

Environmental Science and Policy Program Mentoring Conversation Guide

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Effective mentorship is a cornerstone of a positive graduate school experience. As a secondary program, all ESPP students are primarily appointed in programs across campus. Each of these programs has its own policies and practices that guide mentoring relationships for their students and faculty. Some units have distinct guidance for students who will serve as research or teaching assistants.

To ensure fit with their primary discipline, students should prioritize these norms but, as a uniquely interdisciplinary program, ESPP offers a few additional points of discussion as mentors and mentees discuss the structure that will best support their priorities, values, and personalities.

All students are encouraged to meet with their primary mentors as early as possible in their first semester and during the fall of each year thereafter to discuss expectations.

The following are suggested topics of discussion that are appropriate in each of those meetings:

Meetings:

- *How often and in what contexts will the mentor and mentee meet?*
- *In situations where the mentor and mentee have considerable contact as part of other groups of students and faculty (e.g., research labs), how often should they expect to meet individually?*
- *Are in-person and virtually meetings interchangeable?*

ESPP Program Requirements:

- *ESPP students are required to complete four courses. Given when they are offered, how can they best be structured to fit with the primary program's expected course sequencing?*
- *ESPP students are required to ensure that their guidance/dissertation committee includes faculty from at least two major academic units on campus. What advice is available for the student to meet faculty with relevant expertise in other units?*
- *ESPP students are required to complete their MOU within four semesters at MSU. How will the mentor and mentee work together to assemble the required elements on time?*
- *ESPP students are required to present their research to the community. At what point in the planned research process should the student expect to get the most benefit from this requirement? Do they have other opportunities to present work in-progress for feedback?*

ESPP Research Funding:

- *When would ESPP funding opportunities like the Competitive Research Grant and the Summer Research Fellowship most benefit the student's research and milestone goals?*

Disciplinary Research Expectations:

- *What expectations are imposed by the student's primary academic discipline on appropriate methods for research? Are there methods that are generally not accepted as valid ways of knowing?*
- *What kinds of scholarly outlets are valued by the student's primary discipline? To what extent is it important to emphasize placing interdisciplinary work in disciplinary outlets to ensure recognition within the field or are interdisciplinary outlets equally respected?*
- *Are there key, generally understood disagreements between the student's primary discipline and other related disciplines? Are there specific disciplines that require a clear understanding of their perspectives before productively collaborating?*

Interdisciplinary Research Expectations:

- *How does the students' home discipline conceptualize interdisciplinarity? Are there subdisciplines within the larger discipline that are distinct enough to qualify as a separate discipline or does crossing disciplines require connecting with people asking totally different questions using totally different methods in other units in other colleges?*

Other Resources & Links

Resources from Universities

- [Mentoring Tips for Graduate Students](#)
- [What Is a Mentor? | The Graduate School \(duke.edu\)](#)
- [Mentoring Resources for Doctoral Students and Their Advisors | Graduate Education & Life](#)
- [MSU Guidelines for Graduate Student Mentoring and Advising](#)
- [Rackham Graduate School UMichigan - Faculty Guide Mentoring Grad Students.pdf \(pitt.edu\)](#)
- [Graduate Student Mentoring Guide](#)
- [Mentoring Resources - Council of Graduate Students](#)

Professional Development Resources

- [Career Development Webinar Videos](#)
- [Professional Development Courses](#)
- [Unconscious Bias Course](#)
- [Mentoring Resources for Postdocs \(nationalpostdoc.org\)](#)
- [Effective Mentoring | FAS Office of Postdoctoral Affairs \(harvard.edu\)](#)
- [Mentoring | The Graduate School](#)
- [Microsoft Word - FELCOM Mentor-Mentee Handout.docx \(nih.gov\)](#)
- [Mentor Resources | Postdoc Academy](#)
- [The Importance of Mentoring for Career Development](#)

CIMER (*Center for the Improvement of Mentored Experience in Research*) Project

- [What is the CIMER project?](#)
- [CIMER January Newsletter](#)
- [National Mentor Month](#)
- [CIMER – Center for the Improvement of Mentored Experience in Research \(cimerproject.org\)](#)
- [CIMER - Entering Mentoring](#)

Articles on Mentorship

- [A Better Approach to Mentorship | HBR](#)
- [Full article: The importance of mentorship in higher education: An introduction to the symposium](#)
- [The role of mentoring in promoting diversity equity and inclusion in STEM Education and Research](#)
- [The Role of Mentorship in Bridging Graduate Education Equity Gaps](#)
- [Equity-Minded Mentoring Toolkit](#)
- [Mentoring: What Is It? How Do We Do It and How Do We Get More of It?](#)
- [How to get the most out of mentorship](#)
- [Exploring the benefits of mentoring activities for the mentor](#)
- [Mentoring Graduate Students of Color: Myths, Models, and Modes](#)

- [Faculty Diversity and Mentors of Color Are Keys to Success for Black Women in Graduate School - The Education Trust](#)
- [Why Mentorship and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is important](#)
- [The Best Mentorships Help Both People Grow | Harvard Business](#)
- [The Power of Mentorship: How Mentors Can Help Employees Grow and Succeed | Forbes](#)
- [Improving Equity in Graduate Education through Mentorship](#)