

## Notes for potential PhD advisees

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I am happy to advise students who demonstrate seriousness and commitment to research in areas in which I am qualified to advise them. To avoid confusion and disappointment, it is worth being concrete about what I expect from advisees or potential advisees.

1. Work hard. If I make a concrete suggestion about something to do, then you should do it or at least attempt to do it (I realize that not all of my suggestions will be feasible), before requesting another meeting. The same holds for reasonable suggestions made by others during work-in-process presentations. As a graduate student, your comparative and absolute advantage is to be able to dedicate yourself to one project for a long period of time. This can mean collecting original data, grinding through every potentially blind alley in theory or empirics, or whatever your heart desires. But whatever it means to you, do not squander this advantage.
2. Please do not ask me to conduct your research for you. Questions like “I’m interested in microfinance, what should I write about?” will not receive a positive response. Nor will requests along the lines of “Tell me about the literature related to this topic” or “Explain the following bit of theory or econometrics.” Working through these items *is* the research process. That’s your job! I can respond to and, if necessary, help you direct your efforts, but they have to be *your* efforts.
3. Come prepared to meetings. You must send me a less-than-one-page summary of the ideas and issues you wish to discuss the day before we meet. The notes need not be exhaustive, but they are necessary to keep us focused and productive.
4. Set up appointments ahead of time. While I have open office hours, these times are largely filled by my undergraduate and MPA students. The best thing for PhD students is to sign up for a slot on Google Docs (email me for instructions) or, if a slot is not available, to schedule a time via email.
5. Attend the development seminar (even when it is up at UCL), the work-in-process lunch, and (when it is running) the development lab. You may not believe it, but my development colleagues and I notice who attends these meetings. If you are doing research in development-related areas, you should be attending them on a regular basis.
6. Be judicious in asking me to read drafts of your papers. I consider it part of the responsibility of a formal supervisor to read drafts of job market papers and dissertation chapters, but I ask that you be respectful of my time. I will not be enthusiastic about reading a paper that a student has clearly put little time into, or the third or fourth draft of a paper that has changed only marginally since the last time I read it.
7. Work hard. Yes, I already said this, but it is worth emphasizing. As a graduate student, focused effort is your comparative advantage. Use it.

These notes are not to scare you off. It is just that I find advising relationships work more smoothly if expectations are established at the outset. Happy researching!

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Eric Verhoogen for inspiration. These guidelines are substantially based on his own.