HDCA MENTORSHIP HANDBOOK

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01 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the HDCA Mentorship Program is to provide support and guidance to early career researchers and practitioners working on the capabilities approach. Many of these individuals may not have access to fellow or advanced capabilities researchers within their department or university, and may not have a forum for capabilities dialogue. The primary focus of the mentorship program is therefore on fostering capabilities scholarship, although mentoring for career development may also naturally occur in the course of exchange between mentors and mentees. Our hope is that early-career researchers at universities that lack capabilities scholars will receive appropriate mentorship and be able to collaborate on contributions that accurately reflect capabilities theory.

This booklet is intended to provide mentors and mentees participating in the HDCA Mentorship Program with a clear understanding of the program's objectives and requirements, along with the roles and expectations of mentors and mentees.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

02 PROGRAM OBJECTIVES AND REQUIREMENTS

The main objectives of the HDCA Mentorship Program are:

1. To provide an opportunity for early researchers to engage with established capabilities scholars who can provide competent feedback.
2. To advance the use of the capabilities approach.

The mentorship program requires a minimum of three online or in-person meetings per year, each lasting about 40-60 minutes. However, participants are encouraged to engage with each other beyond this minimum in order to foster collaboration and develop new projects together. Because each mentorship pairing is unique, with different topic focuses, needs, backgrounds, and experiences, participants are free to determine and agree upon a manageable commitment and the form and function of the collaboration that best suits their needs. To participate in the mentorship program, mentees must be actively registered HDCA members.

Main objectives:

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03 PROGRAM DURATION AND EXTENDING BEYOND ONE ANNUAL CYCLE

The normal duration of each mentorship cycle is almost a year (late Jan till Oct). We recommend spacing the three required meetings out into three time brackets for the purpose of tracking progress:

- First meeting: End-January to third week of March

- Second meeting: Start of April to first week of June

- Third meeting: Mid-June to third week of August

However, you are free to arrange when to hold these meetings at a time that is convenient for both you and your mentor/mentee.

In October, a survey will be conducted to gather feedback and improve the program. If collaborative projects are ongoing at the end of the yearly cycle, paired mentors and mentees may choose to extend their mentorship into the second year. This extension is subject to the availability of both parties and must be agreed upon by both the mentor and mentee.

04 HOW THE MENTOR-MENTEE MATCH IS MADE

The primary focus of the mentorship program is on fostering capabilities scholarship, especially for early-career researchers who may not have access to capabilities scholars within their own institutions. Therefore, the primary criterion for matching mentors and mentees is the mentee's research focus and the availability of mentor's expertise. Often capabilities research cross or overlap several disciplines. In such instances, we aim to identify the applicant's key research focus and make the match. Applicants are also specifically asked during their application for what they particularly look for in the mentorship or in a mentor and these inputs are also taken into strong consideration as a second criterion alongside their research focus.

In addition to the above primary criteria, selection and matching also takes these other considerations into account:

- If the applicant has access to capabilities scholars at their own institution
- The geographic area of the applicant's field research
- If the applicant has a specific interest in meeting scholars from other continents
- The applicant's preferred operating language, if different from English
- If the applicant is a registered member of the HDCA (non-members are given the opportunity to register to participate in the program)

As the program is still growing, the capacity is largely constrained both in terms of the number and mentor-expertise coverage we have available, as well as the coordinators' capacity to implement the program. The program's goal is not to assign as many applicants as possible, but rather to build the fundamental processes to further iteratively improve and scale in the near future. To this effect, matches are currently being assigned by a committee of experienced HDCA members. This is to ensure a balanced distribution of mentors, including both well-known and mid-career capabilities scholars. However, as the program and the pool of resources grow and the processes become more refined and firmly established, future iterations may better meet the applicant demand.

05 WHAT MENTEES SHOULD EXPECT

In this program, mentees include HDCA members who are graduate students working on HDCA related dissertations, researchers (post-docs up to 3 years after PhD), and other graduates who wish to apply CA in practice. While early career researchers may be well accustomed to taking directions from more established scholars like their supervisors, unlike a supervisor relationship this mentorship program aims to be principally mentee-centred.

While mentors are there to help, the most effective mentoring relationships are mentee-centered and focused on the mentee's agenda (Clutterbuck, 2014; Ackroyd and Adamson, 2015). As a mentee in the HDCA Mentorship Program, it is important to take the initiative and drive the mentorship relationship by setting the agenda for meetings and discussions. This means being clear about your goals and objectives, and bringing specific issues and topics for discussion with your mentor. By being proactive and taking the lead in setting the agenda for your mentorship, you can ensure that you get the most out of the relationship and make progress towards your goals.

"One of the most common problems with formal mentoring schemes is that mentor and mentee meet, each hoping the other will define what they should be talking about" (Clutterbuck, 2014)

To avoid this common problem, here are some recommendations on certain mentee qualities to better prepare one for a successful mentoring relationship. According to Clutterbuck (2014), successful mentoring relationships are characterized by mentees who are:

- Realistically ambitious for the relationship, having clear expectations of what it can do for them.
- Unambiguous about their own role in selecting and bringing issues for discussion.
- Prepared to take the prime responsibility for arranging meetings and the agenda.
- Willing to challenge and be challenged.

- Able to approach the relationship with respect, good humor and openness.
- Aware of the obligations the relationship places on them, regarding their behavior towards the mentor and to interested third parties, such as their line manager (or supervisors).

As a mentee, it is important to understand that the relationship with your mentor is not limited to co-writing a paper. Instead, it is also important to approach the relationship with creativity and authenticity, and to explore the many possibilities that may arise from working with your mentor. Some ideas on how to engage with activities together are described below. To get the most out of the mentorship, it may be beneficial to start by asking your mentor about their own experiences as a mentee, and to work together to define the differences between mentoring and supervision (detailed in the next section). This can help to clarify your expectations for the mentorship and develop a stronger relationship with your mentor. Additionally, having a clear understanding of what specific goals you want to achieve and bringing those to the table will ensure that the mentoring relationship will be more productive and result oriented.

The UCL Mentoring Handbook (2019) furnishes further ideas on what to expect as a mentee. Feel free to use this resource.

06 WHAT MENTORS SHOULD EXPECT

"Mentoring is separate from supervision/appraisal and allows the mentee to speak more freely than with a research supervisor. It is a pre-defined space where mentees can discuss work-related and career-related topics with a more experienced person." (Burke et al., 1991, see also IHEA Handbook, 2022)

A central challenge for mentors in the HDCA Mentorship Program is to shift from their traditional role as an authority figure and establish trust with their mentees. This can be achieved by offering an alternative perspective, acting as a sounding board (Iversen, Eady and Wessely, 2014, pp. 314), and focusing on personal learning and mutual discovery of both mentor and mentee (Clutterbuck, 2014 (citing Engstrom, 1997/8)). Established mentors may have difficulty in this aspect, as mentees may view them as authoritative figures, despite the mentor's best intentions. In such cases, it is crucial for mentors to guide the focus of the relationship back to the mentee by prioritizing active listening, posing open questions and by helping them find their own solutions rather than giving direct advice (IHEA Mentoring Booklet 2022; Clutterbuck, 2014).

This approach, also known as developmental mentoring, is more effective in the long term as mentees develop problem-solving skills and become more self-sufficient and empowered. The process aims at co-learning, helping mentees make better decisions, and growing in wisdom through deeper self-awareness (Clutterbuck, 2014). A key question that mentors should ask themselves is, "Is this going to help the mentee work out what is the right path for them?" This approach allows mentees to become the driver of their own development, with the mentor providing guidance and support (Clutterbuck, 2014).

As the program aims primarily to assist HDCA's early career scholars and practitioners, and to build an inclusive community for all members, mentors benefit vicariously through the growth of its members and their development of high-quality research. Mentors will have the opportunity to develop their own mentoring skills, create a stronger network with the newer generation of scholars, as well as build a rapport with fellow mentors, should they choose to engage with them as peers within this program.

Mentors from different areas of the world operating through different languages will also have the opportunity to build a broader network within those geographic areas and languages through this program's various channels, and especially help early career researchers and practitioners to bridge the trans-cultural and language gaps. Most of all, this program is a fertile space to initiate collaborations with members, practitioners, along with many others beyond the association in an encouraging, motivated, and innovative atmosphere.

For more mentoring guides and frameworks, the UCL Mentoring Handbook (2019) offers various tools for mentors.

> **"The delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image, but giving them the opportunity to create themselves."**
> **Steven Spielberg – Movie Director**

07 IDEAS ON HOW TO ENGAGE

In addition to the typical academic collaboration of co-writing a paper together, there are many different activities that mentors and mentees can engage in to make the most of their mentorship. Here are a few ideas as suggestions that mentors and mentees may find useful:

01 — Set clear goals

At the start of the mentorship, the mentor and mentee should work together to establish clear goals for the relationship. These could include specific research projects to work on, career development goals, or any other objectives that the mentee hopes to achieve through the mentorship.

02 — Research review

The mentor can offer guidance to the mentee on how to review and analyze academic research, help them understand how to critically evaluate sources, and provide feedback on their own research work. Likewise, mentees can be invited to provide a different perspective as part of the mentor's work-in-progress seminars or informal symposiums.

03 — Collaborative projects

Mentors and mentees can work together on collaborative research projects. This allows the mentee to learn from the mentor's expertise while also having the opportunity to contribute their own ideas and perspectives. This could include collaboratively organizing an online or in-person seminar, inviting each other to various events in their institutions, proposing a panel or topic for the HDCA or other conferences, or organizing an online session through a HDCA thematic group or the Early Career Researchers and Practitioners Network (ECRPN). Collaborations could also enter into the social media space, through the creation of a podcast or video about an important topic, interviewing practitioners in their field of interest, or a social media campaign to publicize an important topic or event or mark an important milestone.

04 — Networking

The mentor can introduce the mentee to their professional network, which can be very valuable in terms of getting to know other scholars and practitioners in the field, finding new research or work opportunities, and building connections for future collaborations.

05 — Professional development

The mentor can provide guidance on how to navigate the academic job market or transition into a practitioner, help the mentee prepare for job interviews, and offer advice on how to develop and maintain a professional reputation in their field.

06 — Journal clubs

Participating in journal clubs is another way mentors and mentees can engage in a more formal setting. A journal club is where a group of scholars get together to discuss a recently published paper or book in their field of interest. This allows both mentees and mentors to stay up-to-date with the latest research and discuss its implications with peers. It will also allow mentees without opportunities for capabilities exchange within their institutions to more deeply engage on capabilities theory, especially within the mentor's and mentee's relevant disciplinary field of interests.

07 — Journal submission and feedback

The mentor may help in the review process of the mentee's papers, submission for journals and giving feedback for improvement on the papers.This could include learning to deal with the review process, on how to respond to critical reviews during revisions, dealing with rejections, and identifying the most relevant journals to target for submissions. Both could share news about upcoming calls for submissions and special issues, or even initiate one together if there is a need for one.

The key point is that, mentoring relationship is a two-way street and the co-learning and collaborative possibilities are limited only by the creativity and imagination of both parties. Open communication, flexibility and willingness to learn from one another are key ingredients to make it a successful one.

08 HOW TO HANDLE PROBLEMS?

As previously mentioned, a frequent challenge in mentoring programs is when the mentor and mentee meet without a clear understanding of what topics should be discussed, and an expectation that the other party will guide the discussion. We suggested that mentees should take the initiative by setting the agenda for meetings and discussions, and being clear about their needs and expectations with their mentors.

There is also the issue of unrealistically expecting too much of each other. For example, generally, expecting a mentor to read through and review a whole dissertation, or to secure the next position for the mentee, might be reasonably considered unrealistic expectations. On the other hand, expecting mentees to abide by every request or suggestion might also be expecting too much out of a mentee. To avoid unrealistic expectations on either parties, it is important to mutually set expectations early on, on what each side might be willing to do to meet certain objectives of the mentoring program.

Additionally, it is also important for both parties to recognize that if the mentoring relationship is not meeting their needs or achieving its intended goals, it can be ended amicably. This can be discussed through regular check-ins to evaluate the progress of the relationship and determine if the mentor and mentee are well-suited for one another. If it is determined that the current mentor-mentee pairing is not working out, the mentor can also help the mentee explore other mentoring options that may better suit his or her needs. Both parties can also seek guidance from the Mentorship program's coordinators as needed. Recognizing when a relationship is no longer effective and gracefully ending it is a sign of maturity and self-awareness for the mentee, and a sign of the mentor's ability to foster mentee growth and development. (IHEA Mentoring Handbook; Clutterbuck, 2014).

09 KEY POINTS IN SETTING UP A MENTORSHIP RELATIONSHIP

HIGHLIGHT 1

- Mentees should take the initiative in setting up meetings and identifying focus areas.

HIGHLIGHT 2

- Mentors should prioritize active listening, open-ended questioning, supporting mentees to find their own solutions, and providing constructive feedback.

HIGHLIGHT 3

- Agree upon the purpose and goals of the mentoring relationship at the first meeting. Establish the roles and responsibilities for both mentors and mentees.

HIGHLIGHT 4

- Clarify the boundaries and expectations for confidentiality in the relationship.

HIGHLIGHT 5

- Differentiate mentoring from other forms of support such as research supervision, appraisal, and counseling.

CITED LITERATURE AND OTHER RESOURCES

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UCL Mentoring Handbook (2019): https://www.ucl.ac.uk/human-resources/sites/human_resources/files/ucl_mentoring_handbook_website.pdf

Contact

If you need additional support or have questions about one or more sections of this handbook please direct your queries to the mentorship coordinators through **hdca.ecrpn@gmail.com**