

## Yale GSAS Mentoring Conversation Guide for Graduate Students

Regular, clear communication of expectations for meeting academic and professional milestones is foundational to a productive mentoring relationship. Below is a list of suggested topics that can be adapted to guide mentoring conversations as you plan to meet your academic and professional goals. Some topics may be more relevant depending on the nature of the mentor/mentee relationship. For example, in the context of an academic advising relationship (formal or informal), focusing on academic milestones will be your primary work with your mentor. As you build a mentoring network of peers and professional connections within and/or outside your field of study, addressing professional development more broadly in mentoring conversations will become more relevant. This template is intended as a starting point for thinking about how to structure conversations within the context of a mentoring network.

### Expectations for Communication

- Meeting pattern
  - o Discuss a meeting schedule that will provide accountability and structure for achieving professional goals
  - o Consider setting agenda items ahead of each meeting so that both parties can come prepared
- Mode of communication
  - o Agree upon acceptable modes of communication (email, phone, text, etc.)
  - o Set expectations for reasonable response times

### Academic Planning and Milestones

- Consult the GSAS [\*Guide to Advising Processes for Faculty and Students\*](#) and your department's own advising guidelines for guidance on structuring your mentoring relationships within the context of academic advising
- Consider keeping a document, spreadsheet, or checklist that you can consult and update as you move through your degree program
- Work with your mentor to build in accountability for achieving program milestones
- Maintain clear communication about planned dates for meeting milestones and for graduation

### Feedback

- Discuss expectations around soliciting and receiving feedback on professional activities
  - o On what professional activities will your mentor be providing feedback and in what form?
  - o How far in advance should you submit work for review and, correspondingly, what is a reasonable length of time to allow for review and response?

## Professional Development

- Discuss expectations for the development of professional skills and a concrete plan to apply these skills, for example:
  - Norms and expectations around authorship (e.g., co-authorship/collaboration, if applicable; publication process and timeline; format, etc.)
  - Participation and presentation at professional meetings/conferences
  - Participation and presentation at departmental workshops, colloquia, seminars, etc.
  - Pursuing additional training opportunities (e.g., internships, professional development experiences, courses, etc.) in your field and/or in other career paths that may be of interest
  - Funding sources available for these activities and how to secure it
- Discuss additional opportunities to network (e.g., personal connections with colleagues and peers, informational interviews, etc.)
- Discuss short-, medium-, and long-term goals in the various skill areas of your field
  - Consider creating an [Individual Development Plan \(IDP\)](#) or similar document that allows you to articulate a strategic plan for your professional development in the short and the long term
  - Revisit your plan periodically with your mentor and be open to adjusting it as your research interests and career goals develop over the course of your program

## Work/Life Balance

- Discuss reasonable expectations for time off (vacation time, sick time, etc.)
- Engage in open communication about how to establish healthy personal and professional boundaries
- Talk with your mentor about support resources on campus (mental health resources, accessibility accommodations, wellness resources, career services, family support, etc.) as applicable. What resources does your mentor recommend you be aware of?
- Build in flexibility to accommodate unanticipated issues that may arise in your personal or professional life
  - If you need to take time away, how can you adjust your plans to get back on track when you return?
  - What role can your mentor play in providing support if such an adjustment is necessary?