



ORE PhD Thesis Student Co-Mentorship Goals and Principles

These guidelines pertain to co-mentorship for a thesis project, and may not apply to faculty serving as co-mentors on a student's fellowship proposal; i.e. a co-mentor on an F31 proposal.

1. Co-Mentorship of a PhD student by two ORE program faculty has the primary goal of enhancing the student's training experience. Co-mentorship is appropriate when it provides substantial educational or research benefits that a single mentor cannot provide alone.

Common situations that merit co-mentorship include:

- Primary mentor has limited/no prior experience mentoring a PhD student as the primary mentor and the addition of a senior co-mentor with an extensive successful track-record of mentoring PhD students can provide valuable guidance and knowledge to the principal mentoring team.
- The PhD student's research project involves different disciplines, and the proposed co-mentor brings valuable, needed knowledge and expertise that complements the principal mentoring team.
- The student's project requires access to specialized resources, techniques, or datasets that are available through a second mentor's laboratory or research program.
- The primary mentor's career circumstances change (e.g., transition to a new institution, change in research focus, extended leave), and a co-mentor can provide continuity and stability.
- Co-mentorship should not be used solely to distribute financial burden, to circumvent program requirements, or to remedy poor mentor-student fit that would be better addressed through a primary mentor change.

2. When co-mentorship of a student is being considered, the student and the proposed mentor(s) will submit a formal Co-Mentorship Proposal to the Program Director(s) for review and approval.

Timeline:

- If co-mentorship is established during the first year, the proposal should be submitted in time for review before the student joins the mentors' research programs.
- If co-mentorship is established after the comprehensive exam, the proposal must be reviewed and approved by both the Program Director(s) and the student's thesis committee.
- For co-mentorship established at other times, consult with the Program Director(s) regarding appropriate timeline and approval process.
- Review process:
 - The Director(s) will meet separately with the student and each proposed co-mentor to review the proposal. This separate meeting structure allows all parties to speak candidly about expectations, concerns, and logistics. The Director(s) will



communicate the decision to all parties within two weeks of receiving the complete proposal.

- Required elements of the proposal:
- Rationale and training enhancement:
 - Describe the goals of co-mentorship, how the student's training experience is enhanced beyond what single mentorship could provide, and the complementary expertise or resources each co-mentor brings.
- Roles and responsibilities (prevent gaps or duplication in mentoring responsibilities):

Mentor's information

- Meeting schedule:
 - frequency of 1-on-1 meetings of each co-mentor with the student
 - frequency of joint meetings with both co-mentors and the student
- Communication plan for guidance from mentors outside of specified meeting times, availability of mentors for guidance outside of scheduled meetings, and primary point of contact for different types of questions (e.g., technical, career, administrative).
- Physical resources: space available/reserved for the student's research (e.g., bench space in each lab and a desk in one) and access to equipment, software, and shared resources in each laboratory.
- Financial responsibilities: Division of research expenses, coverage of travel and other expenses for scientific meetings, publication fees, and professional development activities (see #3)
- Authorship: Expected authorship norms for publications arising from the research
- Conflict resolution: a plan for how to handle situations when the co-mentors disagree about aspects of the student's training or research. Identification of a neutral third party (e.g., another faculty member, program director) who can mediate if needed
- *Student's information*
 - Student describes how they expect the co-mentorship will benefit their training
 - Student's signature to indicate agreement with the proposed division of responsibilities
 - Student confirms that they have been fully informed and are entering the arrangement voluntarily
- Individual programs have the option to add program-specific criteria to the ORE proposal requirements listed above.



3. Financial responsibilities and student support: To ensure financial security of the student and eliminate ambiguity, one co-mentor must be designated as the Primary Financial Sponsor who will assume full responsibility for the costs of the student's stipend, tuition and fees, health insurance, fees in addition to the costs of doing/presenting research. Despite one co-mentor being designated as having the financial responsibility, the co-mentors may agree to other financial plans by which both co-mentors contribute to the student's expenses so long as all costs are covered.
 - Contingency planning: the co-mentorship proposal must address what happens if the Primary Financial Sponsor loses funding or leaves the university, whether the co-mentor would assume financial responsibility or if alternative arrangements would be made, and how much advance notice would be provided to the student in the event of funding changes. The co-mentors should discuss funding expectations with the student openly and update them if circumstances change.
4. Conflict of interest: Co-Mentors must disclose any conflicts of interest that could compromise objectivity, create bias, or otherwise negatively impact the student's training. Disclosures must be made to the student, the Program Director(s), and the student's thesis committee (once formed), and must be made at the time of co-mentorship proposal submission and whenever new conflicts arise such as financial interest, amorous relationships (current or prior), family relationships, professional/business partnerships, supervisory relationships, and/or other dual relationships. Decisions about conflicts will be evaluated on a case by case basis but could exclude co-mentorship. Undisclosed conflicts discovered later may result in dissolution of the co-mentorship and potential disciplinary action per university policy. Relevant University/Campus COI policies include:

APS 5012: Conflicts of Interest and Commitment in Research and Teaching
(<https://www.cu.edu/ope/aps/5012>)

APS 5015: Conflict of Interest in Cases of Amorous Relationships
(<https://www.cu.edu/ope/aps/5015>)

Anschutz Financial Conflict of Interest Disclosure Rules
(<https://medschool.cuanschutz.edu/faculty-affairs/for-faculty/rules-and-policies/conflict-of-interest>)