

Sample Questions for Potential Mentors

When meeting with potential mentors, you need to determine whether their research programs and mentoring philosophies match your own interests and needs. We've divided sample questions into categories. We recommend that you start with questions about the research program before addressing your potential role in the research group.

Questions About the Mentor and His/Her Research Program

- How often do you meet individually with your students and fellows?
- Does your research group have regular group meetings? If so, how frequently?
- What qualities do you value most in a student or fellow?
- What are your current research projects, and at what stage of completion are they right now?
- Do you allow students/fellows to design their own projects or do you prefer to assign projects?
- How often do you collaborate with other research groups?
- What process do you use to evaluate your students and fellows? How often does this occur?
- How many former students and fellows have you mentored, and where did they go after leaving your research group?

Questions About Your Potential Role in the Research Group

- What might I be working on here?
- What technologies, approaches, and model systems would I have the opportunity to learn and develop?
- Would I be able to take courses or participate in training programs?
- Would I be able to attend scientific meetings? How often?
- Would I have opportunities to give formal and informal research presentations?
- Would I be working on my own project or sharing a project with other members of the research group?
- Is there a specific person in the group that I could go to with day-to-day questions about laboratory procedures and supplies?

Additional Questions for Advanced Trainees

- If I joined this group, would I have the opportunity to train or mentor junior members of the research group?
- Do you allow students and fellows to co-author review articles with you?
- Do you allow fellows to pursue independent projects to take with them to their own faculty positions?
- What would you expect of me if I disagreed with your interpretation of results or even the value of a research project?

Source: Office of Intramural Training & Education,
https://www.training.nih.gov/questions_for_potential_mentors

