Near Lab Expectations and Policy

adopted from Luke Tornabene, University of Washington

My Goals for you

My primary goal is for you to successfully complete your program. Students graduating from my lab should have:

- knowledge of how to identify and pose research questions that address important scientific challenges, be a thorough scholar in the broad and specific areas of your research and develop the necessary skills to address important scientific problems.
- a strong foundation in ichthyology, systematics, genomics, evolutionary biology, and phylogenetics.
- the ability to present analyses in written and oral formats.
- be ready to take the next career steps.
- enjoyed their time as a graduate student in one of the top programs of its kind in the world.

What you should expect from me

- I will create constructive and positive work and learning environment that strives for excellence in research and service.
- I will be committed to ensuring that you gain as much as possible, both academically and professionally, from your time in EEB at Yale. This will involve encouraging you to be involved in all relevant activities available at Yale.
- I will strive to be impartial in my dealing with all students and create an atmosphere of collegiality to facilitate learning and excellence, and will ensure that the lab is safe, equitable, and free from harassment.
- I believe that graduate students are one step away from leading research groups on their own. Thus, I believe that you are sufficiently mature academically to work on your own.
- I will help you select a thesis topic and plan your research and will direct you towards resources that will help you during your time as a graduate student, including providing advice regarding committee members and courses that I think will help you in your research.
- I will respond to any requests for help and meetings within 24-48 hours (except when I am travelling).
- I will be proactive in your research. As a mentor and collaborator, I will seek frequent updates, meet to discuss preliminary analyses, and encourage regular brainstorming sessions where we discuss specifics of your research projects.
- I will monitor your progress towards your academic and professional goals and provide feedback intended to help you achieve those goals. I will keep you aware of the job market, comment on your CV, and introduce you to potential employers/collaborators.
- I will always endeavour to be a clear in my advice and feedback to you, and be willing to clarify my thoughts if there is any ambiguity.
- I will keep you informed regarding funding for your time in the EEB graduate program at Yale.
- I will provide timely feedback on any manuscripts, talks, and posters you produce during your time as a student in my lab.
- I will be open to your thoughts even if they conflict with my *a priori* expectations, in particular those related to timelines for completing tasks.

- I will not ask you to do tasks that are unrelated your academic or professional development.

I will provide career advice and assist in finding you a position following the completion of your program. As part of this, I will write honest letters of recommendation for you. I encourage you to engage with the Yale Office of Career Strategies, https://ocs.yale.edu/

What I expect from you

- You are expected to maintain a high level of professionalism, self-motivation, excellence, scientific leadership, apply ethical standards, and behave in a manner that is consistent with the expectations of Yale University.
- You should be working at least 40 hours per week. If you are funded by my research funds you need to work 20 hours a week on a course of research we have agreed on. If you are a TF you are expected to work for 20 hours per week on your teaching. In these two cases, you are expected to spend another 20 hours a week working on your research (broadly defined). If you are funded through a university fellowship (UF) you are expected to work on research at least 40 hours per week. I will not check how you use your time. Rather, I will review your progress in the context of identified goals and milestones.
- You should know the requirements of the program, including milestones (e.g., prospectus, progress reports, etc.). I will do my best to advise here. Completing your degree and checking off the required boxes is ultimately your responsibility.
- You should do your best to attend all relevant meetings, all departmental seminars, and lab meetings. Such events broaden your education and better prepare you for your future careers.
- You should keep me apprised of your academic progress. We should meet on a regular basis, ideally weekly (in person or by Zoom), but you should contact me whenever you need help. If you are unclear about my expectations, please talk to me so we can avoid conflict later on. You should be prepared for any meetings we have and any presentations that you give to the lab group or department.
- You will keep careful notes of your research and ensure that you research data and software is backed up in multiple locations.
- You will ensure that your supervisory committee is kept informed of your research and you will organize meetings with your committee at least annually.
- You should carefully review my comments on drafts of your work (not simply “accept all”) and question me if a suggestion for a change is unclear (or does not seems justified / appropriate). You should also use your peer network to provide a review of draft material – this is both useful to improve your writing skills, and to learn how to conduct peer-reviews.
- You should seek out a range of faculty and peers who can provide you with examples of the person you want to be once you have completed your program.
- You seek to publish results from your dissertation/side projects in a peer-reviewed journal when the study is completed.

Authorship of scientific products

- I hope that you will collaborate with other students in the lab (and in EEB generally) on side projects. I encourage an inclusive approach to authorship of papers, with the primary author of the paper being first author and all those involved in the paper being invited to be authors. Authorship should be based on (a) conception and design of the project, (b) analysis and interpretation of data, and (c) drafting significant parts of the manuscript.
- It is best to establish authorship *as early during a project as possible*, ideally including the basis for the order of authors.
- Individuals who contributed to a project but are not authors should be mentioned in the acknowledgements section of the paper.

Other issues

Student Mentoring and Collegiality

- Our lab is a team. Collaboration is integral to our success. Maintaining healthy relationships within the team is critical. Thus, I expect you all to be the best colleagues you can to one another and work together. Whether intentional or unintentional, actively or passively, you may find yourself serving as positive role-models and/or mentors for younger/less-senior students in the lab.

General

- You may work at home or at a remote site, but you need to (a) first discuss doing so with me and (b) recognize that working away from the lab is a privilege, which will be revoked if there is evidence that the arrangement is not working. The work-at-home privilege does not excuse you from meetings with attendance at departmental seminars, etc.

- I may only get to your requests and my other communications with you at late hours or over the weekend. *I do not expect you to work over the weekend or outside of hours – this reflects my work schedule.* I do appreciate a short "Got your email" if you happen to be monitoring email – as I do sometimes forget to send emails I have worked on.

- You should inform me if there are reasons why you cannot achieve goals so we can identify ways to overcome the issues. You should be comfortable that I will keep any personal details private (if you wish to reveal them). There are many resources at Yale to help you overcome the challenges of being a graduate student – use them.

Classes

- Yale has an amazing array of classes available. However, this can be both a blessing and a curse because this may be one of the last opportunities you have to take classes with the Yale faculty-calibre instructors, and you may end up spending a considerable amount of time taking the classes. Generally, I encourage my graduate student to take as many classes as possible that will improve their quantitative skills, in particular classes in statistics, computer science, and informatics. Please talk to me if you wish to take classes so that we are both aware of the workload implications and consequences.

Technology

- **Back up your data and writing.** I dread a nightmare scenario where ¾ of your thesis and data disappear a week before a deadline because of poor data management or hardware failure (I've been there).

Travel

- I will strive to support your participation at relevant scientific meetings, but I will only support attendance if you present a paper or a poster. If you want to travel to a meeting, you should contact me first indicating what you intended to present, the rationale, and a draft budget.
- I will provide the support you need for fieldwork. If working in North America, you have access to our lab field vehicle, collecting gear, and materials for the preservation of specimens and tissue samples.
- Please let me know when you are on vacation for a week or more.

Side Projects

- There are many opportunities for "side projects" and I support you being involved in these. Your side projects may be the part of your CV that gets you over the edge for the next job. However, (a) be careful how many of these you take on as they can quickly take over your lives and (b) please inform me that you will be working on a side project so that I am aware of it.

Outreach

- Working in my lab and the fish collection at the Peabody Museum of Natural History affords us all ample opportunities for outreach and public education. Communicating with a broader audience, and being involved with our local community, are both major goals for my research team.

Collection, Specimens, Labs, and Offices

- Please keep your offices and our common areas organized and clean. We routinely have visitors and tours through the collection, and your spaces may be on display.
- Please take care of the specimens you use in your projects. This includes:
    - proper labelling – never leave a fish in a jar without a label
    - not mixing specimens between jars
    - not allowing specimens to dry out when looking at them under the scope
    - communication with the curator or collection manager when you move a specimen from its spot on a shelf
    - take care to make sure the proper fluid is used to preserve the specimens
    - do not damage the specimens unless you have permission to dissect.
    - Keep track of all material loaned from other collections. I will be the one signing off on your loans, and I'll be the one that has to answer for any missing/damaged specimens.
    - When it comes to specimens, when in doubt about anything, ask me or Greg.
- Clean up after yourselves in all labs. This includes keeping benches sanitary in the molecular lab to avoid contamination.
- Follow the safety rules in the lab (e.g., no food in the molecular lab)
- Please keep the shared lab computers organized and 'clean', and do not use them for personal business. Always log out of emails and websites when you are done. Please keep them free of malware!

Personal Issues

I will do my best to be an approachable mentor for you. Working with students is the single most rewarding part of my job, and because if that, I want to be there to help you in any way I can. My office door is always open (figuratively), and almost always open (literally), if you have a personal issue that I could help with. However, if there is any issue that you do not feel comfortable approaching me with, please do not hesitate to seek help or guidance from one of the many Student Services programs on campus. Note that if your problem is beyond my capacity, I may recommend contacting Student Services anyway, or may do so myself if the need is urgent https://gsas.yale.edu/life-yale/student-services