Attributes of an Excellent Graduate Student (& Pdoc)

1. Take intellectual ownership of the thesis project as soon as possible. This means, among other things, making choices about the next steps in research based on what you think should be done, rather than on what you think your advisor wants. In the end, you should become the world's expert on your thesis topic, prior to the PhD final oral exam. One essential step to this end is to read the literature regularly and thoroughly.

2. Be professional in all things. This means, among other things, showing up to all meetings on time; making all written and oral presentations clear and of high quality. Take TA responsibilities seriously. Keep a good lab book. Follow good safety practices at all times. Behave in an ethical manner (properly attribute all work in written and oral presentations, don't plagiarize, etc.). Consult with your advisor about specific expectations for vacation, hours worked, etc.

3. Be completely reliable. This means, among other things, that your advisor can trust your experimental results, can depend on you to do the appropriate control experiments, and that you report exactly what happened, not the results you think your advisor wants to hear. Honesty and integrity are expected at all times.

4. Develop your critical faculties, and apply them both to your own work and to the work of others.

5. Be intellectually curious. This means, among other things, attending seminars outside your area, reading outside your area, and asking questions at seminars.

6. Work hard. Assess your level of effort on the basis of what you have actually accomplished, not just on the time you have spent.

7. Be a cooperative, collaborative, and enthusiastic member of your research group.