Student-Advisor Expectation Scales

The Student-Advisor Expectation Scales worksheet lists 16 pairs of statements describing end points on a continuum. Individuals differ as to the position they take on each scale. These differences reflect variation in educational philosophy, personality, and the norms of the home discipline. Each item is an issue about which most students and advisors need to reach agreement. Often, however, students and faculty members do not directly discuss their perspectives about how this matter should be resolved and why. In fact, in many cases, the situation may change over the student's time in doctoral studies.

Making expectations explicit, and having regular conversations about expectations, helps to minimize misunderstandings. It is important to recognize that most students do not feel comfortable asking their advisor to complete the worksheet. Faculty members may need to be the ones to initiate conversations about expectations.

This document can provide a basis for conversations between students and advisors to align their expectations. The Expectation Scales worksheet can be used in several ways.

Faculty Advisors

Faculty advisors can complete the worksheet and use it as the basis for a discussion with individual students, among a group of advisees, or with a team in the lab. Students prefer faculty members to initiate discussions.

- For each item, why does the advisor think that this is the best way to proceed?
- Which items are non-negotiable? Which can be discussed and determined together?
- In which ways does the advisor tailor her/his *modus operandi* to the individual student? Why does the faculty member change his/her MO? Does the advisor take into account the student's personality, background experiences, stage in graduate studies, or other factors?
- What other expectations does the advisor have of students? When and how should students ask for clarification of expectations?

Students

Students can complete the worksheet to explore:

- The student's own needs and desires. What does the student think is the best way to proceed for the student's own development?
- What does the student believe and understand to be the advisor's preferences and *modus operandi*?
- Complete the worksheet identifying both what the student desires and the perception of the faculty advisor's position. If the difference is more than 2 points, this is an item that should probably be discussed directly.
- Do all of the faculty member's advisees share similar understandings of the advisor's preferences and *modus operandi*?
- Develop a personal advising philosophy. How would the student plan to advise graduate students in the future? How does the student mentor and advise undergraduates or newer graduate students?

Directors of Graduate Studies

The worksheet can be used with a group of faculty members to initiate discussion about:

- What positions do individual faculty members hold? Why do they think that this is the best way to proceed?
- Does the department have some expectations that are shared?
- Do faculty members share the same reasons or rationale for shared positions on scales?
- When and how do faculty members discuss expectations with student advisees?

Original from Ingrid Moses, 1985, Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia. Adapted by Margaret Kiley and Kate Cadman, 1997, Centre for Learning & Teaching, Univ. of Technology, Sydney. Further adapted by Chris M. Golde, 2010, Stanford University.

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Read each of pair of statements describing end points on a continuum. Estimate your position and mark it on the scale. For example, if you believe very strongly that it is the advisor's responsibility to select a research topic for the student, on scale #1 you should circle '1'. If you think that both the advisor and student should be equally involved, circle '3'.

The other side of this document describes ways to use this worksheet.

Course of Study & Dissertation Planning		
1. The advisor should suggest and approve which courses the student takes.	1 2 3 4 5	Students should solely determine which courses they take.
2. It is the advisor's responsibility to select a promising dissertation research topic.	1 2 3 4 5	The student is solely responsible for selecting the dissertation topic.
3. The advisor should select the other members of the dissertation reading committee.	1 2 3 4 5	The student should select the members of the dissertation reading committee.
Contact & Involvement		
4. The advisor should determine when to meet with the student.	1 2 3 4 5	The student should decide when to meet with the advisor.
5. Faculty-student relationships are purely professional and personal matters are not appropriate.	1 2 3 4 5	Close personal relationships are essential for successful advising.
6. The advisor should check regularly that the student is working consistently and on task.	1 2 3 4 5	Students should work independently without having to account for how they spend their time.
7. The advisor should be the first place to turn when the student has problems with the research project.	1 2 3 4 5	Students should try to resolve problems on their own, including seeking input from others, before bringing a research problem to the advisor.
8. The advisor is responsible for providing emotional support and encouragement to the student.	1 2 3 4 5	Emotional support and encouragement are not the responsibility of the advisor – students should look elsewhere.
The Dissertation		
9. The advisor should insist on seeing all drafts of work to ensure that the student is on the right track.	1 2 3 4 5	Students should submit drafts of work only when they want input and feedback from the advisor.
10. The advisor should assist in the writing of the dissertation if necessary.	1 2 3 4 5	The writing of the dissertation should only ever be the student's own work.
11. The advisor should determine when and where to present or publish the research.	1 2 3 4 5	The student should decide when and where to present or publish the research.
12. The advisor should decide when the dissertation is ready to be defended and submitted.	1 2 3 4 5	The student should decide when the dissertation is ready to be defended and submitted.
13. The advisor has direct responsibility for the quality of the dissertation.	1 2 3 4 5	The student bears sole responsibility for the quality of the dissertation.
Support		
14. The advisor is responsible for finding funding for the student until the student graduates.	1 2 3 4 5	Students are responsible for finding their own sources of funding.
15. The advisor is responsible for introducing the student to others in the field, especially at conferences.	1 2 3 4 5	Students are responsible for building their networks in the field.
16. The advisor is responsible for providing career advice and preparation to the student.	1 2 3 4 5	Career advice and preparation are not the responsibility of the advisor – students should look elsewhere.

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