

Questionnaire for Aligning Expectations in Research Mentoring Relationships

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

For each pair of statements, determine your preference. For example with statement pair #1, if you believe the ideal mentoring relationship focuses on common research interests, select 1, 2, or 3. Or if you think the ideal relationship focuses on effective working and communication styles, select 4, 5, or 6. Avoid filling in "3.5" for your responses.

Early Stages of the Mentoring Relationship and Choosing Mentors/Mentees			
1	In an ideal mentoring relationship, the mentor and mentee should have similar research interests	1 2 3 4 5 6	In an ideal mentoring relationship, both should have similar working and communication styles
2	In an ideal mentoring relationship, mentors should provide close supervision and guidance	1 2 3 4 5 6	In an ideal mentoring relationship, mentors should provide much freedom and independence for the mentees to explore and learn themselves
3	Mentors should only accept mentees when they have specific & deep knowledge of the mentee's research topic	1 2 3 4 5 6	Mentors can provide overall guidance, and so should feel free to accept mentees from a broad range of disciplines
4	A personal and friendly relationship between mentor and mentee is important for a successful relationship	1 2 3 4 5 6	A professional relationship is advisable to maintain objectivity for both mentee and mentor during their work
5	The mentor is responsible for providing emotional support & encouragement to the mentee	1 2 3 4 5 6	Personal counselling and support are not the responsibility of the mentor
6	The mentor should play a significant role in deciding on the research focus for the mentee	1 2 3 4 5 6	The research focus should be selected by the mentee
7	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 5 6	When choosing research topics, I prefer to work on projects that have a strong & safe chance of success, even if the payoff is low
8	The mentor should decide how frequently to meet with the mentee	1 2 3 4 5 6	The mentee should decide when she/he wants to meet with the mentor
9	The mentor should provide the rules and guidelines for the program or dept to the mentee	1 2 3 4 5 6	It is the mentee's responsibility to gather and learn the rules and guidelines of the program or dept
10	The mentor is responsible for finding funding until the mentee graduates or completes the program	1 2 3 4 5 6	Mentees are responsible for finding their own sources of funding
Middle Stages of the Mentoring Relationship			
11	The mentor should be the primary guide for the mentee in their academic and professional goals	1 2 3 4 5 6	The mentee should gather multiple mentors as they work toward their academic and professional goals
12	The mentor should be the first place to turn when the mentee has problems with the research project	1 2 3 4 5 6	Mentees should try to resolve problems on their own, including seeking input from others, before bringing a research problem to the mentor
13	The mentor should check regularly that the mentee is working consistently and finishing tasks	1 2 3 4 5 6	The mentee should work independently and productively, and ask for help when needed
14	The mentor should develop an appropriate plan and timetable of research and study for the mentee	1 2 3 4 5 6	The mentee should develop their own plan and timetable of research and study, and seek input from the mentor only as needed
Advanced Stages of the Mentoring Relationship			
15	The mentor should initiate the preparation of presentations, papers, and reports	1 2 3 4 5 6	Presentations, papers, and reports should be started with a first draft by the mentee
16	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 5 6	Mentees should submit drafts of work (presentations, thesis, papers, etc) only when they want constructive criticism from the mentor
17	It's the mentor's responsibility to first explain about co-authorship early in the process	1 2 3 4 5 6	It's the mentee's responsibility to make sure there is mutual understanding about co-authorship
18	The mentor is responsible for providing career advice and professional connections to the mentee	1 2 3 4 5 6	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 is often 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. The goal of using this questionnaire is to provide a framework for a fruitful discussions about each person’s expectations, and how to decide on appropriate ongoing actions as the relationship evolves. Participants are free to select which pairs of statements are relevant for their situation, and to even add statements or topics for discussion. Our experience suggests that this questionnaire 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

Signs of Misalignment

If you detect that your mentoring relationship is strained or unhealthy, consider if you are experiencing some of these observable signs of misalignment (adapted from <https://ictr.wisc.edu/mentoring/mentees-alignment-phase-resources/>)

1. Mentor/mentee dreads attending mentor meetings and finds themselves avoiding the other.
2. Mentor/mentee does not find the time to meet, when they had previously agreed upon scheduled meetings.
3. Mentor/mentee does not respond to emails and tasks in a timely manner.
4. Mentee does not feel a sense of belonging within the professional culture.
5. Mentee’s work is successful, but movement toward independence is not being fostered by the mentor (e.g. mentor does not publically advocate for mentee, provides opportunities for advancement, etc)
6. A sense of shared curiosity and collaborative teamwork is not present.
7. Mentor does most of the talking and direction-setting during mentoring meetings, and does not give the mentee opportunities to speak up, ask questions, and contribute.

Although the misalignment 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. *The mentor and mentee should also seriously consider developing a compact to help frame a more structured relationship. Some examples of compacts and other resources are found here:* <https://ictr.wisc.edu/mentoring/mentoring-compactscontracts-examples/>

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

- When considering using this questionnaire for a direct conversation between the mentor and the mentee, please consider this carefully. In a direct conversation, the mentor’s responses will often be considered “right”, and the mentee might be placed in an uncomfortable position of simply adjusting to the mentor’s responses. These types of direct conversations might be helpful to directly address a conflict, but it depends much on the rapport and the relationship between the mentor and the mentee.
- Sharing your responses to the questionnaire among peers (mentors or mentees) at your similar stage will probably be the most helpful, so that you can compare how other people respond to the statements.
 - When sharing responses among your peers, discuss thoroughly the significance of each response (i.e. answer what each response means for each person), and provide suggestions on how you’ll address different responses and expectations. Consider repeating the process at various critical transitions.

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 was further revised by Steve Lee (Assistant Dean of Diversity & Inclusion at Stanford University; spl33@stanford.edu) and Stephanie House (Co-director of the NRMN Master Facilitator’s Initiative at UW Madison; house2@wisc.edu).