**What do Faculty Want Students to Know Before They Start Research?**

\*Note that the following information is a result of a survey of faculty at Elon and other institutions. It may not apply in all undergraduate research situations.

**What is research?**

Faculty would like students to know that conducting research is FUN, but it is not like writing a research paper in most classes. Depending on the discipline, it typically involves other skills (e.g., learning how to do a literature review or analyze data, doing a professional performance). In some cases, research involves teamwork.

**What topics are faculty willing to mentor?**

Faculty typically mentor projects that fall into their areas of expertise.

Depending on the discipline, mentors may have a project that you can work on and/or make your own.

**Time and Meetings**

Research takes a lot of time.

Faculty will expect to meet with you regularly.

* Students will be expected to take the initiative in these meetings.
* Give the mentor time to read over your work before the meeting if you have something for them to read or edit.

What happens in a meeting with a mentor?

* Report on the tasks that were decided on at the last meeting.
* Come prepared with questions/ideas
* Take notes during the meeting (e.g., shared Google Doc with mentor).
* Turn your phone to silent.

**Communication**

Most faculty prefer to be contacted via email.

* Be quick to reply to emails and be professional in your wording.

Some faculty are ok with texts in an emergency.

Some faculty use shared folders/drive to communicate about work (e.g., Google Drive).

**Organization**

Faculty agree that organization is very important.

* Create a timeline with goals and deadlines.
* Allot regular time for research.
* Be prepared to keep multiple files organized.
* Coordinate with other researchers if working on a team.

**Evaluation**

Grades in 499/498 typically come from:

* High quality work that goes above and beyond (e.g., depth of thinking, creativity).
* Working consistently toward projection completion/effort.
* Conscientiousness (e.g., time management, intrinsic motivation).

If you make a mistake, tell your mentor right away. Faculty know that mistakes happen.

**Key Skills**

Below are some of the skills faculty mentioned:

Knowing how to do a *literature review*

* You will learn how to do this and may start with an annotated bibliography.

*Computer skills*

* Most faculty expect students to work with Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint).
* There may be other research-specific software that you will learn.

*Grant writing*

* The university has funding opportunities – plan ahead before the applications are due.

*Writing*

* This will take a lot of time.
* There will be many drafts and lots of revisions. Lots of edits doesn’t mean that you’re doing poorly.
* You may be writing in a new way.

*Professionalism*

* Faculty expect students to behave professionally (competently, respectfully)
* You may be working with community members and cultural competence is necessary.

*Dissemination* (This usually happens toward the end of your experience.)

* What happens depends on your discipline and the particular project
* Many students present on campus at Spring Undergraduate Research Forum (SURF)
* Some students present at National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR).
* Some students present at professional conferences or performances and some publish their work.
  + Talk to your mentor about authorship
  + Student authorship typically involves a high level of involvement in the project.
  + The mentor typically makes the decisions about authorship.
* Be able to talk about your project to different audiences (e.g., community, academics, professionals, etc.)

**Non-Research Mentorship**

Elon faculty often talk with their students about courses, their major(s), and the post-Elon professional plans.

* You may gain connections to other students/faculty in the department or university and also outside of the university.

Source: **Allison, M.** (June, 2019). What faculty want students to know as they begin their first undergraduate research experience. Poster presented at the Biennial Council on Undergraduate Research - Undergraduate Research Programs Division Conference, Columbus, OH.