



## Questions Frequently Asked by Mentees

### 1. What types of assistance should mentors be able to provide?

One of the great things about peer mentors is that they have had experience being in your program. This means that they can give advice on the culture of your program, important degree milestones and their timelines, professional protocol, how they dealt with adjustments to graduate school, etc. They are also experts in the graduate student experience outside research and classes; they know what it's like to deal with the confusion, uncertainty, and stress of graduate school. They are there to listen to you with friendly and sympathetic ears!

### 2. How much is too much to ask of a mentor, in terms of time devoted to me?

Don't hesitate to call on any mentor, for emergency concerns. For non-emergency concerns, the best way to answer this question is to think about how you would feel in their place. Whenever you have a concern, it is fine to ask their advice, because that is why they are there. Mentors have volunteered to serve as resources for their peers and have agreed to meet face to face every other week (bi-weekly). You may want to work out a somewhat regular meeting schedule that is convenient for both of you where you can share your questions. These meetings can be over lunch, coffee, or just in the mentor's office. If you feel a mentor is hard to interrupt, try email, which can be answered when time permits and can be followed up in person at a mutually convenient time.

### 3. Should I seek help from another mentor if I don't think an assigned mentor is best able to help me?

It is certainly fine to build connections with other mentors; this is exactly what the peer mentor network is for! It is likely that, as you progress in your program, you will meet new people, your interests will change, etc. This may mean that you find other students or mentors that you go to more often for advice, and there is no problem with that. You might just mention to your mentor that you've met others with whom you have some common ground, so that your mentor won't worry about you.

### 4. What can a peer mentor offer beyond any other graduate students I interact with (in my lab, classes, etc.)?

A peer mentor by no means replaces these other students you know and from whom you get advice. A peer mentor is just one more person in your support network during your graduate career. Having a peer mentor to talk to who is not involved with your advisor or your research can be beneficial in obtaining an outside, perspective. They can also refer you to the right office or person on campus when an issue is beyond their expertise.

**For immediate assistance or additional information about the program, please contact Graduate Division Program staff at 228-4723 or visit: [graddiv.ucmerced.edu](http://graddiv.ucmerced.edu).**

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**1. How should I initiate contact with students, and how often?**

Feel free to contact your mentees directly to ask when they would like to meet. At the first meeting you can discuss how often they would like to meet with you. We encourage all peer mentors to meet face to face with their mentees at least once every other week (bi-weekly).

**2. What type of advice should I be prepared to give to students?**

Students tend to ask how long it usually takes students in your graduate group to complete a degree, what steps are necessary to complete a degree, things you have learned along the way towards completing your degree (perhaps things you might have done differently), how to work with advisors, etc. You may also be asked about the more personal side of the graduate school experience, like managing stress, coping with doubts about staying in graduate school, balancing relationships with work, living on a graduate student budget, etc.

**3. What do I do if the person I'm mentoring says that they think they might quit grad school?**

Ask why! If it is something you have been through before, talk about your experience. Find out if it is actually the program, the advisor, the field of study, or the profession that they dislike, or if they are having emotional difficulty. In the latter case, a referral to Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at UC Merced, may be the most appropriate response you can make.

**4. What type of support network is available if I find that I am being asked questions for which I don't have ready answers? Also, what should I do if a time-sensitive problem comes up that I find I just don't have the time to deal with at the moment?**

If you find yourself confronted with issues beyond your time demands or expertise, whether personal or professional, there are people and campus resources you can encourage your mentee to utilize. Graduate Division program staff is readily available to assist in navigating the appropriate campus resources. The school deans can help with policy issues and problems related to degree progress, time to degree, advisor conflicts, etc. For issues of a more personal nature, such as depression and anxiety, please refer students to Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at UC Merced. Additionally, the Office of Ombuds Services provides a safe, alternative channel for confidential, neutral and informal dispute resolution services.

**5. For how long will I be expected to mentor?**

The commitment we ask for is one year, however mentor appointments are confirmed each semester. You may build connections with students for their entire graduate student career, while others might not ask for mentoring advice after their first year; other students may connect with other mentors as their needs and interests change.

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