

Meeting guidelines for graduate student mentors

First of all, thank you so much for volunteering your precious time to share your science with our community! We have prepared this short guideline to help you structure your meetings with your mentees, so that everyone can get the most out of them. It is certainly not a requirement that you follow them - they are just here for your reference.

After you are matched with your mentees, you should reach out to your students within one week to set up meeting times for the next 3-4 weeks. You will have weekly meetings, each lasting around 45 minutes during this time, where you will share both your professional knowledge, and your personal experience of becoming a scientist with your students. These meetings can be in person, or virtually over zoom, depending on what your group decides to do.

First meeting - introduce yourselves to each other - use some of these fun icebreakers to get the conversation started:

<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/icebreaker-ideas-for-small-groups>

<https://www.quizbreaker.com/icebreaker-games-for-small-groups>

Once you have all gotten to know each other a little bit, it may be helpful to do a short “freestyle Q&A” session, where you’ll invite the students to ask you some questions they have always wondered about science, and you can try to answer them. After everyone has had a chance to get a question in, you should find an opportunity to segue into the main topic for this meeting: identifying a topic of interest to focus on for the project. For this part, you should ask your mentees what they want to do, jotting down their brainstormed ideas on the whiteboard, and let them agree on the best topic, with a little bit of guidance on your part.

Now that your team has a rough idea of what they wanted to do for the project, it’s time to give everyone some homework (*exciting*)! Before your second meeting, challenge your students to look online to find enough information on this topic to be able to give you a 5-minute presentation on the basics of it. For example, if you students wanted to make their project about viruses, challenge them to make a short presentation on what viruses are made of, or about a particular type of virus.

Second meeting - The main focus of the meeting should be about finding information about their topic of interest. In the beginning of the second meeting, you may pick up where you left off, and invite your students to give you the short presentation that you asked them to make at the end of the last meeting. After this presentation, provide them some feedback on what they did well, and if you identified any areas that are unclear or inaccurate, challenge your mentees on how they got their information, and help them improve upon their slides.

After this presentation, you should begin to encourage your mentees to think of ways they can transform their presentation into the form of a baking project. After this brainstorm session, your group should begin to have a good idea of what to write for the first section of the project design document. This will be the homework for the second week for your students. As the students

discuss their design, your job is to continually challenge the students to think about how their design elements reflect the science that they are trying to showcase.

Third meeting - You will continue to work with your mentees to finish the project design document. Discuss plans to execute their final project, and also ask them to practice presenting their final project. You should make sure that your students understand the background knowledge, as they pertain to the project, accurately enough, and provide some tips on how to communicate this knowledge effectively to their audience. Make a plan about when and who will submit the final project design document.

In the final meeting with your students, we would like to encourage you to prepare a short speech or presentation on your own professional journey, on how you got to be the scientist you are today. One of the main goals of the Great Biology Bake-off is to foster connections between our scientific community in biological research and our local community in Madison. We think that it would be very beneficial for your mentees to hear your story and perhaps even see themselves wanting to go on a similar path as you.

Add a fourth meeting as needed and as time allows, so you can distribute some of this content over the course of four weeks. We hope you have fun working with your mentees, and thank you again so much for volunteering!