**DISCUSSION PROMPTS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS AND FACULTY ADVISORS**

Dear GDPE graduate students and advisors,

The student-advisor relationship is a crucial one, in which clear communication is vital for both the student being mentored and the faculty member doing the mentoring. The discussion prompts and questions below are modified from an exercise\* designed to help mentees and mentors align their expectations for how a graduate program will proceed. We recognize that every student-advisor relationship is both unique and dynamic within and across research labs. We offer the prompts below as one way to help students and advisors develop clear lines of communication with each other. Please feel free to use only those prompts that are relevant to your situation. Please also check the [Expectations for Student/Advisor Relationships](https://ecology.colostate.edu/guide-to-your-degree/) and the [timelines](https://colostate.sharepoint.com/sites/GRAD_GDPE_ExCom/Shared%20Documents/General/2021-09-13/timelines) provided on the GDPE website.

Best wishes,

Ruth Hufbauer, Director, and the members of the GDPE Executive Committee

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1. What are the possible career goals that the student has in mind? How can the graduate program and the student-advisor relationship best help the student achieve them?
2. What would success in graduate school look like? What might be achieved:
   1. by the end of the 1st year?
   2. by the end of the 2nd year (MS program) or 3rd year (PhD programs)?
   3. by graduation?
3. How long is it likely to take to complete this degree?
4. How many hours per week and at what times/days the graduate student might expect to work on research? How much time in a semester might be reasonable for engagement with the GDPE community (e.g. attending seminars and other events, participating in FRSES, etc.)?
5. Work-life balance: How much time is reasonable to spend on non-academic pursuits to maintain a healthy work-life balance and take care of other commitments (e.g., family, community, etc.)?
6. An important role of advisors is just that - to advise – to help students develop as scientists, which can include things like outlining a timeline and providing critical feedback. Discuss how the student likes to receive and the advisor likes to give feedback. For example, do you each prefer written feedback or verbal feedback? How often do you plan to meet together to discuss graduate school and research progress?
7. Writing is a crucial part of obtaining a degree in GDPE. What role the advisor might play in the development of the student’s writing skills? For example, will there be feedback and guidance throughout the process of writing a first complete draft, or will the feedback process start with a completed draft? How many rounds of feedback might be given? These choices are a matter of style and preference, and it is good to know each other’s preferences at the start.
8. Writing typically leads to the publication of peer-reviewed papers. How many papers might come out of this degree program, and what are some examples of target journals? Who might be first author or corresponding author?
9. Does the planned research involve lengthy field trips where the student might be isolated with others for long periods? Discuss potential safety issues to establish open lines of communication. For example, it can be useful to discuss contingency plans, such as what to do, who to contact, and where to go in the event of auto failure, broken equipment, or emergency, and also to consider what resources might be required (both time and money) to make sure that such events don’t derail research progress too much.
10. What institutional safety or ethics training might be required for the planned research?