



Fox Lab Research Assistant Mentoring Agreement

Contract between _____ & Kathryn Fox, Lab Director.
(name and level)

What you can expect from me as your research mentor/supervisor

I hope that all lab members learn about the research process including ethics related to human subjects and the study of suicide and self-harm.

Some of the things that I will attempt to do to help achieve these goals include the following:

1. **Thoughtful and individualized mentorship.** The lab functions best when we have a diversity of members, including a range of personal interests and backgrounds. I recognize that not all lab members will have a background in clinical psychology or suicide/self-harming behaviors. I will work to provide everyone with readings and didactic lab meetings to provide a foundation of knowledge on this topic. Everyone in the lab should have the opportunity to learn enough about our research methods that they are able to describe our work to their peers, families, and on future job and school interviews.

I will help you prepare for the next step of your professional goals. To make this possible, it's key that you continue to communicate your professional goals with me as they evolve.

On a related note: not all lab member experiences will be identical. Lab opportunities (described further below) are in part based on availability, time spent in lab, and demonstration of skill in completion of lab tasks. My goal is for each lab member to have a successful learning experience in the lab given these restrictions.

2. **Responsivity.** I strongly value and prioritize responsivity. When you send me drafts of lab projects + tasks, I will get them back to you with feedback (edits, comments) as quickly as possible. I know you will have spent significant time and energy on these projects, and I want to keep the ball rolling. You can expect me to respond to you (email, call, text, Teams channel) within 48 hours, provided I am not out of town. **If you don't hear back from me in 48 hours, PLEASE ping me again.** I do not perceive this as rude, annoying, or anything other than you caring about the work. I might have just overlooked your note and need a reminder!

3. **Provide critical feedback.** I will do my best to provide critical and constructive feedback on all projects sent to me with a single goal: to improve the quality of the work. I care deeply about the work you and our lab produce. Sometimes that means I'll provide critical feedback. I know that this may sometimes feel discouraging, but that is never my goal. Please remember, feedback is in direct service of improving your work (and believe me: I am still constantly incorporating collaborator's edits, feedback, thoughts into my work!). I will respectfully challenge ideas (what we read, what other people talk about, my own, and yours) with an effort to make yours and our work better. I expect you will do the same!

An essential skill to succeeding in the lab is the ability to constructively respond to feedback. But this is a skill, meaning I expect it will take time for you to build and grow in that regard.

- **Lab Citizen/Researcher Feedback.** I will do my best to provide you with feedback regularly throughout the year about your participation in lab as it relates to the below expectations.

- **Grant Feedback.** There are many grants that can help provide undergraduate and postbaccs with funding for summer research, conference travel, and small research projects (see lab document including a non-comprehensive list of grants). These are fantastic opportunities to strengthen your CV and to gain independent research experience. Please send me a draft of any grants you plan to submit **at least 2 weeks before they are due**. I will do my very best to get initial feedback to you within one week. Having two weeks will ensure we have time for at least 2 rounds of edits before submission.

- **Manuscript Feedback.** See below about expectations for being involved in manuscript writing. If you do become involved and you send me a draft of your work, I will do my best to get manuscript feedback to you within 1 week. However, please be patient with me, and allow for 2 weeks for revisions.

4. **Work with integrity and honesty.** I will be transparent, open, and honest with you and on all lab projects.

5. **Accessibility.** I am here to support you. I will meet with all research assistants one-on-one at least once per quarter, if not more frequently. I will meet with lab manager(s) up to once per week (but this will depend on your needs).

At least some of your lab hours will overlap with my availability so that you can ask me questions and get hands-on feedback in person (or Zoom given COVID). This will obviously vary based on both of our schedules, but I hope to spend at least some one-on-one time weekly with each RA as we work on lab tasks. If you want to chat outside of lab meetings and our one-on-one meeting, message me and we'll set up a meeting.

6. **Advocate.** I know students can often feel like they have little career/institutional power in their classes, departments, universities, jobs, and so on. I will advocate for you! If you feel I'm not doing this enough, please tell me. I am new to this role. I want to do the best that I can, and your feedback is critical. See below for more on this topic.

Relatedly, I will write recommendations for you. To make sure that these are as strong as possible, I ask:

- That we have worked together for 2+ quarters before you request a rec.
- Please provide me with: specific deadlines and instructions for submitting relevant rec. materials.
- Do your best to ask for a rec letter **3 weeks** in advance of the due date. I know this isn't always possible, but it is my preference, and recs will be strongest when I have this time.
- Please send me reminders a few days before a deadline if you haven't yet received notice that the rec was submitted.
- If you're applying to a graduate program, please send your statement of purpose and key content you'd like to make sure I include in my letter.

My Expectations for Research Assistants (updated quarterly)

1. **Commit to** [___] hours per week in lab and participate in all of your scheduled lab hours and the weekly lab meeting unless we otherwise agree to a different arrangement.
2. **Be proactive.** Ask me, each other, and graduate students what projects they need help with. Volunteer for tasks. If something is not working, let us know. If you are having trouble with something (lab or otherwise), reach out to talk about it. If you are avoiding a task because it's causing you anxiety, bring it up and let's problem solve. If something got in the way of you completing a task on time (e.g., illness, anxiety, work, life), let your team members know rather than waiting for them to contact you. Communication is key for a strong team!
3. **Prepare.** If you are asked to complete a task (e.g., reading an article before lab meeting, presenting to lab), come prepared with it completed. As a member of the lab, other people are counting on you.
4. **Follow Study Protocol.** You will read all study protocols carefully and do your best to follow them when working with participants.
5. **Admit mistakes.** Mistakes will happen. I make mistakes regularly. Do not be afraid to make mistakes. **Do try to learn from them. I'm more concerned about HIDING mistakes than making mistakes.** Please, as soon as you realize you've made a mistake, alert the key people involved in the given project (and me). We conduct science transparently, and a key ingredient to doing so is recording any deviations from protocol.

6. **Follow through.** You are expected to put your best effort possible into task assignments. If you agree to complete a task, the lab is trusting that you will get it done. Our lab culture does not include micromanaging. Honor the trust you're given by following through. Everyone has busy schedules; being busy is not an excuse for failing to follow through if you agree to complete a task. Remind yourself with whatever necessary (e.g., whiteboard, post-its, Google calendar alerts) to complete the task.

7. **Ask for help—and be a problem-solver.** Life secret: nobody knows what they are doing. We are all figuring it out as we go. We are all learning. Questions are *expected*. Ask them as they come up. Lean on each other.

Crucial caveat: ask for help **after** you've attempted to solve the problem on your own (if it's a problem that can be solved by doing your homework such as by consulting the lab manual, study protocol, or Google). I expect you to be a self-directed learner and make a concerted effort to uncover knowledge and skills.

8. **Do not suffer in silence.** Difficulties arise. If you are having problems, please come and talk to me! If you feel overwhelmed, uncertain, or want additional support, please ask for as soon as possible.

9. **Dress code.** Dress code is casual. The exception is when you are running participants. We want to display professionalism and respect to people who are donating their time to our research. Some general guidelines include no shorts (dresses and skirts are fine), no pajamas or sweats, no workout clothes, appropriate coverage, no spaghetti straps, etc.

10. **Mental and Physical Illness.** We study really heavy and difficult topics. It's OK if it's hard for you at times (it means you have feelings!). Please take care of your mental and physical health by planning time off, taking vacations, and engaging in other self-care activities (e.g., attend regular physicals/doctor visits, exercise, regular sleep, cooking, therapy when needed). Communicate with me (on a broad or specific level depending on your comfort) when you're struggling with your mental/physical health. I will help you to locate services/support. *Note: all students are eligible to receive services at the DU Health & Counseling Center (<https://www.du.edu/health-and-counseling-center/>). To schedule an appointment, call (303) 871-2205.*

Stay home and take care of yourself when you're sick. If you're scheduled to run a participant or have something on your plate that day, find a replacement and notify the folks who need to know ASAP (preferably the night before when possible).

11. **Attend to relationships.** We rely on each other to build community and conduct research.

- a. Work to build strong relationships with lab members. Have each other's backs. Raise each other up.
- b. Contribute your share to projects and avoid creating more work for your teammates (e.g., falling off the grid, not following through on your commitment, using ad hominem attacks).

12. **Please give me feedback.** I want and need your feedback! I am a new professor here, and I only recently finished graduate school myself! I care a lot about mentorship, and I want to help you learn, grow, and contribute to our research team. If I'm doing something that gets in the way of those goals, please tell me.

Similarly, if something isn't working the way it should be, and/or when you're not happy with what you're doing in the lab, **I want to know.** I will respond constructively to any and all of your feedback. I will not be defensive and I will think about and respond to any/all feedback you give me. Feedback you give to me will not impact our relationship in the long-term, the degree to which I advocate for you, or the quality of future recommendations that I write for you.

Typical Research Assistant (RA) Tasks

As an RA in the Fox lab, you will help with our research by participating in a wide variety of research-related tasks. These may include but are not limited to:

- attending weekly lab meetings (required)
- reading and discuss scientific articles relevant to our research topic (required)
- coding articles in Zotero for lab use
- helping with submissions and responses to the DU or other Institutional Review Boards (IRBs)
- identifying community agencies, primary care settings, schools, listservs, and parent/teen-focused groups for partnership and participant recruitment
- administrative research tasks such as packet preparation for participant visits, data entry and literature searches
- creating physical and electronic recruitment advertisements
- maintaining lab webpage
- maintaining study webpages
- scheduling participant visits to the lab
- using Qualtrics to translate surveys into an online format that is easy for participants to read

- facilitating active data collection with participants including consent/assent and data acquisition from youth and their parents
- testing out lab equipment (e.g., pressure algometer) and process real time data from behavioral tasks
- organizing electronic participant payment
- collaborating with other RAs here at DU and in other labs (e.g., with collaborators at Stony Brook University, Florida State University, Harvard University)
- helping to purchase lab furniture and equipment + set up the lab space for participant and research staff use.

It is important that you understand that individual RAs may or may not complete the same tasks or engage in active data collection with participants in the same way. RA activities depend upon a variety of factors such as: time spent in the lab (both within an individual quarter and across quarters), whether your hours in the lab overlap with scheduled participants and/or my schedule for guidance on higher-level tasks, and the particular skill set that you already have or develop during your lab participation.

Safety Issues and Other Immediate Concerns about Research Participants

You are not the primary touchpoint for youth or families in distress. When safety issues arise, I will be physically present in the lab (or available via text/phone in time of COVID) to address the issue as soon as possible. It is your responsibility to notify me immediately if and when safety issues or other serious concerns occur (i.e., youth or parent calls the lab in distress) and I am not physically in the lab space to address them (e.g., I am in class or in a meeting).

If you encounter information from a family (either in person, or via telephone or email) that there is a safety issue or other immediate concern, you immediately come find me in the lab space or call and text my cell phone. If this occurs in person, you also do whatever you can to keep the family in the lab space until I or another senior clinician can meet with the family in person.

If I am ever out of town, I will provide you with the contact information of another licensed clinical faculty in our Psychology Department in advance of my absence.

Additional Opportunities for Research Assistants

After spending a sufficient amount of time in the lab (i.e., at least two quarters, although this varies based on the individual RA), some research assistants may be invited to participate in poster presentations or publication/writing activities with me.

Things you can do to increase the likelihood that you will be invited to participate in these additional publication opportunities include: successfully participate in Fox Lab as a research assistant for more than two consecutive quarters, with participation defined in the above Expectations for RAs section, communicate your research goals clearly with me during our individual quarterly meetings devoted to discussion of your training in our lab, and demonstrate mastery of the skill sets that you learn in lab.

These additional poster and publication opportunities occur outside of scheduled lab hours.

Specific Areas of Focus for You

During our initial meeting about your goals in [____], you indicated that you would like to work on the following this year:

I confirm that I have carefully read the Supervision Vision, Guidelines, and Expectations document. I have asked questions about anything that needed clarification. I pledge to do follow these guidelines and expectations at all times.

RA Signature & Date

RA Name - Printed

Kathryn Fox, Ph.D. & Date