Setting the Scope for Ph.D. Projects

Tessa & Andrew
2018

What is successful mentoring of students?

- Things to consider/think about (write for a few minutes)
- What are your goals in mentoring Ph.D. students?
- How does your experience as a Ph.D. student influence how you will mentor (both good & bad)?
- How will you provide support (financial, intellectual, emotional, logistic) support for your Ph.D. students?
- Will you help prepare Ph.D. students for careers in academia, industry, policy, other (i.e., reconcile your goals with your student’s goals)?

Mentoring Survey

Every student is different

- Not every student will be like you
- They will all need different types of mentoring
- Recognize that you may need to adjust how you communicate depending on the student
- Make sure that your expectations are clear

How do you define ‘success’ for your Ph.D. students? - What are your goals?

- Papers published (expectations on number?)
- Conference presentations
- Ability to find funding on their own
- Types of jobs they will be prepared for
- Teaching/mentoring/communication skills that they learn
- Timelines for completion

Do your goals and your student’s goals align?

- Consider a student you currently have, or one you might have in the future
- Goals of student:

- How do these align with your goals (previous page)
**Variable structure of Ph.D. research projects**

- Example 1: Student comes in on a currently funded federal grant; needs of the grant are explicit so student works on chapters closely related to their PI’s research.
- Example 2: Student starts out on a defined chapter/project that is supported by their advisor. Remaining chapters/projects are more free form and driven by student brainstorming.
- Example 3: Student arrives with a ‘blank slate’—advisor encourages student to develop a thesis proposal that is novel on their own.
- Example 4: Student is co-advised by two or more faculty; develops a thesis proposal that is a blend of expertise and research experience.
- Other?

**Ph.D. Research Timelines**

- **Year 1**: Coursework, in some cases exams or written proposals, writing graduate student fellowship proposals.
- **Year 2**: Research focused, Qualifying exams, developing first chapter/manuscript.
- **Year 3-4**: Focused work on data collection, chapters/manuscripts, presenting at conferences.
- **Year 5+**: Presenting at conferences, applying for postdocs, jobs, finalizing manuscripts.

*Timelines and benchmarks will vary by university; many things can shorten or lengthen these phases.*

**Your student needs to know which structure they are following**

- Remember that this is your student’s first dissertation—they don’t know how this works.
- We often forget how much our students need us to guide them through this.

**Additional considerations – at your tables, discuss:**

- Structure of dissertations: published chapters/articles, how many first author, are there concerns about embargoed information?
- How will co-authorship be managed, and determined, for dissertation chapters?
- How to strike the right balance of TAships and research funding?

**Begin with the end in mind:**

What is successful mentoring of students?

- Things to consider/think about (write for a few minutes!)
  - What are your goals in mentoring Ph.D. students?
  - How does your experience as a Ph.D. student influence how you will mentor (both good & bad)?
  - How will you provide support (financial, intellectual, emotional, logistic) support for your Ph.D. students?
  - Will you help prepare Ph.D. students for careers in academia, industry, policy, other (i.e. reconcile your goals with your student’s goals)?