



TECHNISCHE
UNIVERSITÄT
DRESDEN

POSTDOC CENTER

Mentoring program Academia

GUIDELINE FOR MENTEES AND MENTORS



Contents

1. Program goals	4
2. What does mentoring mean?	5
3. Which topics can be addressed in mentoring?	7
4. What are the contents of the mentoring program?	9
5. How can mentee and mentor organize a successful mentoring relationship?	10
6. Tips for the first meeting	17
7. How to plan and structure mentoring discussions	19
8. Contact	22

Welcome to the **mentoring program Academia** of the Postdoc Center!

With this guideline we hope to provide you with orientation for the mentoring relationship between mentee and mentor. The guideline offers advice and suggestions for an easier start into the mentoring program and tips to support you with the organisation of the mentoring process.

We wish you an exciting, inspiring and successful time in the mentoring program!

Your Postdoc Center Team

1. Program goals

Our program is addressed to **postdocs** of TU Dresden, who aim for a leadership role in science or research and would like support with their professional development and the planning of an academic career.

Over a period of twelve months a mentor supports a mentee with the further steps of their academic career. Depending on the personal objectives, the mentor can advise the mentee on career planning and give him or her professional feedback or insights into working processes and structures of the science system.



2. What does mentoring mean?

In general, mentoring means the "Activity of an experienced person (mentor), who is passing on professional knowledge and experiences to an inexperienced person (mentee)."¹

In the academic field mentoring programs serve to support the **career planning** of early career researchers. Over a fixed (longer) period (in this case 12 months) an experienced leader and a mentee work together on the mentee's professional and personal career development and promotion.

Mentors support mentees with their **career planning** and **building of professional networks** and give **insights**

¹ <http://wirtschaftslexikon.gabler.de/Definition/mentoring.html>

into academic and professional structures and rules.

The points to be addressed in the mentoring relationship are specified by the mentee. Goals and expectations are discussed and set together with the mentor.

Mentors contribute their professional expertise, give support and act as contact persons. This happens outside an academic supervision or a direct employment relationship. There is no hierarchical (employment) relationship, but rather a **cooperation at eye level.**



3. Which topics can be addressed in mentoring?

For a successful mentoring relationship it is important, that mentee and mentor discuss and agree on their **expectations** as well as (short-term and long-term) **goals** right at the beginning of the mentoring relationship. This establishes transparency and avoids unnecessary frustration.

In principle, mentee and mentor are free to prioritize the addressed topics. Following topics can be discussed within a mentoring relationship:²

Career plans of the mentee

- career planning and possible obstacles
- identification (and determination) of the further career steps
- joint development of professional strategies (e.g. When and where is it necessary to apply for which third-party funds? - DFG, BMBF, EU)
- advice on concrete situations and current questions
- identification of previous successes
- feedback about e.g. the person's appearance and effect on others (self-image and public image) as well as personal goals, resume etc.

Working experience and work environment of the mentor

- reflection on the mentor's experiences
- advices on important scientific organisations, third-party donors, conferences
- introduction to networks and contact mediation
- informal rules of the science system
- publication strategies
- handling of challenging situations in everyday working life: salary negotiation, leadership, conflicts, low motivation, assertiveness, ...

² Scientia Mentoring: Logbuch für Mentees, S.10



Personal aspects of the mentee

- promotion of potential
- promotion of professional development
- identification of reasons and motivation for actions and decisions
- strengthening of self-image and self-confidence
- work-life balance
- compatibility of career and family planning

Mentoring can provide:

- exchange of experiences
- sharing of informal knowledge
- (individual) advice on career development and feedback
- career promotion
- support with network building and expansion

4. What are the contents of the mentoring program?

The mentoring program consists of two modules:

Module 1: Mentoring relationship (tandem)

The **mentoring relationship** is the central program module. Mentees propose potential mentors and can decide, if they make the first contact with the mentors by themselves or if the program coordinators of the Postdoc Center should make the first contact. If the potential mentor agrees to participate, mentee and mentor are forming a so-called tandem.

The program coordinators are available for questions during the entire program period. Nevertheless, it is up to the tandem to organize their communication and a constructive working relationship (e.g. number and period of meetings).

Module 2: Network building

During the twelve-month program cycle, there are three official **meetings** (kick-off event, mid-term review and closing event), which give program participants the opportunity to get to know each other as a group and to exchange ideas.

Furthermore, there is the opportunity to apply the method of **collegial consultation** in small groups (peer groups). In this systematic conversation according to a fixed dialogue structure mentees can advice each other on professional questions and key topics and develop solutions together.

In addition, participants of the mentoring program can use further **qualification and advisory offers of the Postdoc Center**. More information about our offers you can find on our website.



5. How can mentee and mentor organize a successful mentoring relationship?

Mentoring represents a professional and personal relationship between two persons. For this reason, **mutual trust** and **respect** form the basis of cooperation. The general principle of a successful mentoring relationship is: We work on goals together. Mentees and mentors should be aware of their individual rights and obligations to make the cooperation a beneficial experience for both parties.

Principles of mentoring relationships:

- open-mindedness
- respect
- confidentiality
- benevolence
- on eye level (non-hierarchical)

The contact between mentee and mentor should take place personally, in writing, by phone or via video call at **regular intervals**. The tandem decides on the frequency

of contact and the organization of meetings. Mentee and mentor should plan enough time for discussion of the defined topics. We recommend to always set the time for the next appointment and to formulate aspired goals at the end of the meeting. Mentees are responsible to organize the meetings.

Even if the mentoring relationship is non-hierarchical, mentee and mentor should follow basic **rules for a respectful cooperation**. That includes e.g. keeping agreements and appointments, timely cancellation in case of being prevented and confidentiality towards third parties.

If any **problems** arise, mentee and mentor should seek dialogue with each other at an early stage. Open communication can often help to eliminate emerging conflicts. Mentee and mentor can contact the program coordinators if they cannot come to an agreement and the problem affects the further cooperation.





Infobox: DOs and DON'Ts for mentees³

DOs

- Set **specific goals** and communicate your expectations clearly. As a mentee you decide on the key topics you want to work on. Set professional and personal goals and formulate them together with your mentor.
- Be **independent** and **active**: You arrange appointments proactively and propose topics. You stay in touch with your mentor and contact him:her with current and short-term topics.
- Prepare yourself **well** for every meeting.
- Be **professional** and **fair**. Show consideration for your mentor's feelings and time.
- Be **open** for feedback and **constructive** criticism.
- You **decide for yourself**, which suggestions you want to take up. You have to decide, what you want to realize in your life and career. Use advices and suggestions only if they correspond to your personal values and you think they are right.

DON'Ts

- **No false expectations**: Mentors cannot make decisions for you or solve your problems.
- Do not repress **problems** and **conflicts**: Have the courage to address also difficult issues.
- No **perfectionism**: View mistakes and failures as learning possibilities and chances.

³ Scientia Mentoring: Logbuch für Mentees, S.12



Infobox: Tips for mentors⁴

How can I support my mentee? What is expected of mentors?

- Within the scientific context, mentoring is not understood as a substitute for academic supervision, but rather as a **career-promoting supplement**. Mentors support the individual career planning and personal development of their mentees.
- As a mentor you share your **own professional experiences**: Mentees can benefit from your professional experiences and learn directly on a relevant career model.
- You raise **awareness** for the meaning of professional networks and act as door opener.
- Mentors give **feedback** and **strategic advice**. With specific questions and active listening they help mentees to find their own solutions.
- If necessary, you contribute your **own opinions** and experiences and point out possible obstacles/difficulties.
- Mentors do not set **targets** and cannot offer **patent solutions**.
- You **motivate** and **encourage**: Support your mentee with evaluating and appreciating their personal competencies realistically.
- The mentees should have the bigger **conversation's proportion** during the meetings.
- Define your **limits** clearly: What can you provide as a mentor and what not. If necessary, address unproductive behaviour.

⁴ Scientia Mentoring: Logbuch für Mentees, S.12

Mentoring relationship: WIN-WIN for everyone

Mentees benefit from a mentoring relationship as well as mentors. There are different positive effects for their professional and personal development.

Benefits for mentees:

- Career planning: Mentees get individual advice and support with the planning of their academic career from an experienced mentor. They can receive e.g. informal knowledge about structures, rules and advices for professional routine from their mentor. They gain clarity about professional (and personal) objectives and can plan the next career steps based on this.
- Networks: Mentors can facilitate their mentees access to professional networks. Mentees can learn how to establish and maintain contacts.
- Position determination and personality development: During the mentoring process mentees reflect on themselves and their current professional situation. They get to know their personal abilities and strengths better and learn to assess them realistically. By discovering the





perspective of their mentor they can widen their focus on certain matters.

- Strengthening self-confidence and social competence: Perhaps mentees discuss weaknesses, doubts, fears and difficult situations in the mentoring relationship as well. Mentors can encourage their meentes to solve them and to increase confidence in their own abilities. Mentees train their social competencies by conversations and reflection, e.g. self-management and conflict ability.
- Support: The program coordinators are available for any questions and advise on individual concerns or appearing problems. In addition, mentees can receive a travel allowance for personal meetings with their mentors.
- Certificate: After finishing the mentoring program Academia all participants get a certificate.

Benefits for mentors:

- Leadership and advisory competencies: Mentors can gain experiences in supervision, improve and develop their leadership and advisory competencies and practice active listening. You can present yourself as an influential and good leader and talent promoter.
- Inspiration and networks: You get in contact with early career researchers, get an insight into their professional situation and challenges and possibly gain new impulses for your own research or scientific work. Furthermore, mentors can widen their own professional networks by mentoring contacts.
- Self-reflection and feedback: Discussions with mentees encourage mentors to reflect on their own career. Perhaps mentors get feedback about their own behavior and leadership style through the mentee's questions and opinions.
- Sharing personal values: Mentoring gives mentors the opportunity to share personal values and opinions.
- Support: The program coordinators are available for any questions and advise on individual concerns or appearing problems.
- Certificate: After finishing the mentoring program Academia all participants get a certificate.



6. Tips for the first meeting

The first meeting between mentee and mentor forms the basis for the further mentoring process. Here they set the **framework conditions for their cooperation**.

TIP: Both persons should take enough time for the first meeting and to get to know each other.

Following points can be discussed to introduce each other:

- current occupation or position and research focuses
- previous career
- professional qualification, interdisciplinary competencies
- professional plans and goals for the next 2 to 5 years



Infobox: Questions in the first meeting⁵

Regarding the **organization of the mentoring relationship**, it is recommended for mentee and mentor to discuss the following questions in the first meeting:

- What (short-term and long-term) **goals** do you as a mentee want to achieve with mentoring? How can you achieve these goals? How is be recognised that the goal has been achieved?
- What **topics** and **concerns** are particularly important for you?
- How should **feedback** be given? How can you as a mentee make clear if the feedback does not help you? Do you also want to receive feedback as a mentor?
- What **expectations** do you have on each other in the mentoring tandem?
- What do you **expect** from the mentoring relationship? On which do you attach particular importance during the cooperation and what do you definitely not want to experience?
- Which **areas** should not be addressed?
- What should be treated in **confidence**?
- How do you want to meet each other and in what **time intervals**? When is contact by phone or e-mail acceptable? At which times are you not available?
- How **late** can an appointment be cancelled?

⁵ Scientia Mentoring: Logbuch für Mentees, S.14

Mentee and mentor define the general conditions of their mentoring relationship in a **mentoring agreement**. You can find a model agreement on our website. In the mentoring agreement they reflect on their personal objectives and expectations for the mentoring program. At this point it is also advisable to discuss the **procedure** in case of a breach of agreement or other **problems** during the cooperation. In such cases the program coordinators are always available as contact persons.

At the end of the first meeting we recommend to structure and divide the defined objectives into **individual phases** of the mentoring process. The mentoring agreement makes the results verifiable and give a written orientation for the mentoring process. This way mentee and mentor can formulate their desired goals and objectives e.g. until the next meeting, half-time of the programm and the end of the mentoring.

7. How to plan and structure mentoring discussions

It is the mentees responsibility to organize and prepare the meetings. They should consider beforehand what topics interest them currently and what points they want to discuss. For this, the time frame of the meeting should be taken into account. Mentees can send their mentors an agenda for better preparation. An agenda provides useful orientation during the discussion, so that no questions will be forgotten. We recommend the following structure for the mentoring meetings:

1. Describing the situation and formulating a question

In the first step, mentees describe the problem with a **concrete situation** and formulate a **concrete question** that concerns them regarding the described situation.

2. Understanding and asking questions

The mentor can then ask questions about the situation described. In doing so, he or she should take care not to necessarily provide possible solutions, but rather to encourage their mentee to think and reflect independently by

asking open-ended questions. Good questions can sometimes help mentees more than the sharing of their mentor's experiences.

3. Feedback and analysis

In the next step mentors give **feedback** to the mentee's behaviour in the described situation. Together they discuss possible solutions. In this process, the problem or the question can also be divided into intermediate steps.

4. Developing solution approaches

In the last step, mentee and mentor assess the discussed suggestions and develop **concrete solution approaches**. Mentees decide by themselves which option is best for them. Mentors provide only advisory support. At the end they plan together the implementation of the chosen solution. It may be helpful to relate to the initial situation again.

After the meeting

For mentees it is recommended to **follow-up all** mentoring discussions. They can e.g. prepare a **brief** summary of the



most important results and insights. They can also check if all questions have been discussed in detail or if there are still any uncertainties. Perhaps even new questions for the next meeting arise. Furthermore, a written follow-up documents the development of the mentoring relationship.

Tip: The final meeting

The official mentoring program and cooperation end after twelve months. Like in the first meeting it is important to take enough time for the final meeting. In the final meeting mentee and mentor can reflect on their cooperation, balance the achieved results and thank each other for mutual support.



8. Questions? Suggestions? Need for support?

Do you have questions or suggestions or need support during your time as a mentee or mentor? Then contact us at any time, we will be happy to help you:

Postdoc Center Mentoring program Academia

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↗ <https://tu-dresden.de/ga/postdoccenter/career-track-academia/fachmentoring>

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↗ <https://tu-dresden.de/ga/postdoccenter/career-track-academia/fachmentoring>

This guideline was created in consideration of the following mentoring guidelines:

- Maria-Reiche-Mentoring Programm der TU Dresden: Leitfaden für Mentees & Leitfaden für Mentor:innen
- Scientia Mentoring: Logbuch für Mentees & Logbuch für Mentor:innen
- Unibund Halle-Jena-Leipzig: Mentoring-Programm für Postdoktorandinnen: Leitfaden zum Mentoring
- Universität Bayreuth: Mentoring-Leitfaden zum Programm CoMento



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