

Lab statement on work-life balance and mental health

We pursue ambitious research goals and working hard is part of our lab culture. However, scientific success should never come at the cost of your mental or physical health. Researchers often experience failures, setbacks and rejections. Because of these challenges, students and postdocs can experience considerable stress and health (both physical and mental) problems are relatively common¹. This can carry a heavy toll on young scientists. We consider it our collective responsibility to create an environment that is supportive of students in challenging situations.

Work-life balance

There may be times when your project requires that you work late or on weekends, but you are not expected to regularly work more than a normal 40-hour workweek. It is important that you take time off for personal life, hobbies, friends, vacations, etc. Studies show that this helps you to be more creative and productive^{2,3}. At the same time, there is no general rule about how to organize your work hours. What works for others may not work for you. Find out what works best for you.

Supervision & Training

Every person is different, with his or her own talents, strengths and weaknesses. In order to establish a productive partnership that works for different personalities, openness and empathy among supervisor and student are important. We encourage frequent and routine communication during which the supervisor and student formulate expectations, openly state problems and set goals for the near future.

General conduct

In order to create a friendly, productive and creative working environment, we expect mutual respect, generous support and cooperation amongst the members of our group. This includes that we encourage the critical and constructive discussion of different viewpoints regarding each other's projects. On the other hand, negative or discriminatory attitudes towards individual lab members are not tolerated under any circumstances.

Health concerns

If you are experiencing mental health problems, such as anxiety or depression, it is important to take care of yourself and seek support, even if it means that you miss out on data points or miss a deadline. You can approach your supervisor or your co-mentor and let them know that you are struggling and discuss how they can help you. If you feel more comfortable getting professional support, the University of Mainz offers comprehensive counselling for a wide range of problems (in either German or English):

Contact

Psychotherapeutic Counseling Center of Mainz University

Hegelstraße 61, fifth floor (HDI-House), 55122 Mainz

Tel.: 06131-39 22 312

E-Mail: pbs@uni-mainz.de & Website: <https://www.pcc.uni-mainz.de/>

¹Teresa M. Evans et al., *Nature Biotechnology* 36, no. 3 (2018): 282.

²Lisa C. Walsh, Julia K. Boehm, and Sonja Lyubomirsky, *Journal of Career Assessment* 26, no. 2: 199–219.

³Andrew J. Oswald, Eugenio Proto, and Daniel Sgroi, *Journal of Labor Economics* 33, no. 4: 789–822.