

# GAGLIA LAB MENTOR-MENTEE COMPACT

UPDATED: 4/16/2023

## INTRODUCTION

### **My values**

I believe anyone who has the desire and drive to do science should be able to access a research career, regardless of their race, gender, nationality, background, etc. I see my role as providing a supportive and inclusive environment that will allow everyone who comes to the lab to feel like they belong and can grow into the professional they want to be. I recognize that the enterprise of science has been built by white people and continues to present unique challenges particularly to people of color. It is my intention to do my part to improve the situation, and to support lab members in this effort too. That said, I will make missteps and mistakes, and I am constantly learning my own biases and assumptions. I am committed to learning and welcome feedback.

### **The scope of my job**

It is my job to initiate research that will make tangible contributions to science, mentor students and postdocs, secure funding for the lab, participate in graduate teaching, and perform department and campus level administrative service (e.g. thesis meetings/oral exams, graduate/faculty recruitment efforts, administrative committees). In addition, I am expected to perform service to the greater scientific community, for example by serving on grant panels, journal review/editorial boards, participating in conference organization, etc. Finally, a critical component of my position is disseminating our discoveries and drumming up enthusiasm for our research by giving talks and publishing papers. Publications are essential not only to the success of each lab member, but also to the success of the lab as a whole. They directly impact our ability to secure grants, as well as our reputation in our research community.

### **Why have a compact?**

Agreements between researchers (undergraduate students, graduate students, postdoctoral associates, research assistants and associates) and their faculty supervisor (me) are often implicit. But an implicit agreement is little better than no agreement. This document makes things explicit. Much may be common knowledge, but writing down common expectations helps prevent misunderstandings.

If you have been invited to join my research group or are already a member, please read the whole thing carefully. If you have questions or concerns, please talk about them; the document, like my research style, is a work in progress. I review this document periodically to make sure that my expectations and obligations are clear and that nothing important is forgotten.

In the spirit of full disclosure, I have tried to identify what's distinctive about working with me—both the good and the bad:

- Working with trainees, especially students, and contributing to their professional development is the most rewarding part of my job. My ideal is to help all trainees develop into colleagues.
- I am ambitious and have high standards, and I expect the same from you.
- You can take on as much responsibility as you want. I hope that all trainees – including interns, technicians and master students - will leave the lab having progressed in their development as skilled

researchers, who can identify important problems, solve them, write about them, and present them to a technical audience.

- I like mentoring so I take on more interns, summer students and master students than some other laboratories and expect current lab members to work with them.
- I have many other calls on my time and I sometimes move meetings with little notice because of conflicts or because I dropped some of the balls that I am juggling. I apologize in advance.
- I believe that our mindset is at the core of our success. I am constantly working on my own and bring what I am learning from that coaching to my mentoring.
- I am ultimately in charge of the laboratory. I try to take everyone's opinion and view into account, but I may make decisions that you disagree with from time to time.

## WHAT I EXPECT FROM YOU

The most important part of my job to me is to train and advise others in biomedical research. I must contribute to your professional development and progress in your degree. I will help you set goals and hopefully achieve them. You will be helping me carry out the laboratory's research. It is imperative that we do so using good scientific methods and that we conduct ourselves in an ethical way. In general, I expect you to:

- Learn how to plan, design, and conduct high quality scientific research
- Learn how to present and document your scientific findings
- Be honest, ethical, and enthusiastic
- Be engaged within the research group and with outside colleagues
- Treat your lab mates, lab funds, and equipment with respect
- Take advantage of professional development opportunities
- Work hard – don't give up!

### ► **Take ownership over your research and training experience**

✓ **Acknowledge that you have the primary responsibility for the progress of your research project and, if applicable, the successful completion of your degree or fellowship.** You should maintain a high level of professionalism, self-motivation, engagement, scientific curiosity, and ethical standards.

✓ **Ensure that you meet regularly with me and provide me with updates on the progress and results of your activities and experiments.** In general, we should meet once a week to review primary data. If you cannot make the normal meeting time, we can reschedule or, on occasions, cancel the meeting. I will also appreciate you having patience with me as I may have conflicts that will lead to rescheduling too. I expect you will come to the meeting with your primary data labeled and organized. You should also have thought about what the data may mean and how to move forward. I have recently implemented a spreadsheet system to track goals for the upcoming week or month, and to help people decide on priorities. The spreadsheet is updated at each meeting. The granularity of the plans may depend on the stage of training and the situation. Make sure that you also use this time to communicate new ideas that you have about your work and challenges that you are facing, or feedback you have for me to improve my mentoring.

✓ **For students: be knowledgeable of the policies, deadlines, and requirements of your program.** Comply with all academic program milestones. In particular, I am not fully aware of the rules and deadlines of each academic program – it is up to you to keep to them, inform me of anything you need, and seek my help or the laboratory's help for feedback if necessary. Whenever the deadlines involve a written document, please send me a draft 1 week of YOUR deadline in advance for feedback (or more for longer documents like a Master's thesis). Whenever the deadlines involve a presentation, please send me a draft of your slides at least a few days in advance. I also encourage you to schedule a practice talk with me and the laboratory, either as a part of the lab meeting schedule or as an extra lab event (use Doodle/When2meet to find an appropriate time).

✓ **Be knowledgeable of the policies, deadlines, and requirements of the university.** Comply with all institutional policies, including academic program milestones, laboratory practices, and rules related to chemical safety, biosafety, and radiation safety.

✓ **Actively cultivate your professional development.** Take advantage of resources for professional development that are available at the institution, since becoming a successful scientist involves more than just doing academic research. I expect all lab members to attend relevant seminars, minimally the IMV weekly seminar. Also, most graduate degree programs require attendance at a weekly seminar. Attendance at conferences and workshops will also provide professional development opportunities. It is a good idea to become a member of one or more professional societies such as the American Society for Virology or the RNA Society (also reduces costs of meeting registration). I can cover the costs.

✓ **Develop your writing and presentation skills.** As you start to make progress on your individual project, begin outlining a paper's figures and drafting the text. I have made diagrams of how to make an outline and

plan out the writing process, which can be found in the Gagliablab Google Drive (MyDrive > manuscript outlines) Be prepared to go through several rounds of revisions before submitting an abstract or paper. Although the availability of travel funds will vary, I encourage you to submit your work for presentation at one conference per year. Conference abstracts need to be approved by me prior to submission, and we should work on your talk or poster together before it is finalized. Abstract drafts should be sent to me ~1 week prior to the deadline, and talks should be practiced with the whole lab.

### ► **Be a team player**

- ✓ **Attend and actively participate in all group meetings, as well as seminars.** Participation in lab and sub-group meetings does not mean only presenting your own work, but also providing support to others in the lab through shared insight. If you have questions that come up during the meeting, please ask them as they come to you instead of waiting to talk to the person later. It will encourage discussion among everybody and help you practice asking questions in less “safe” situations (seminars, conferences etc.). You should refrain from using your computer or phone during research meetings, and, if on Zoom, do other activities while in the meeting. 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. Maintain a safe and clean laboratory space. Be respectful, tolerant of, and work collegially with all laboratory colleagues: respect individual differences in values, personalities, work styles, and theoretical perspectives. That said, not all lab members become personal friends (it often happens but not always) and you should still be able to work collegially with each other.
- ✓ **Apply for fellowships, awards, and travel grants, if applicable.** Not only will an award help your career and the overall lab funding situation, the experience of writing the proposal will help you think about what you are doing more deeply. If you see an award you are eligible for, please let me know and I’ll be happy to nominate you. PhD students and postdocs should also apply for outside funding at least once during their tenure (unless there are extenuating circumstances). Staff scientists may also apply for outside funding if applicable. For these, please work with me to set a schedule for drafts. There is an ideal timetable diagram in GoogleDrive.
- ✓ **Acknowledge the contributions of others to your work,** especially when presenting. This may include other lab members, including interns, and collaborators.
- ✓ **Help others with their work but also respect people’s time when they are helping you.** I would like everybody to feel that they can ask others to help completing small tasks (split cells, collect samples that are easy to collect, add drug treatments) if they need to be away and that they can ask others to show them how to do a specific protocol that is new to them. However, people that receive the help should appreciate and respect the time that others are taking. Be reasonable in your request for help. Also, if someone is showing you a protocol, take notes and read the protocol so that you can repeat it on your own as soon as possible (after 1-2 times with help).
- ✓ **Mentor others.** I will expect you to be willing to mentor others – rotation students, interns etc. I am open to working with you on whether this is reasonable at the specific time, but it is part of your lab experience. It is also an important skill to develop, whichever career path you go onto.
- ✓ **Respond timely to communication from me or the laboratory.** I use Slack for most laboratory communication, so make sure you check the Gaglia Lab workspace regularly (at least a few times daily) and set notifications (please set to stop at night). I have Slack on my phone so I can get even urgent messages timely. Contact me on my phone only in a true emergency (accident/lab fire etc.).

► **Develop strong research skills**

- ✓ **Take advantage of your opportunity to work at a world-class university by developing and refining stellar research skills.** I expect that you will learn how to plan, design, and conduct high quality scientific research.
- ✓ **Prepare scientific articles that effectively present your work to others in the field.** The ‘currency’ in science is published papers, and we have an obligation to funding agencies (and taxpayers) 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. PhD students will be expected to be lead author on at least one research manuscript, although two would be better for career advancement. Postdocs should aim for at least 2 first author. We will deposit all our manuscripts on a preprint server like bioRxiv at the same time as we submit them to a peer-reviewed journal.
- ✓ **Keep up with the literature so that you can have a hand in guiding your own research.** Block at least one hour per week to read papers, or some time every day. You are expected to keep on top of both current and past literature related to your project. While I may seem like I can do it, I do not have the bandwidth to be on top of all of the literature for everyone’s project—I *expect you to be the expert!* Please forward me papers you come across that you think are particularly relevant.
- ✓ **Maintain detailed, organized, and accurate laboratory records.** You should maintain an electronic lab notebook through LabArchive. Your notes should allow your work to be reproduced (meaning they must be understandable by people other than yourself) and will help to assign credit for authorship. They are required by funding agencies and for any potential patents. At a minimum each experiment should clearly identify the purpose, what you did, the results, and your conclusions. Be aware that your notes, records and all tangible research data are property of the lab. When you leave the lab, I encourage you to take copies of your data with you. But one full set of all data must stay in the lab, with appropriate and accessible documentation. Store all your data on the lab’s Box account which is automatically backed up. (Box Sync and Box Drive are tools to simplify this process – take advantage of them). [*I think this will become Research Drive at UW, TBD*]

► **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.
- ✓ **If you feel that something is going on in the lab environment that is not ok, please bring it to my attention before it gets out of control.** I do expect you all to be adults and try to communicate with each other first and resolve conflict. That said, sometimes I will need to get involved. In this case, it helps the situation if you get clarity with yourself on what you would like to see as the outcome and communicate this clearly. Beware that you may also have to accept you may not get all you want.
- ✓ **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 the time. Do not skip meetings with me if you feel that you have not made adequate progress on your research; these might be the most critical times to meet with a mentor. Also, do not skip meetings without letting me know in advance.
- ✓ **Discuss policies on work hours, leave and vacation with me.** I am not interested in tracking hours – instead, I am interested to see that you are productive. As long as you are meeting expectations, you can largely set your own schedule. That said, I expect that, on average, the majority of your time in lab should overlap with regular working hours (e.g. ~10AM-6PM), as this will enable you to interact with and get advice from others in the lab and vice versa. Also recognize that a certain amount of face-time with your pipettes is

necessary for making sufficient progress on your project. I do not expect people to work on weekends or school holidays, but again recognize it may be necessary at times to keep experiments moving forward. Please notify me in advance of planned absences and record them on the Lab's Google Calendar. Work-life balance and vacation time are essential for creative thinking and good health. I think that it is reasonable for you to take ~3 weeks of personal travel away from the lab in any given year in addition to university holidays. I am also happy to consider longer leaves when situations call for them—particularly for health and/or family reasons. I will also honor any needed absences for religious reasons. Generally, I do not keep track of what you do, so unless you are taking a lot of time off, I probably won't notice. I mostly would like to know if you will be away for planning (and to make sure nothing has happened to you if you don't come to work!).

## 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 one of my top priorities, no matter their personal strengths and weaknesses, or career goals.
- ✓ **I will set the scientific direction for the lab and provide the means to pursue those directions.** This will include helping you to find a research topic, writing grants to fund the research, and seeking out collaborators for our work to further your opportunities.
- ✓ **I will be available for regular meeting and informal conversations.** My schedule often requires that we plan in advance for meetings. However, I also welcome informal discussions, so feel free to come in anytime my door is open or to contact me to set extra meetings.
- ✓ **I am committed to mentoring you now and in the future.** I am committed to your education and training while in my lab, and to advising and guiding your career development. I will work to promote you and your work. I will do my best to provide with help with any career path you choose.
- ✓ **I am committed to training you in career development skills beyond doing experiments.** I will work with you on writing and presentations. I will also do my best to work on you on developing confidence and a mindset for success.
- ✓ **I will be your advocate.** If you have a problem, come and see me. I will do my best to help you solve it. That includes situations when you feel you have been on the receiving end of a micro or macroaggression. I can't promise I can help but I will try.
- ✓ **I will discuss data ownership and authorship policies regarding papers with you.** My general policy is to include as author anyone who has contributed data that were essential for the project, even when the specific experiment had to be redone for the final paper. This includes rotation students and undergraduate interns. However, there may be situation where the inclusion or order of authors is not clear cut. 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 encourage you to attend scientific/professional meetings.** I will not be able to cover all requests but you can generally expect to attend at least one major conference per year, when you have material to present. Securing outside funding (e.g. a fellowship or travel award) will enable you to attend additional meetings. I will work together with you to optimize your presentation.
- ✓ **For students, I will help you navigate your program of study.** As stated above, you are responsible for keeping up with deadlines and being knowledgeable about requirements for your specific program. However, I am available to help interpret these requirements, select appropriate coursework, select members for your thesis committees, etc.
- ✓ **I will be honest and strive to communicate well.** I will be upfront but respectful if I feel your progress is not adequate for your stage of training or there is any problem that has come to my attention. On the other hand, if I do not communicate this to you, then assume that I am happy with everything. If you are working with a more senior lab member (typically that would be a rotation or undergraduate student, but could also be a new lab member), I will ask your mentor how you are doing and I may discuss that feedback with you, so do not be surprised or offended. This communication will always have the intent to foster your growth, as well as to resolve any problem before it gets out of hand.
- ✓ **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 trainee comes from a different background and has different professional goals. It will help if you keep me in formed about your experiences.

✓ **I will meet you once a year to discuss an individual development plan (Note: this is meant more for long-term members of the laboratory, but if you wish to do so I am happy to do it for shorter-term members too)** Each year we will sit down to discuss progress and goals. At that time, you should remember to tell me if you are unhappy with any aspect of your experience as a trainee here. Remember that I am your advocate, as well as your advisor. I will be able to help you with any problems you might have with other members of the community (students, professors, or staff). Similarly, we should discuss any concerns that you have with respect to my role as your advisor, including guidance, my availability etc. This will be a good time for us to take care of any issues before they become major problems.



## WHAT YOU SHOULD EXPECT FROM EACH OTHER

- ✓ **Collaboration and respect.** You should all treat each other with respect for who you are, where you are coming from and the stage of training you are at. We can all learn from each other and being more senior does not mean better, just more or less experienced.
- ✓ **Honest communication.** Say what you mean and mean what you say.
- ✓ **Attention and participation during meetings, whether in person or on Zoom.**
- ✓ **Judicious use of lab resources.**
- ✓ **No yelling or provoking arguments.**

At times, research training and work, at all levels, can feel very stressful. If you begin to feel overwhelmed, anxious, or depressed—please seek assistance and take time to attend to your mental health.

And also: please call me Marta.