

Questionnaire for Aligning Expectations in Research Mentoring Relationships

Mentor / Supervisor:		Mentee / Student:	
Time Period:		Dept / Program:	

Read each pair of statements and estimate your position on each. For example with statement 1, if you believe the ideal mentoring relationship focuses on the research interests, circle "1" or "2". Or if you think the ideal relationship focuses on the working and communication styles, circle "3" or "4". Avoid filling in "2.5" for your responses.

Early Stages of the Mentoring Relationship and Choosing Mentors/Mentees						
1	For an ideal mentoring relationship, it's important for both mentor and mentee to have similar research interests	1	2	3	4	For an ideal mentoring relationships, it's important for both to have similar working and communication styles
2	Mentors should only accept mentees when they have specific & deep knowledge of the mentee's research topic	1	2	3	4	Mentors should feel free to accept mentees from a broad range of disciplines, to provide overall guidance
3	A personal and friendly relationship between mentor and mentee is important for a successful relationship	1	2	3	4	A professional relationship is advisable to maintain objectivity for both mentee and mentor during their work
4	The mentor is responsible for providing emotional support & encouragement to the mentee	1	2	3	4	Personal counselling and support are not the responsibility of the mentor
5	It is the mentor's responsibility to select a research topic for the mentee	1	2	3	4	The mentee is responsible for selecting her/his own research topic
6	When choosing research topics, I prefer to work on projects with potential for high payoffs, even if it involves high risk	1	2	3	4	When choosing research topics, I prefer to work on projects that have a strong & safe chance of success, even if the payoff is low
7	The mentor should decide how frequently to meet with the mentee	1	2	3	4	The mentee should decide when she/he wants to meet with the mentor
8	The mentor should provide the rules and guidelines for the program or dept to the mentee	1	2	3	4	It is the mentee's responsibility to gather and learn the rules and guidelines of the program or dept
9	The mentor is responsible for finding funding until the mentee graduates or completes the program	1	2	3	4	Mentees are responsible for finding their own sources of funding
Middle Stages of the Mentoring Relationship						
10	The mentor should be the primary guide for the mentee in their academic and professional goals	1	2	3	4	The mentee should gather multiple mentors as they work toward their academic and professional goals
11	The mentor should be the first place to turn when the mentee has problems with the research project	1	2	3	4	Mentees should try to resolve problems on their own, including seeking input from others, before bringing a research problem to the mentor
12	The mentor should check regularly that the mentee is working consistently and on task	1	2	3	4	The mentee should work independently and productively, and not have to account for where time is spent
13	The mentor should develop an appropriate plan and timetable of research and study for the mentee	1	2	3	4	The mentee should develop their own plan and timetable of research and study, and seek input from the mentor as needed
Advanced Stages of the Mentoring Relationship						
14	The mentor should initiate in the preparation of presentations, thesis, papers, and reports	1	2	3	4	Presentations, thesis, papers, and reports should be initiated by the mentee
15	The mentor should insist on seeing all drafts of work (presentations, thesis, papers, etc) to ensure that the mentee is on the right track	1	2	3	4	Mentees should submit drafts of work (presentations, thesis, papers, etc) only when they want constructive criticism from the mentor
16	The mentor is responsible for providing career advice and professional connections to the mentee	1	2	3	4	Because professional options these days are numerous, mentees should seek career advice and connections from other sources

Using the “Questionnaire for Aligning Expectations in Research Mentoring Relationships”

The Role of Expectations

Managing expectations between mentors and mentees can be challenging and is a common source of conflict in mentoring relationships. Often the conflict relates to unspoken expectations that are not explicitly addressed, because they are assumed or even unaware to the mentor or mentee. To help bring some of these expectations into the open for discussion, using this questionnaire can help. This tool has been designed as a discussion starter for use by research mentors and student mentees. Our experience suggests that the tool is especially effective when users of this form recognize that:

- there are no “right” answers to the items on the questionnaire
- responses are likely to be different at different stages of academic or professional progress, i.e. for undergraduate students, graduate students, postdocs, junior faculty, senior faculty, etc
- even identical numerical responses can correspond to different rationales and expectations

Although the mis-alignment of expectations can often lead to conflict, the expectations do not need to be identical (and would be unrealistic) to develop a productive working relationship. However, a thorough discussion of expectations can greatly increase the likelihood of a productive collaboration and minimize conflicts. Relevant expectations in the context of research mentoring and supervision can relate to:

- understandings of what research is and is not
- appropriate roles and responsibilities of mentors and mentees, supervisors and employees, etc
- the benefits and advantages of working together as mentor and mentee
- what is considered to be professional and ethical behavior in your discipline
- how respect is expressed to the mentor and mentee
- how *both* the mentor and mentee can be pro-active and actively listen to each other

The goal of using this questionnaire is to provide a framework for a fruitful discussion about each person's expectations, and how to decide on appropriate ongoing actions as the relationship develops. Participants are free to pick and choose which pairs of statements are relevant for their situation, and to even add statements or topics for discussion. Furthermore, this form was created primarily for mentoring relationships between research faculty mentors and student mentees. However, we recognize that different disciplines and contexts may use other terms, e.g.

- PI (principle investigator), research or academic advisor, employer, supervisor
- student, trainee, employee, protégé

Suggestions for Use: We suggest the following process for using this questionnaire.

- make sure both parties have a blank copy of the questionnaire
- both parties fill out the questionnaire separately
- set up a meeting that will be focused on this questionnaire
- at the meeting, start by comparing the responses given for each statement by each person
- discuss thoroughly the significance of each response (i.e. answer what each response means for each person)
- provide suggestions on how you'll address different responses and expectations
- consider repeating the process at various points (e.g. once per year, during critical transitions of the mentee's timeline, etc)

This document originated from Ingrid Moses (Centre for Learning & Teaching, University of Technology, Sydney); was adapted by Margaret Kiley & Kate Cadman (Advisory Centre for University Education at the University of Adelaide); and further adapted by Steve Lee (Graduate Diversity Officer for the STEM Disciplines at UC Davis), with input by Chris Golde (Stanford University).