

## Conceptualizing and Writing a Mentoring Compact<sup>1</sup>

### *Preface*

In Spring 2020, the Department of Communication at the University of Pittsburgh marked its commitment to mentoring by instituting a standing Mentoring Committee. In the constitution of that committee in its Bylaws, the Department affirmed that “on the part of both mentors and mentees, mentoring entails a self-conscious practice of articulating and developing the skills and experiences that are necessary and valuable in a profession and in other aspects of life.” That Bylaws charge speaks of mentoring in relation to “Appointment Stream (Adjunct/Part-Time, Visiting Instructor, and Full Time) and Tenured/Tenure-Stream faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, and staff.” Anyone in any of these groups could make use of the compact process described here.

This document on mentoring compacts is designed to aid the articulation and development of the skills and experiences named in the Bylaws. It stands alongside the Department’s Mentoring Philosophy Statement Guide (available on the Department of Communication’s website). These documents supplement rather than replace the Department’s current mentoring practices during on-boarding, staff and faculty annual review, and graduate student roll call, for example. And they support rather than constitute the Mentoring Committee’s efforts to improve current mentoring practices and make good mentoring available to all in the Department. These documents supplement a networking approach because they might occasion folks the opportunities to make frank assessments of their own strengths and weaknesses, and seek appropriate mentorship from various sources whose capacities complement their own. The chosen idiom of “compact” is distinct from that of “contract” and is meant to suggest reflective mutuality rather than enforceable obligation. Moreover, no one is required to make such compacts. We hope this document helps you think about whether one would be useful and, if it would be, how to go about creating one. General statements of mentoring philosophy can be a good place to begin when crafting a specific mentoring compact.

This guide to conceptualizing and writing a mentoring compact therefore comes out of a particular context. It is nevertheless made freely available for use by others elsewhere.

Thinking together about goals, expectations, and processes is an important part of collaborating as mentors and mentees. That’s true for all the different forms of mentor/mentee collaboration involving faculty (appointment-stream, part-time, tenure-stream, and visiting), graduate and undergraduate students, and staff. There is no presumption here that any given mentee has only one mentor, and we see compacts as tools that enable a network of mentoring

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connections. They could be used by an individual, for example, to help figure out how they want to fill out their mentor networks, with attention to potential mentors' strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, a compact could be entered into by more than two people; different combinations of co-mentors and co-mentees are entirely possible.

This document is designed to help you create mentoring compacts of your own that respond to your needs and help you move toward your goals—whether you are a mentor, mentee, or both. Because there are lots of different forms of mentor/mentee collaboration, this document doesn't attempt to lay out every detail. It provides a framework to assist mentor(s) and mentee(s) in producing their own compacts. Listed below are some of the issues that are important to consider when establishing such compacts.

We recommend that mentor(s) and mentee(s) in the Department of Communication first share any existing statements of mentoring philosophy, confer on whether they wish to tailor the generic form at the end of this document for their needs, and then meet to discuss the compact and the mentoring collaboration, before finally writing up the content of the agreement and signing it.

### *Questions to Consider when Making a Mentoring Compact*

Preparation. Conceptualizing and writing mentoring compacts is something that many reflective professionals have done. There are a number of resources that can provide guidance on how to do this work, some of which are available on the [Department's website](#):

1. Are there examples of other mentoring compacts that any of the parties to the mentoring compact would like to put on the table for reflection?
2. Do any of the parties to the mentoring compact have statements of mentoring philosophy that might inform this mentoring collaboration?

Goals. Part of establishing a good mentoring collaboration is being clear what you're working toward, and these questions may help you make this explicit:

1. What are the goals of this mentoring collaboration?
2. What component skills and knowledges are needed to work towards those goals?
3. What steps are involved in developing those skills and getting to those goals?

Expectations. Another part of mentoring collaboration is making sure that you understand each other's expectations, and here are some questions that may help you with that:

1. What expectations does each party to the compact have of the other(s)?
2. What shared expectations do you have?

3. Will it be useful to establish any ground rules or basic commitments for discussions in mentoring meetings?

Processes. Even basic processes can be easy and affirming or alternatively difficult and taxing, and here are some questions that can help you settle arrangements for things like meetings, forms and frequency of communication:

1. What will be the primary means of mentoring communication?
2. Will it be best to set up a regular time to meet (whether that be weekly, monthly, annually, etc.)?
3. If regular meetings are not the right way to go, then who will routinely be responsible for scheduling meetings?
4. How long should such meetings generally be, and where should they take place?
5. When will the first meeting take place?

Evaluation. Assessing how a mentoring collaboration is going is an important part of that collaboration itself, and here are some questions that can help you prepare for this:

1. What is the plan for assessing the effectiveness of the mentor/mentee collaboration?
2. If issues or problems arise, what is the plan for addressing them?
3. What is the plan for terminating the mentoring working relationship when it has achieved its goals, run its course, or is not working?

**Mentoring Compact** (Note: the size of these boxes is just a starting point; please feel free to develop statements of whatever length you feel is warranted. If more than two parties wish to enter into a single compact, add additional name, signature and date lines as necessary.)

Statement on Preparation	
Statement of Goals	
Statement of Expectations	
Statement on Processes	
Statement on Evaluation	

Mentee's Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Mentee's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor's Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_