

General Experience, Mutual Selection Paths, and Dilemmas in the Two-Way Selection of Graduate Students and Supervisors in Local Universities

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Abstract: The mutual selection process of graduate students and supervisors in local universities is a pivotal phase in academic development. This paper examines this process through detailed questionnaire analysis, regulatory investigations, and incorporates valuable suggestions. It highlights the crucial role of early contact between students and supervisors, underscores the necessity of pre-selection activities, and delves into the diversity of graduate student categories. Additionally, the paper emphasizes the importance of aligning project progress with school requirements. Regulatory investigations shed light on the mechanisms in place at various universities, providing valuable insights into the double selection process. Suggestions to enhance the process are also discussed, including increased opportunities for contact and the introduction of "basic" and "performance" indicators. This comprehensive analysis aims to optimize the mutual selection process, fostering an environment conducive to academic growth and innovation.

1. Introduction

The mutual selection process of graduate students and supervisors in local universities has witnessed significant transformations in recent years. This process, which holds profound implications for the academic and research landscape, requires a nuanced understanding of the evolving dynamics. The mutual selection of graduate students and supervisors is a pivotal juncture in academia. This symbiotic relationship hinges on aligning research interests, mentoring styles, and career aspirations^[1]. However, it also presents a unique set of challenges, commonly referred to as the Mutual Selection Dilemma^[2]. This dilemma arises from the multifaceted expectations and objectives of both parties, demanding a nuanced approach for an effective selection process.

2. The Evolving Landscape: Categories of Supervisors

A critical aspect of the mutual selection process lies in the diverse categories of supervisors. Understanding the unique attributes of each category is crucial in making informed decisions^[3].

2.1. Eminent Scholars

Eminent scholars, with their extensive academic, financial, and networking resources, offer unparalleled exposure to cutting-edge projects. However, considerations regarding the intensity of academic pursuit and alignment of research interests are paramount.

2.2. Dual Role Leaders

Supervisors in leadership positions within the institution wield administrative influence in addition to academic resources. For students aspiring to remain within the mentor's research group, this category presents an enticing prospect.

2.3. Academic Mentors

While lacking official titles or abundant resources, academic mentors are approachable, dedicated to academia, and eager to guide students. Their strength lies in matching students with suitable research directions.

2.4. Life Mentors

Life mentors focus on holistic personal development, offering invaluable life advice. While they may not lead numerous research projects, they play a pivotal role in nurturing well-rounded individuals.

2.5. Other Categories

Supervisors falling outside the aforementioned categories present viable options for students without specific criteria. Their mentorship style and approach may offer a unique perspective.

3. Diverse Categories of Graduate Students

Equally diverse are the categories of prospective postgraduate students. Each category brings distinct strengths and considerations to the mutual selection process.

3.1. Academic Pursuers

Driven by a passion for in-depth research and future academic pursuits, academic pursuers seek to excel in their chosen field, often making substantial contributions to their research area.

3.2. Technophiles

Technophiles thrive on innovation, contributing tangibly to lab projects. Their inclination towards hands-on learning positions them as potential catalysts for groundbreaking research and innovation.

3.3. Managers in the Making

These students, though not necessarily academically inclined, excel in leadership, social activities, and personal development. Their presence in a research group can bring unforeseen benefits in terms of organizational and interpersonal skills.

3.4. Degree Seekers

Clear-cut in their objectives, degree seekers prioritize attaining the degree. Once they find their footing, their potential to make meaningful contributions to research becomes apparent.

3.5. Following the Current

Motivated by external pressures or societal expectations, this category of students may initially lack a clear academic passion. However, their journey through the mutual selection process may lead to unexpected and valuable contributions.

4. The Mutual Selection Dilemma: Balancing Expectations

The mutual selection process often presents a dilemma for both students and supervisors. Striking a balance between academic pursuits, research interests, and personal growth is a complex undertaking.

4.1. Student Perspective

Students face the challenge of aligning their academic aspirations with the mentor's research focus. The desire for autonomy in research pursuits must be balanced with the need for structured guidance.

4.2. Supervisor Perspective

Supervisors, in turn, grapple with the task of assessing a student's potential for contributions to ongoing research. They must also consider the long-term academic and professional goals of the student.

4.3. The Need for Clear Communication

Transparent communication between students and supervisors is paramount in overcoming the mutual selection dilemma. Articulating expectations, goals, and potential challenges sets the foundation for a successful partnership.

5. Questionnaire Analysis: Insights from the Frontlines

A questionnaire survey was conducted to gather firsthand insights from students and supervisors engaged in the mutual selection process. The analysis of responses offers valuable perspectives on the challenges and opportunities inherent in this critical juncture.

5.1. Distribution of tutor contact time points:

- Undergraduate level (before postgraduate entrance examination): 7.5%
- Undergraduate level (after postgraduate entrance examination) and before graduate admission: 35%
- After graduate admission: 57.5%

This data reveals that a majority of students initiate contact with their supervisors after being admitted to graduate school. This trend may be linked to the extent of familiarity between students and supervisors during the postgraduate entrance examination phase.

5.2. Opinions on the activity arrangements before the double selection of tutors:

- Required: 90%
- Not required: 10%

A significant majority of students express the belief that activities should be arranged before the double selection of tutors. This pre-selection engagement is viewed as instrumental in fostering better mutual understanding and providing essential information for an informed choice of supervisor.

5.3. Graduate Year Distribution:

- First-year postgraduate students: 35%
- Second-year postgraduate students: 55%
- Third-year postgraduate students: 10%

This distribution reflects the varying academic year statuses of graduate students within the sample. Different academic year cohorts may have distinct needs and experiences related to supervisor selection and topic progression.

5.4. Opinion on whether project progress meets the school's requirements:

- Serious discrepancy: 5%
- Basically consistent: 50%
- Compliant: 40%
- Very true: 5%

The majority of students assert that the progress of their research projects aligns reasonably well with the school's stipulated requirements. While this indicates a positive trend, there is room for improvement according to some respondents.

6. Regulatory Frameworks: Navigating the Mutual Selection Process

Many local universities have recognized the significance of establishing clear regulatory frameworks to govern the mutual selection process. These regulations serve as guiding principles, ensuring fairness, transparency, and accountability.

6.1. Regulations of Shenzhen University School of Medicine

This set of regulations provides specific guidelines on the determination and alteration of postgraduate supervisors. It stipulates the maximum number of academic and full-time professional master's students each tutor can recruit annually. Additionally, it outlines the timetable for mutual selection, emphasizing the importance of supervisors and students signing and confirming the results.

6.2. Notice from the School of Economics and Management of Wuyi University

This notice underscores the imperative of organizing an online dual-selection exchange meeting for 2022 graduate students and tutors. It mandates both supervisors and students to prepare basic personal introductions in advance and submit a matching list following the meeting. By facilitating this exchange, the university aims to streamline the mutual selection process.

6.3. Interim Measures for Allocation of Graduate Enrollment Indicators of Huaqiao University

These measures lay down the fundamental principles for allocating enrollment indicators, distinguishing between basic and performance indicators. They also address the criteria for increasing or decreasing performance indicators, ensuring a balanced approach to graduate student admissions.

6.4. Notice from Zhejiang University of Science and Technology

This notice outlines the procedures and eligibility criteria for graduate students seeking to change their supervisor. It places restrictions on the number of times a student can make such a change, promoting stability and continuity in the supervisory relationship.

6.5. Guidance on Changchun University of Science and Technology Postgraduate Students

This guidance document highlights the significance of mutual selection between supervisors and students. It calls for the issuance of corresponding guidance documents by the graduate school and provides specific timeframes and precautions for the dual-selection process. By offering this guidance, the university aims to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the mutual selection process.

7. Valuable Suggestions: Empowering the Process

In light of the diverse experiences and perspectives gleaned from the questionnaire analysis and regulatory investigations, several recommendations emerge to further enhance the mutual selection process and foster an environment conducive to academic growth and innovation^[4].

7.1. Increase Opportunities and Time for Supervisors to Contact Graduate Students

To optimize the mutual selection process, it is crucial to enhance interaction opportunities between supervisors and students. This involves a balanced approach between organized research activities and independent exploration, ensuring that talented individuals who might not have already earned titles also receive the necessary support. Research activities, such as seminars and research workshops, offer platforms for students and supervisors to interact and discover mutual interests. Encouraging independent exploration allows students to explore their interests, potentially leading to innovative research directions.

7.2. Fine-tuning the Selection Platform with "Basic" and "Performance" Indicators

The selection platform should be fine-tuned to offer a more effective and fair process. One approach is to introduce a sequential opening of "basic" and "performance" indicators. By first allowing supervisors to select students based on their basic requirements, and subsequently distributing performance-based indicators, a more comprehensive selection process can be achieved. This sequential approach balances efficiency with fairness, aligning with the suggestions of the "Graduate School Admission Best Practices" report by the Council of Graduate Schools.

7.3. Leveraging Technology for Enhanced Matching

Tools incorporating machine learning algorithms hold immense potential in facilitating the

identification of students whose research interests align with those of potential supervisors. These platforms streamline the matching process based on research areas, academic backgrounds, and skill sets^[5].

7.4. Fostering Interdisciplinary Collaboration

The mutual selection process presents a unique opportunity to foster interdisciplinary collaboration. Establishing dedicated platforms and events for cross-disciplinary interactions between students and supervisors is imperative in nurturing a culture of multidisciplinary research.

7.5. Embracing Diversity and Inclusion

Recognizing the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives of both students and supervisors is paramount. Policies and practices should be implemented to actively promote diversity and inclusion, ensuring equal access to mentorship opportunities for all.

7.6. Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation

A crucial aspect of enhancing the mutual selection process lies in its continuous assessment and refinement. Metrics and key performance indicators should be established to evaluate the outcomes of mentor-student pairings. Regular feedback loops should be instituted to gather insights from participants, thereby informing iterative improvements.

7.7. Bolster Quality Assurance

Strengthening the Construction of an Outstanding Supervisor Team is crucial. This involves breaking the lifetime appointment system, and implementing a mandatory application process for supervisors in line with enrollment. It also requires refining selection criteria and training mechanisms for supervisors to enhance their mentoring capabilities. Additionally, focusing on key processes, establishing a comprehensive quality monitoring system centered around degree conferment is imperative.

8. Conclusions: Nurturing Future Scholars and Innovators

The mutual selection of graduate students and supervisors stands as a dynamic process with immense potential. By embracing collaboration, fostering open communication, leveraging technology, and promoting diversity and inclusion, universities can create an environment where students and supervisors thrive in their academic pursuits.

As we navigate the complexities of the mutual selection process, let us remain steadfast in our commitment to nurturing the next generation of scholars and innovators. Through strategic interventions and a collective dedication to excellence, we can ensure that the mutual selection process becomes a beacon of academic empowerment and achievement.

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