

The 10 Commandments - MD Project Program

1) Thou Shalt Begin Early, for Procrastination Is the Enemy

You may think you have 9-weeks to carry out your MD project but trust us, it's going to feel like 9 days once you factor in meetings, emails, redefining research questions, ethics amendments, and other technical difficulties. Students - Don't wait until the last minute to Google what "data analysis" means. Supervisors – Ensure you have EMR/hospital access and all relevant approvals/ethics needed to make the project available before recruiting the MDP student.

2) Thou Shalt Communicate Often (and with MDP-relevant Purpose)

Students, your supervisor isn't a mind reader. Supervisors, your students don't know how to read your mind (yet). Both – We are not mind readers either (yet). Whether it's through emails, meetings, or carrier pigeons, keep the communication flowing. And remember, "Just wanted to check in!" is not a valid email subject. Define what you want and students – do not ask us for EMR access for your next rotation starting in 3 days! You won't get it!

3) Thou Shalt Respect the Power of Data

Students, get to know your data like it's your best friend. You'll need to talk about it, analyze it, and sometimes even part with it to generate new data. Supervisors, you may need to remind your students that "winging it" does not count as data analysis. Ask your supervisors for specialist software access – MDP team cannot pull out a license outside of SPSS/NVivo.

4) Thou Shalt Seek Feedback (Even If It's Uncomfortable)

Students, feedback is not a judgment of your worth as a human being. It's a way to make your project better. Supervisors, feedback should be given kindly, preferably not in the form of "I told you so." "Constructive" is the keyword here.

5) Thou Shalt Not Expect a Perfect Thesis in 9 Weeks

Students, this is a research project, not a blockbuster film. Perfection takes time—this is your contribution to a project, not the final version. Aim for progress in the eight weeks and try perfecting the presentation and submission for week 9. Examiners and stream leads – Please remember this is a 9-week project and mark students based on the marking rubric – not in comparison to others their cohort or stream.

6) Thou Shalt Manage Thy Expectations (And Thy Time)

Students, the project will not solve world hunger in 9 weeks. If it does, you may have accidentally invented a new type of soup. Supervisors, please remind your students that they're not expected to cure cancer in one rotation—unless it's part of their project, in which case... carry on.

7) Thou Shalt Be Aware of The Power of Google, ChatGPT and LLMs

Students, Google, ChatGPT, and LLMs may only be used as per the WSU Generative AI policy, but please don't use these as your only research tool. You can cite articles, books, and academic sources that you find through the university (electronic/recorded) library's access to reputed journals. Supervisors, all MDP students are being offered some support related to accessing databases in their skills week. However, train them if/when they need specific project-related expertise.

8) Thou Shalt Not Expect “project magic!” from the MDP Admin Team

Students, the MDP Admin Team is here to support, but not to brainstorm research questions, or handle ethics alternatives, building, lab, or hospital access. These tasks are managed by your supervisors and their teams who have the content expertise to your project. Contact them early and follow up regularly to ensure everything is in place before your rotation. The Admin team is not your project consultant and has no magical powers in this space.

9) Thou Shalt Be Prepared for the Unexpected

Students, stuff will go wrong. The data won't load. The analysis will freeze. That one piece of equipment your whole project depends on will break and the next one available is in Timbuktu. Students, learn the fine art of creative troubleshooting. Supervisors, be there to help. Students; don't expect “time” to be a remedy for all problems. If you do nothing for 9 weeks, you will fail MDP for no project work, no show, no effort, and/or unprofessional behaviour.

10) Thou Shalt Enjoy the Process, Even If It Feels Like a Rollercoaster

Students, this is a learning experience. Yes, it can be stressful at times, but it's also a fantastic opportunity to expand your knowledge and skills. Supervisors, let your students feel challenged but make sure they know it's okay to enjoy the ride (and maybe take a break for coffee).

Whether you're a student or a supervisor, always remember: the MD Project is not a destination, but a journey - a potentially bumpy, caffeine-fuelled, slightly chaotic journey, but one that will make you both (and us) laugh, cry, and maybe even learn something amazing in the end.