

Goal: To create a more inclusive community where individuals can find other community members with similar lived-experiences.

Peer Support Description and Guidelines

A peer support can be any member of our botany/zoology/BRC community. A member of this community can be a staff member, faculty, post-doc, or graduate student within the Botany and Zoology Department, or who considers themselves a member of the Biodiversity Research Center community. Peer supports are individuals who have identified that they are knowledgeable, experienced, and/or understanding of a particular situation that others in the community may experience or seek camaraderie in. Examples of such lived-experience include but are not limited to: international from a non-Western country, international from a Western country, out-of-province Canadian, international from North America, first generation student, non-native English speaker, women in academia, and identifying with the following communities; LGBTQ+, Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour community, and disabled. Additionally, peer supports include someone who has gone through a comprehensive/candidacy exam, someone who has completed a defense before, etc. Individuals are encouraged to specify whatever they would like to include in topics they are open to discuss. For example: navigating supervisor-student conflict, lab-mate conflict, leaves of absence, mental health and wellness, child-rearing and/or pregnancy in grad school or postdoc, etc. The purpose of this program is to not have individuals provide advice or solutions for problems, but rather to help people find common ground, build friendships, and to connect with others.

The Peer Support group recognizes that there is not an overarching response to stress. People belonging to different groups, identities, and cultures will experience different stresses. We want to provide a support system that is able to tackle different stresses that others may experience.

The following provides a general guideline for what you can be expected and **not expected** to provide as a peer support. If you are uncomfortable or doubtful of something that is asked of you, you are allowed to refuse to address the situation. If you would like to be removed from the Peer Support list, you may feel free to do so by removing yourself from the document, and you do not need to provide a reason.

Within Boundaries

- If your peer has questions regarding the graduate program (for example, understanding the Graduate Handbook:
<https://www.zoology.ubc.ca/system/files/assets/media-file/file/2020-04/Zoology%20Grad%20Student%20Handbook%20-%20February%202020.pdf>)
- If your peer wants to ask questions about your own graduate experience (either at UBC or previously) and personal experiences (if you are comfortable to share)

- If you have personally sought counselling and you feel it is appropriate/comfortable in sharing this information with your peer
- If your peer needs someone to listen to their struggles and you are in the right headspace
- Tips and recommendations for living in Vancouver (e.g. a lot of people just leave their appliances and furniture out on the curb for free!)
- Tips on commonly used community programs, websites, and other applications (department listservs, GitHub, Slack, social media, etc.) to make transitioning to the departments more easy and accessible.

Out of Boundaries

- You are not a therapist/counsellor. If your peer shows signs of distress, please refer them to the appropriate resources: <https://www.botzooubcwellness.com/resources-new>
- If you are also feeling distress from being a peer support, you can take a break from being a peer support
- Remember, this is on your time and you set your own boundaries as well. You should not be there 24/7 for your peer, you can set your own schedule/timeline for what suits you and your peer.
- It is recommended that a peer support shouldn't take on chatting with more than 2 or 3 people at a time.
- If you are being harassed or bullied by your peer, let us know as soon as possible (wellness@biodiversity.ubc.ca).

If you have questions, please email us at wellness@biodiversity.ubc.ca.