

Chung Lab guideline for graduate students

What you should expect from me

- **I will work tirelessly** for the good of the lab group; the success of every member of our group is my top priority, no matter their personal strengths and weaknesses, or career goals.
- **I will be available for regular meetings and informal conversations.** I will try to be available as much as possible.
- **I will help you navigate your graduate program of study.** You are responsible for keeping up with deadlines and being knowledgeable about requirements for your specific program. However, I am available to help you interpret these requirements, select appropriate coursework, and select committee members for your PhD training.
- **I will be your advocate.** If you have a problem, come and see me. I will do my best to help you solve it.
- **I am committed to mentoring you, even after you leave my lab.** I am committed to your education and training while you are in my lab, and to advising and guiding your career development - to the degree you wish - long after you leave. I will provide honest letters of evaluation for you when you request them.
- **I will lead by example and facilitate your training in complementary skills needed to be a successful scientist, such as oral and written communication, grant writing, lab management, mentoring, and scientific professionalism.** I will encourage you to see opportunities in teaching, even if not required for your degree program. I will also strongly encourage you to gain practice in mentoring undergraduates.
- **I will encourage you to attend scientific/professional meetings and will make an effort to fund such activities.** You can generally expect to attend at least one major conference per year, when you have material to present. Please use conferences as an opportunity to further your education. If you register for a conference, I expect you to attend the scientific sessions and participate in conference activities during the time you are there. Travel fellowships are available through the Departments. I will help you identify and apply for these opportunities.
- **I will discuss data ownership and authorship policies regarding papers with you.** These can create unnecessary conflict within the lab and among collaborators. It is important that we communicate openly and regularly about them. Do not hesitate to voice concerns when you have them.
- **I will strive to be supportive, equitable, accessible, encouraging, and respectful. I will try my best to understand your unique situation, and mentor you accordingly.** I am mindful that each student comes from a different background and has different professional goals. I view my role as fostering your professional confidence and encouraging your critical thinking and creativity. If my attempts to do this are not effective for you, I am open to talking with you about other ways to achieve these goals.

What I expect from you

- Be honest, ethical, and enthusiastic
- Openly share your data and research outcome with your colleagues
- Learn how to plan, design, and conduct high-quality scientific research
- Learn how to present and document your scientific findings
- Be engaged within the research group and broader research community on campus

- Treat your lab mates, lab funds, equipment, and animals with respect
- Be responsible for your lab job.

You will take ownership over your educational experience

- **Ensure that you meet regularly with me and provide me with updates on the progress and results of your activities and experiments.** Make sure that you also use this time to communicate new ideas that you have about your work and challenges that you are facing. Remember: I cannot address or advise about issues that you do not bring to my attention.
- **Be knowledgeable of the policies, deadlines, and requirements of the graduate program, the graduate school, and the university. Actively cultivate your professional development.** MIT has outstanding resources in place to support professional development for students. I expect you to take full advantage of these resources, since part of becoming a successful engineer or scientist involves more than just doing academic research. All graduate degree programs require attendance at a weekly seminar. Various organizations on campus engage in science outreach and information education activities. Attendance at conferences and workshops will also provide professional development opportunities. When you attend a conference, I expect you to seek out these opportunities to make the most of your attendance.

You will be a team player

- **Attend and actively participate in all group meetings, as well as seminars that are part of your educational program.** Participation in group meetings does not mean only presenting your own work, but providing support to others in the lab through shared insight. Do your part to create a climate of engagement and mutual respect.
- **Strive to be the very best lab citizen.** Take part in shared laboratory responsibilities and use laboratory resources carefully and frugally. Maintain a safe and clean laboratory space where data and research participant confidentiality are protected. Be respectful to, tolerant of, and work collegially with all laboratory colleagues: respect individual differences in values, personalities, work styles, and theoretical perspectives.
- **Be a good collaborator.** Engage in collaborations within and beyond our lab group. Collaborations are more than just publishing papers together. They demand effective and frequent communication, mutual respect, trust, and shared goals. Effective collaboration is an extremely important component of the mission of our lab.
- **Acknowledge the efforts of collaborators.** This includes other members of the lab as well as those outside the lab.

You will develop strong research skills

- **Take advantage of your opportunity to work at a world-class university by developing and refining stellar research skills.**
- **Present your work at meetings and seminars and publish scientific articles that effectively present your work to others in the field.** The “currency” in science is published papers: they drive a lot of what we do. We have an obligation to complete and disseminate our findings. I will push you to publish your research as you move through your training program, not only at the end. Students pursuing a doctoral degree will be expected to lead author on at least two journal paper submissions.

- **Keep up with the literature so that you can have a hand in guiding your own research and participate in journal clubs.**
- **Be responsive to advice and constructive criticism.** The feedback you get from me, your colleagues, your committee members, and your course instructors is intended to improve your scientific work.

You will communicate clearly

- **Remember that all of us are “new” at various points in our careers.** If you feel uncertain, overwhelmed, or want additional support, please overtly ask for it. I welcome these conversations and view them as necessary.
- **Let me know the style of communication or schedule of meetings that you prefer.** If there is something about my mentoring style that is proving difficult for you, please tell me so that you give me an opportunity to find an approach that works for you. No single style works for everyone; no one style is expected to work all of the time.
- **Be prompt.** Respond promptly (in most cases, within 48 hours) to emails from anyone in our lab group and show up on time and prepare for meetings. If you need time to gather information in response to an email, please acknowledge receipt of the message and indicate when you will be able to provide the requested information.
- **Discuss policies on work hours, sick leave, and vacation with me directly.** Consult with me and notify fellow lab members in advance of any planned absences. I believe that work-life balance and vacation time are essential for creative thinking and good health and encourage you to take regular vacations.
- **Help other students with their projects and mentor/train other students.** This is a valuable experience! Undergraduates working in the lab should be encouraged to contribute to the writing of manuscripts. If you wish to add other individuals as authors to your papers, please discuss this with me early on and before discussing the situation with the potential coauthors.

Yearly evaluation

Each year we will sit down to discuss progress and goals. At that time, you should be sure to tell me if you are unhappy with any aspect of your experience as a graduate student here. Remember that I am your advocate, as well as your adviser. I will be able to help you with any problems you have with other students, professors, or staff.

Similarly, we should discuss any concerns you have with respect to my role as your adviser. If you feel that you need more guidance, tell me. If you feel that I am interfering too much with your work, tell me. If you would like to meet with me more often, tell me. At the same time, I will tell you if I am satisfied with your progress, and if I think you are on track to graduate by your target date. It will be my responsibility to explain to you any deficiencies, so that you can take steps to fix them. This will be a good time for us to take care of any issues before they become major problems.

(Based on ‘Graduate Mentee Contract’ by Professor Trina MacMahon, University of Wisconsin-Madison)