Bergmann lab: Expectations for Postdocs  updated April 2023

My commitments to lab members

My goal is for every member of the lab to become an accomplished independent researcher during their tenure in the lab. This includes learning about working at the bench, acquiring scientific independence in projects, mastering the literature in your field, and working on the project of your choice. It also includes learning about other aspects of doing science, such as scientific writing, grant writing, giving excellent scientific presentations, networking, and speaking well.

Your physical and mental health are important. Science at its best is exhilarating and provides deep satisfaction and meaning, but interspersed with these “highs” can be experimental failure and periods of frustration, anxiety and burn-out. I find it helpful to remember that every day we are literally trying to do what no one has ever succeeded at before! It’s important to train for the endurance race.

Hours: Science doesn’t have set hours and this is both a blessing and a curse. On the good side, you can adapt your working style to your personal circadian rhythm. On the challenging side, biology research does have its own sets of demands, and organisms may need you at inconvenient times. I won’t lie to you and say I only work 40 hours a week, or that I think it would be possible to do what I do in that time, but I also have chosen certain responsibilities (journal editing, advisory boards, traveling) that you do not need to do. It is important to interact with other lab members, so unless otherwise arranged, I expect people to be around between 11am and 3pm M-F.

Timing of emails: I often get to the end of the week with a big pileup of emails to take care of, and so you may receive emails from me on weekends or at odd hours (especially as I am traveling). Or I may just hear something that I think will be interesting to you. If it is essential to respond to these immediately, I will preface them with URGENT.

Your time and effort are valuable to me and I will do my utmost to help you in your work, take your best interests to heart, and direct your efforts in ways that benefit you first and foremost.

I will do everything in my power to enable students to accomplish their experimental agenda by securing funding, acquiring the appropriate equipment, and establishing important collaborations.

I will invest in a friendly and pleasant working environment, and I will consider the input of lab members when making important decisions (including hiring decisions).

I will support you in your career goals, whatever they may be.

My responsibilities toward postdocs

- Work with you to develop project ideas
- Work with you to interpret results of experiments
- Proof-read and contribute to writing of manuscripts
- Discuss future career goals (e.g., do you want to teach, go into academia, continue in research?), and plan ways to facilitate these goals
- Support travel to at least 1 conference during postdoc, and endeavor to enable yearly conference attendance
- Meet ~every two weeks individually to discuss progress and pitfalls
- Assist with identifying and writing fellowship applications and job applications
• Provide feedback on oral presentations
• Ensure that mutually understood expectations and goals are in place at the outset of the postdoctoral training period.
• Meet regularly to establish and foster a career development plan and to assess important aspects of the postdoctoral fellow’s progress.
• Strike a reasonable balance between your responsibility to participate in research central to the themes and missions of the lab and opportunities to develop scholarship reflecting your own research interests as a postdoc.
• Respect the postdoctoral fellow’s individuality, working style, and career goals and be aware that the rate of progress of postdoctoral fellows will vary.
• Maintain an atmosphere in which you, as a postdoctoral fellow, feel free to approach me for advice or discussion of differences.

• Encourage each postdoctoral fellow to seek advice and collaborative opportunities from other faculty members, or even to identify a second mentor, since the training experience can only benefit from a variety of perspectives.
• Promote ethical standards for conducting research, including compliance with all institutional and federal regulations.
• Accord full recognition of the postdoctoral fellow’s contributions to scholarship, including appropriate authorship of published work.
• Establish clear plans for how projects will be divided when fellows complete their training.

**Conflict resolution.** No matter how much we try to avoid it, in close quarters problems and tensions can sometimes arise. It is important for me to treat co-workers fairly when this happens. There are two ways to avoid serious problems:

1. It is important to be clear about expectations, intentions, and feelings ahead of time. We will do this when you join the lab, but will also have these conversations centered on specific projects. These may include informal agreements, collaboration, use of equipment, authorship on manuscripts, etc. A few basic guidelines ahead of time can prevent tensions later on.

2. When problems do arise, all parties must be committed to resolving them in a professional manner. Don't hesitate to come talk to me early and to be clear about your position. If you feel that I am not treating you fairly or that I may be biased or conflicted about a certain issue, we can appoint a third party who can help mediate the discussion.

**Expectations of Postdocs**

• Assume primary responsibility for the development of his or her research and career.

• Play an active role in seeking career and research advice, both from the faculty supervisor and from other faculty members as appropriate.
• Perform the research required by the faculty supervisor to a high standard and in accordance with all institutional and federal regulations.

• Work in a collegial and cooperative manner with the faculty supervisor and other co-workers.

• Prepare for and engage fully in yearly IDP meetings

• Participate in weekly lab meetings
• Write and submit manuscripts
• Proof-read manuscripts from other lab members
• Apply for external funding (either individual postdoc fellowships or contributing to larger lab grant writing)
• Maintain a set of lab notes, including directories of data, annotated codes & versions, detailed methods. These need to sufficient to reproduce results without additional instructions.
• Attend departmental seminars
• Participate in general lab responsibilities (servers, maintain common areas, taking turns hosting visitors)
• Optional, but preferred: Mentor at least one undergraduate student

Working together in the lab

Our lab, in the short-term and long-term, depends on building and maintaining a solid foundation of reagents and protocols for the benefit of future work, as we benefit from the work others have done. Therefore, it is critical to:

Maintain organized and electronically cataloged databases of oligos, plasmids and seeds.

Freeze common stocks of plasmids and strains that you create.

Document your research and protocols, and post your protocols on this website for other members of the lab to view and use.

Be courteous to other scientists in the lab: re-order reagents that may run out, take care of sensitive reagents and equipment so that others may use them after you, and clean up after yourself.

Contribute to the organization and cleanliness of the entire lab and your own work space.
Do your lab tasks in a timely and diligent manner.

Provide thoughtful and constructive criticism that will help lab members move forward in their work and improve the effectiveness of their presentation.

Take time to carefully read and comment on lab written materials (such as manuscripts, grants, and proposals that other members of the lab are writing).

If problems arise, be open about the problem and pragmatic about resolving it. I am always available to help deal with any lab problem.

Collaboration is an integral part of successful research. If someone comes to the lab from another lab looking for help or to use equipment, everyone is expected to lend a hand in a friendly and forthcoming manner.

All members of the lab, whether they are postdocs or high-school students, deserve the same amount of respect, courtesy, and consideration.

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