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 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. 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. 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
  - *The mentor will need to take particular care in not explicitly and implicitly communicating that their responses are the "right" responses, but stating that their expectations only reflect their particular style.*
- 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 as agreed upon.
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 process for using this questionnaire.
- make sure both parties have a blank copy of the questionnaire in advance, and fill it out separately
- set up a meeting that will be focused on this questionnaire
- at the start of the meeting, first share your primary goals for the mentoring relationship and research work
- then compare 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, etc)
- consider sharing your responses to the questionnaire with peers at your similar stage, so that you can compare how other people at your level respond to the statements

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