

Communicating effectively with your supervisor



Start early

- ☐ Don't wait until problems build up – early conversations help prevent confusion.
- ☐ Early + clear communication reduces most common challenges.

Reflect before you speak

- ☐ What are your roles and responsibilities?
- ☐ What are your supervisor's?
- ☐ What exactly are you asking for?
- ☐ If you don't want X... what do you want instead?

Humanize the person

- ☐ They may not know there's an issue.
- ☐ Come prepared with clarity and compassion.

Document your conversations

- ☐ Send a summary email afterward.
- ☐ Documentation ensures mutual understanding and keeps a helpful record.
- ☐ Other options: lab manual, committee report, etc.

Remember the key principles

- ☐ Control – What can you manage?
- ☐ Differentiation – You and your supervisor are distinct people with different roles.
- ☐ Self-esteem – Your needs matter.
- ☐ Mutual respect – Everyone deserves dignity.
- ☐ Understanding ≠ Agreeing – Someone can understand you without sharing your view.

We are here to help.

Situations can arise that can critically delay progress or completion of your degree program, such as personal reasons (e.g., family, health), a lack of communication with your supervisor, lack of resources that are required for you to complete the project, as well as a supervisor's relocation to a different institution. Reach out to us.