

GEOL Student-Advisor Agreement: A Conversation About Shared Expectations

This document is designed to help you, as a student, get the most out of your degree program. Higher education frequently relies on a mentorship model, with the faculty advisor present and agreeing to mentor, coach, and assist the student in pursuing their graduate degree. We acknowledge that this is a mutually beneficial process which depends on cooperation and collaboration between the advisor(s) and grad student. This document is in the spirit of aligning expectations early, so both parties can be successful, and ultimately get what they need out of this unique mentoring and working relationship. The student and advisor(s) may choose to revisit this agreement and adjust it whenever necessary. This is a professional document, and thus the responses included should be fitting to be seen by Department leadership/administration.

Student and advisor(s) should find a time to meet in the first semester to discuss this document. The student bears the responsibility for taking notes on the document, with the assistance and approval of the advisor(s). This is a list of suggested topics. This main agreement template can be modified as the two parties choose. If the discussion does not cover an item, remove it. Add new items that are discussed. The student should record details about what was discussed and agreed upon, then submit a version to the faculty advisor for reconciliation and mutual agreement. Thus this template is recommended to be a conversation piece, not one person filling out in full and presenting it to the other. Our intention is that this helps you launch a successful mentor-mentee relationship.

After completion, the student should file a signed copy with the advisor(s) within two weeks.

To submit a document to the Department to keep on file, there are 2 choices:

- 1) Submit a copy of the full GEOL Student-Advisor Agreement with signatures (hand-written or via DocuSign) to GeoGPA@colorado.edu.*
- 2) A one-page acknowledgement signed by all parties can be kept on file with GeoGPA@colorado.edu. Use the signature page at end of this document and modify it to reflect the discussion. Note that if only the signature page is filed, there may be a future request by GEOL Grad Program Leadership for a copy of the agreement to aid in mediation procedures (if for example, discussions arise in regard to a change in advisor or degree program).*

Overall, it's the department's expectation that we will not look at these frequently, but if necessary, Department leadership (Geological Sciences Department Chair, Associate Chair of Graduate Studies, GeoGPA) will have access.

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Key points:

- Intended as a launching point for successful mentor-mentee relationship
- Suggest in student's first semester to have a conversation and discuss, mutually agree upon and sign
- Signed and dated by both parties (DocuSign), with a copy kept on file with GPA OR a one-page acknowledgement signed by all parties on file with the department (use 1-page template)
- Re-visit and re-sign periodically and as needed (annually or every 2 years?)

Faculty Member(s) Name(s): _____

Student Name: _____ Degree pursuing: MS or PhD

1. Communication

- What is the best way/technology to contact each other non-urgently?

- What is the best way/technology to contact each other urgently (e.g., in case of a lab crisis)?

- Discuss timeframe and boundaries (e.g., nights, weekends, holidays) for expected responses.

2. Regular meetings

- How often would you both like to meet one-on-one, and how will the agenda be determined?

- Will the student participate in research group meetings, and if so, what does participation entail?

3. Opportunities for feedback

- In what forms and how often can the student expect to receive feedback regarding overall progress?

- What is a reasonable turnaround time for the advisor to provide feedback on written work, such as a draft of a thesis chapter or a publication?

c. How can the student provide feedback to the advisor?

4. Funding

a. Review the funding plan covered by the formal Admissions offer letter.

b. Discuss plans for obtaining future funding, including summer support (e.g., internal and external fellowships, research grant proposals, etc.).

5. Time management

Discuss nominal split of the student's weekly hours between academics, research, and paid appointments. The actual split of the student's time is likely to ebb and flow from week to week, but a guiding framework is helpful.

NOTE: Most academic-year paid appointments are at 50% time (20 hours per week), under the principle that the other 20 hours are devoted to pursuit of the degree (classes, coursework, degree exams, and thesis) and other professional activities (e.g., meetings, colloquia, service, etc.). Time for research activities may be built into the paid appointment (e.g., RA), or not (e.g., TA). Fellowships can be in a gray area that requires discussion. Nominal splits may change over the course of the student's time in the program.

6. Research expectations

a. If the student is being paid from a research grant, discuss their specific obligations to the grant. Include delineation of responsibilities relative to other personnel on the grant, and the relationship of the grant work to the thesis/dissertation.

b. If some or all of the student's thesis/dissertation research is not supported by a research grant, discuss principles around research responsibilities, progress, and guidance.

7. Remote work

Discuss mutual preferences regarding proportions of work and meetings done remotely, including rationale.

8. Vacations and other personal time away

Discuss expectations regarding vacations and other personal time away from school, including the timeframe for notification regarding anticipated absences (for both student and advisor). Faculty, please disclose if you're planning a sabbatical in the near future.

NOTE: Graduate Students Assistants (e.g., TA, RA) are not eligible for paid vacation leave; however, they receive all listed University Holidays on the [Human Resources website](#) as paid leave. Qualifying graduate assistants may be eligible for paid [parental leave](#). Graduate Students Assistants are eligible for [sick leave](#).

9. Principles of authorship

Discuss disciplinary norms around authorship of journal articles or other publications, including what it takes to be first author or a coauthor.

10. Principles around professional conferences

Discuss the conferences that the student might be able to attend, including requirements (e.g., presenting their research), frequency, and potential funding sources (including department, university, etc.).

11. Other networking opportunities

Discuss student's interest in additional networking with colleagues (e.g. meeting with seminar speakers, finding additional mentors).

12. Professional/skills development

Discuss career goals as they currently stand. Identify the skills and abilities that the student hopes to master by the end of their degree, and how the advisor can help facilitate them. These could include academic, research, or professional skills, as well as additional training experiences such as workshops or internships.

13. Completion of programmatic milestones

Enter X's into this chart to plan out an ideal timeline. Additional (optional) milestones might include: conference presentation, peer-reviewed publication, etc.

Academic Milestones	Year 1			Year 2			Year 3			Year 4			Year 5		
	F	SP	SU	F	SP	SU	F	SP	SU	F	SP	SU	F	SP	SU
<i>Proto-committee Meeting</i>	X														
<i>Advisory Committee Meetings</i>															
<i>Complete majority of coursework</i>															
<i>Comprehensive Exam (PhD)</i>															
<i>Final Exam/ Defense</i>															

14. Logistical support

Discuss student access to computers, software, equipment, etc. If purchases need to be made, what funds may be available?

15. Other

Discuss any additional areas of understanding between the student and mentor.

GEOL Student-Advisor Agreement: Signature page

Faculty Advisor or Co-Advisors Name(s): _____

Student Name: _____ Degree pursuing: MS or PhD

We acknowledge that a meeting and discussion took place on _____ (MO/DY/YR) between advisor(s) and student and that a mutual agreement was reached. The following topics and related expectations from both parties were covered:

- *Communication*
- *Regular meetings*
- *Opportunities for feedback*
- *Funding*
- *Time management*
- *Research expectations*
- *Remote work*
- *Vacations and other personal time away*
- *Principles of authorship*
- *Principles around professional conferences*
- *Other networking opportunities*
- *Professional/skill development*
- *Completion of programmatic milestones*
- *Logistical support*
- *Other*

Advisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Co/Advisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

On file with Graduate Program Administrator of GEOL Department: GeoGPA@colorado.edu

GeoGPA Signature: _____ Date: _____

