# Mentor–Mentee Contract

Mentee (print) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Mentor (print) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Purpose**:

The Hinton Laboratory aims to advance human knowledge of mitochondrial structure. We are a close-knit and diverse community of exceptional individuals, dedicated to professional and personal growth. We aim for mutual success through scientific publications, grants, presentations, teaching, and outreach efforts and creating a supportive and collaborative professional community that involves mentoring. Thus, while research productivity is important, so too is engaging with the public. As a PI my primary aim is to publish the best papers and secure funding to allow you to carry out the research you want. I am ambitious and have high standards, but my ultimate goal is the success of every individual in the laboratory to go higher than they ever thought they could. I would hold every single individual to the highest of standards and I expect the same for me.

At a baseline, I cover wages, stipend, or salary (unless there is other applicable funding), and also materials, travel, publication fees, etc. However, my role is also as your mentor for the duration of time in the laboratory. While typically mentoring is based on implicit agreement, this contract explicitly outlines the parameters of our work together on this research project/lab. This is based on research that demonstrates that written contracts increase mentoring effectiveness (see Hagerty, S., Barger, N., Taylor, S., Carter, J., & Gruber, J. (2018). Written lab agreements improve mentoring. *Nature*, *563*(7731), 325-325.). Thus, while this document lays out expectations for you, just as much it holds the PI accountable. Thus, in reading this, I employ you to think carefully about these expectations and how we can individually align them with your personality, individual needs, and stage in the degree (please further see the IDP for customized plans). Avoid simply skimming this contract, but rather reflect critically about what might you have trouble with and where you may need more guidance, so we may include facets in the IDP.

If you have questions or concerns, please talk to me about them.

What I Provide to You:

1. I am committed to supporting your educational and career goals. This means you have autonomy on taking responsibility. This should not mean you are being a passive part of the laboratory, but rather that you can decide what your passions are and I can help you achieve them to the best of my ability while still working within the confines of my own responsibilities, feasibilities, and publishing deadlines.

2. I will integrate you into an active lab with ongoing projects, using my research and collaborations as a model for your development as a scientist.

3. I will be equitable, accessible, encouraging, and respectful, considering your unique situation in mentoring. Through techniques such as the microaggression meter, I seek to make a space where all individuals are treated with the utmost respect not just from myself but everyone in the laboratory space.

4. If a graduate student, together, we will navigate your graduate program, including committee selection, exam preparation, goal planning, and research project development.

5. I will encourage and help you broaden your scientific skillset to excel in your career. This will include critical thinking, to help you explore deeper insights through literature review, creative brainstorming, oral presentations, and written exploration of ideas, data, and results.

6. We will work on communication, lab and field research skills, quantitative methods, and scientific professionalism.

7. Regular meetings and informal conversations will be available for discussions. This includes meetings (especially for individuals earlier in their training) to consider research design, timeline for research, and the relevance of the research in the context of the broader literature. I am furthermore frequently available for unscheduled meetings and have a generally open-door poliy.

8. I will assist you in developing strong manuscript and grant writing skills, as well as scientific presentation skills. Similarly, I will constructively criticize writing and presentation skills. These are not meant to make you mad (I will only criticize actions never people) or add more work to your plate, but rather foster your growth as a future PI.

9. Honest and constructive feedback on your dissertation (if applicable) and progress will be provided, and I will seek your feedback on my mentoring.

10. Lead time will be required for feedback on various items, respecting deadlines and providing detailed advice as needed.

11. I will listen to your concerns and help find creative solutions. I am also happy to help frame questions, for you to find the answers.

12. I will encourage and support your attendance at scientific meetings, assisting with funding and networking opportunities as is feasible.

13. If additional support or skills beyond my abilities are required, I will help you find other resources and mentors. I hope that you don’t hesitate to get advice from others, especially in areas in which they are not the world’s experts. I will encourage you to learn how to use techniques such as social media to expand your network.

14. I aim to create a lab community of collaboration, mutual respect, and appreciation of differences, ensuring a safe space for all. I maintain an active microaggression meter for equitability. I also expect you to make use of professional development opportunities and join campus programs.

15. I will be your advocate, providing detailed letters of recommendation and supporting your career opportunities even after you graduate. I aim to make colleagues by the end of your time in the laboratory. While I will seek out awards and fellowships for you, I aim for you to also suggest any that you may be competitive for. As you wish, I am also happy to provide a view of the financial and administrative sides of research for your future career.

What I Expect from You:

1. Ownership of Educational Experience: As a mentee in the Vanderbilt Physiology Lab, you are expected to take full ownership of your educational journey, recognizing that you are primarily responsible for successfully completing your degree and shaping your future career. If you are anything above an undergraduate student, you must be aware of the research literature related to your project; I expect in your specific niche that your knowledge will surpass my own. Similarly, I expect you to regularly attend laboratory at specified times if stated. While hours can be flexible in many cases, when certain hours need to be in-person these should be respected otherwise 9 AM-5 PM schedules will be expected.

2. Developing Strong Research Skills: You will actively engage in building robust research skills, encompassing planning, designing, and executing high-quality research. Learning how to effectively document and present findings with honesty and ethical conduct will be a priority. Document all information as though you are not looking back tomorrow but rather 5 years from now. While virtual message platforms such as GroupMe and Email serve to document priorities, I expect you to also backup all data through the Box and multiple hard drives. Similarly, all citations are expected to be carried out using Zotero. Any figures should be color-blind friendly (<https://venngage.com/tools/accessible-color-palette-generator>). Any sign of dishonesty will not be tolerated.

3. Aligned Research Pursuits: Your research interests should align with the expertise and interests of the lab. This alignment will facilitate successful guidance and mentorship. If your interests shift away from the core lab research, open communication is essential to explore alternative options.

4. Career Trajectory: You will decide on your desired career trajectory or potential paths and develop research skills accordingly. Seeking feedback from various informed sources, especially for non-academic careers, will be encouraged. Recognize that a master's or PhD can significantly benefit your future career, and pursuing a career in academia requires a genuine passion for scientific inquiry.

5. Meeting Degree Requirements (if applicable): You will diligently meet the degree requirements in a timely manner. This includes successfully completing preliminary and comprehensive exams, coursework, and the primary research aspects of professional development, such as research progress, publications, presentations, professional meetings, grants, and fellowship proposals.

6. Regular Meetings: Expect to meet with me regularly, either weekly or bi-monthly, depending on your needs and progress throughout your tenure and as specified in your IDP. These meetings should not just be you showing up but an active participant. This means that you should take notes, ask relevant questions, write down your understanding of the decisions made at that meeting, and follow-up with all applicable individuals via email.

7. Seeking Mentor Advice: You are encouraged to seek my advice on various aspects of your professional and academic development. Consider my guidance seriously when making decisions related to committee members, classes, teaching positions, research directions, authorship norms, funding opportunities, appropriate journals, and additional mentors.

8. Effective Communication: Strive to communicate clearly, being specific, sincere, timely, and constructive in all interactions with your mentor and lab colleagues. As part of this, I expect some active time in the laboratory. While some individuals can do telework for aspects, the ideas spawned from in-person is important. Similarly, lease try to maintain your progress on all of these projects through the spreadsheet on the Box: <https://app.box.com/s/go9tttwdbta6vlup2czh3v06rdtr8lcr>.

9. Goal Setting and Deadlines: Collaboratively set attainable goals and meet deadlines with your mentor each semester. Establish personalized guidelines for consequences if goals or deadlines are not met. While remote work is useful for literature review, it is your responsibility to ensure you are optimizing your time. It is not about how much time you are putting in but the results you are getting. If you are spending 80 hours with nothing to show for it, that is an issue and efficiency must be worked on. Conference attendance, travel, and other avenues will not be allowed for if you are continuously not producing deliverables.

10. Active Pursuit of Research Funding: Actively seek research funding opportunities to enhance your writing, framing of research, and overall CV.

11. Team Player and Lab Engagement: As a valued member of the lab, participate actively in lab meetings, research activities, and peer-to-peer mentorship. Foster a supportive and collaborative work environment by leaving lab spaces clean and organized after use, welcoming and supporting new members, and assisting with lab activities as needed. Similarly, laboratory publishing is not a zero-sum game; as applicable offer your experience to help others, review manuscripts, and help carry out experiments (within reason).

12. Authorship and Publications: As the primary contributor to your research, you are expected to be the first author on all manuscripts resulting from your degree and expected to have a regular output of a variety of manuscript types. Collaborators making substantial contributions should be acknowledged appropriately. Ensure manuscript submissions and presentations receive approval from all authors. As your work with others in the laboratory, individuals who join a project already in progress might or might not wind up as a coauthor, but there will always be future manuscripts you may contribute to.

13. Departmental Engagement: Regularly attend departmental seminars and faculty talks, and meet with visiting speakers relevant to your research. These opportunities provide valuable learning experiences and networking possibilities.

14. Discussing Work Hours and Absences: Discuss deviations from regular work hours, sick leave, and vacation directly with me. Establish regular work hours through individual agreements and notify fellow lab members in advance of any planned absences. Recognize that summers are a critical time for research and plan accordingly. In our laboratory, we have deadlines and take time off accordingly. Sometimes weeks may require 60+ hours and effective research may need that to be put forth. Just as similarly, time-off is well-deserved following such cases, but remember that research is a full-time job and requires an appropriate amount of effort.

Evaluation:

We will also compose an individual development plan. Evaluation will be carried out regularly as laid out in the IDP. While evaluations will discuss your performance and progress, I am your advocate, so you should tell me if there are any ways I can improve or aid in supporting your further (e.g., lower or higher meeting frequency, finding collaborators for projects, etc.). Across your time in the laboratory, it is expected that you will become more independent.

Conflict Resolution:

1. We will seek to address and fix conflict at its earliest onset with respect and professionalism. This includes mutual active listening, face-to-face meeting time, brainstorming creative solutions, and a mediator, if necessary.
2. We will use evidence-backed conflict resolution techniques (see Hudson, P. (2014). Conflicts and conflict resolution strategies in mentor-mentee relationships.; Lock, R. H., Lee, S. H., Theoharis, R., Fitzpatrick, M., Kim, K. H., Liss, J. M., ... & Walther-Thomas, C. (2006). Create effective mentoring relationships: Strategies for mentor and mentee success. Intervention in School and Clinic, 41(4), 233-240.; https://www.nonviolentcommunication.com/aboutnvc/4partprocess.html; <https://www.icre.pitt.edu/mentoring/problemsolving.html>)

**Relationship termination clause:** In the event that either party finds the mentoring relationship unproductive and requests that it be terminated, we agree to honor that individual’s decision without question or blame. We agree to take every action reasonable to avoid such a termination and resolve issues prior to this.

Agreement:

By signing below, we agree to these goals, expectations, and working parameters for this research lab.

Mentee’s signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Mentor’s signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Notes: This contract is drawn on the basis of numerous literature and prior composed contracts, including but not limited to Working with Norman Ramsey: A Guide for Research Students, Sample Compact from Laboratory of Dr. Trina McMahon for Graduate Students, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and McCain Lab Mentoring Agreement. We appreciate and recognize the contributions of all of these individuals in composition and ideas utilized in this contract.