction?" ("+" = want more, "-" = want less, neutral= fully satisfied)

	-		+	N/A	Don't Know Yet
Length and frequency of interactions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guidance on the research project	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing feedback on student's progress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support of student's ideas and decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student's willingness to listen to advisor's ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advisor participation in research group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discussion of student's post-graduate career plans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support of student's post-graduate plans (e.g., mentoring, teaching, conference opportunities, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supports student meeting annual milestones in a timely manner (e.g. completion of coursework, 4 th yr progress report)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Part III: The student and advisor are encouraged to ask and answer the following questions:

- What is the motivation for and goals of the current project?
- What is the time scale of the current project?
- Has a thesis project been well-defined?
- Is the current project applicable to thesis work?
- What additional work needs to be done before the thesis is complete?
- Has the student's research progressed as expected?
- Is the student preparing adequately for his or her future career choice?