Pollinator Ecology (Mallinger) Lab Guidance for Graduate Students

Welcome to the lab! This document outlines expectations and tips for success as a graduate student. While some of these guidelines are set in stone and non-negotiable (e.g. expectations at the university or department level, ethical issues), others are open for discussion. My goal as an advisor is to help you succeed in graduate school and beyond, and I recognize that every student is unique. Your research project, career goals, and strengths and weaknesses will all determine expectations and working arrangements. I therefore encourage you to discuss with me the below expectations and guidelines both at the beginning of your program and as you progress through the program. I also encourage you to develop expectations you have of me as your advisor and mentor. My expectations of you, and your expectations of me, can be jointly discussed and agreed upon.

**Success in graduate school**

Many things will determine your success in graduate school. This can be a challenging, rewarding, intellectually stimulating, and even fun period, but it can also be overwhelming. Some tips for success include:

* Be in regular communication with the department’s academic advisors (currently Elena Alyanaya). You should check in with them once a semester and pay attention to the deadlines, processes, and expectations laid out for you in the Canvas advising hub and graduate student handbook. It is your job to make sure that you follow all procedures for registering for courses, proposal, preliminary exam, and final exam, and meeting all milestones.
* Be in regular communication with your advisor (me!). I generally meet with students once per week or every other week. Please do your best to keep these meetings unless it is absolutely necessary to cancel.
* Seek other advice, feedback, and guidance. Utilize your committee members! They are there to guide you through research, professional development, and the job search. Don’t be shy about scheduling meetings with them and asking them questions.
* Read the literature both specifically and broadly. Talk to me about strategies for keeping up with the literature.
* Take opportunities to collaborate with other students, post-docs, or faculty, and present your work at conferences. Signing up to present your research is a great way to set deadlines for yourself as you progress through your program, and attending conferences is a great way to network.
* Engage with the department. Try your best to attend weekly seminars. The department and student organization (ENSO) also hosts a number of social events. While it may not be reasonable to always attend these socials, showing up on occasion can provide great benefits both professionally and personally.

**Lab respect and collegiality:**

Graduate school will be a time for you to learn to work with others and mentor others. I expect all graduate students to mentor undergraduates at some point in their program. To ensure a collegial and productive lab group, please respect the lab space and shared equipment. This includes cleaning up after yourself in the lab, being proactive about organizing and cleaning the lab, following all safety procedures, and reserving lab vehicles and shared equipment in advance using the lab calendar.

**Work expectations**

To create opportunities to interact with colleagues, I expect everyone to spend some regular time in the lab/office (Steinmetz)—at least several hours per week. How you divide your time between working in person and remotely is up to you, but I expect each student to come into the lab/office at least a couple of days per week. Please think about what tasks work best in the lab/office and what tasks are better done remotely. The exception to this is peak field season when I understand that you may be in the field all day most days!

I strongly encourage you to take breaks! You should feel free to take all official UF holidays off and a reasonable additional amount of vacation (2-3 weeks per year). You should take sick leave as needed, but please talk with me early and often if health issues are impacting your progress. Note that breaks (winter, spring, summer) are not necessarily official UF holidays, and you should plan to work on your research or assistantship duties during those periods unless it is an official holiday or you are taking vacation.

**Data organization and ownership**

Hard-copy data should be entered digitally as soon as possible. When immediate data entry is not possible, consider taking a photograph of the data sheets to preserve digitally. Digital data should be backed up to at least two sources, one of which should be UF OneDrive. It is your responsibility to make sure that your data is backed up. When you leave the lab, all data and data outputs will be saved in the lab’s One Drive folder. You will also be asked to provide metadata for all data files upon completion of your research.

We collect a lot of insect specimens in the lab. All specimens should be pinned, given a unique ID number, labeled (with site, date, and method of collection, collector, and identifier), and entered digitally. Seek out assistance with insect identification. In general, all IDs should be verified by a second and experienced lab member (Rachel or other).

**Publications and conference presentations**

Writing for publication is an essential part of the graduate research experience; a typical dissertation will result in at least 3 publications while a MSc project will result in at least 1 publication. For the most part, I will be a co-author on all publications unless they are unrelated to your main PhD/MSc project, but I expect you to take the lead on publications. I expect my students to be both the first (primary) and corresponding author on all publications. In the event that you graduate and do not have interest in publishing any unpublished work, I will take over as the corresponding author and you will remain first author. Students will also be co-authors on lab research projects if they provide at least two of the following: intellectual contributions to developing project questions and methods, data collection in field or lab, data analysis, and/or manuscript writing.

Likewise, for all conference presentations and posters, I will be a co-author unless the presentation is on work done outside of your main project. As a co-author, I request that you send the presentation or poster at least 1 week before it is presented. All other co-authors should also be given the opportunity to review your presentation or poster in advance.

For your proposal, thesis or dissertation, you should work with me well in advance of sending the document to the rest of your committee. It is my job to make sure that what you send to your committee is in relatively good shape and ready for their review. Plan for multiple rounds of review with me, and thus plan to be working on these documents well in advance of any deadlines. In general, documents should be sent to your committee at least 2 weeks in advance of your presentation/exam.

**Safety**

Field and lab safety are of the upmost importance. In general, you should not go to the field alone if it is possible to have another student or lab member with you. Undergraduates should never be sent to the field alone under any circumstance. If you need to do solo field work, please make sure Rachel and/or the lab manager know where you are and try to stay within an easy distance of your vehicle. Always carry a charged cell phone. First-aid kits are in each lab vehicle – familiarize yourself with their contents.

**My responsibilities**

One of my main responsibilities is seeking out funding for your research. However, I also encourage you to apply for your own funding. With some exceptions, all funding applications need to be processed and approved by UF. Thus, you need to let me know of a funding opportunity you want to apply for at least 3 weeks in advance of the deadline.

I will also:

• Schedule a regular meeting with you, typically weekly or biweekly.

• Be available for unscheduled meetings and emergencies. I can be reached by text if you need a response within 24 hours. For emergencies, call at any time of the day or night (269-267-4757).

• When new skills are needed, teach them, find other instruction, or develop a plan for self-teaching.

• Help plan experiments, accompany you the field (especially early in your research), and help analyse your data.

• Help over roadblocks.

• Constructively criticize writing and presentation skills

• Evaluate your work thoroughly and carefully.

• Require challenging goals to be set and met.

• Help you prepare for qualifying examinations.

• Help with job-hunting or connect you to people who can better help you find career opportunities.

• Write letters of recommendation

• Nominate you for appropriate awards and fellowships

**Additional thoughts.**

Please 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 advisor. Similarly, we should discuss any concerns that you have with respect to my role as your advisor. 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. We will evaluate your progress and your satisfaction with your program each semester.

Graduate school can be a challenging time. If you need or would benefit from mental health services, please know that there are services available to you within and outside of UF. The UF Counseling and Wellness Center offers consultations, short-term individual counseling, psychiatry, and group counseling (find out more [here](https://counseling.ufl.edu/services/)). There is also non-clinical support for students available through [CARE](https://care.dso.ufl.edu/schedule-an-appointment/) (Campus assistance and resources for empowerment). Students in our department have also found good mental health care through [Talkspace](https://www.talkspace.com/online-therapy/)

**The lab is committed to working for equality and inclusion in our lab and welcome lab members from all races, sexual orientations, cultures, and backgrounds. We stand against racism, bigotry, and all forms of hate, and actively work to combat inequality and injustice in our field. Please let me know if you experience any type of harassment or discrimination during your time at UF. If you do not feel comfortable sharing that with me, you can report any discrimination to UF anonymously.** Anonymous reports can be made to the UF [Compliance Hotline](https://compliance.ufl.edu/compliance-hotline/) by calling (877) 556-5356 or using its [online reporting service](https://app.mycompliancereport.com/report.aspx?cid=uofl).