

## **Mentoring at the University of Ostrava: Career Development of Researchers**



EUROPEAN UNION  
European Structural and Investment Funds  
Operational Programme Research,  
Development and Education



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,  
YOUTH AND SPORTS



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November 2020



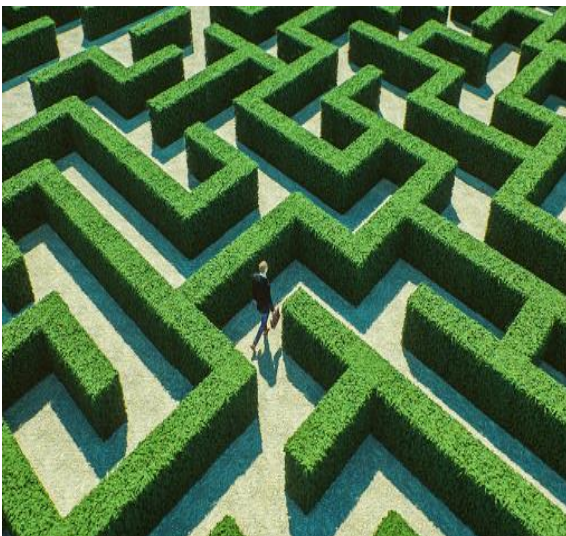
## Introduction

Experience from the foreign universities and a number of studies clearly demonstrate that a mentoring program can be a start to successful career path of a junior researcher or expert in given scientific discipline.

Whereas the mentoring styles differ based on the field of expertise and personal focus, its basics are formed and used during the university studies. This guideline should serve as a basic manual for Faculties and university workplaces. Our aim is to provide a source of information for the Faculty members who try to improve the relationship with the junior researchers/experts and their effectiveness when working with them. We believe that this document will be useful not only for those who are new in this role but also for those who already were successful in the role of a mentor or mentee and want to get better and ready for various situations that may appear during the mentoring program.

Mentees and their mentors share responsibility for ensuring productive and rewarding mentoring relationship. Both parties play a role in the success of the mentoring. On the following pages, you can find basic information on mentoring in general or specifically tailored for the UO, a number of templates and sources, which might help you to cultivate positive relationship mentor-mentee.

We appreciate your interest in this guideline, your work commitment and your involvement.



**A mentor is not the same as a supervisor.**  
**Mentees are not formally dependent on mentors (student, subordinate).**

## What is mentoring?

Mentorship is surrounded by aura of mythology; the term itself is derived from Mentor (an old wise man, who was an embodiment of the goddess Athena), who was taking care of young Telemachus while his father Odysseus was taking part in the Trojan War.

Nowadays, the term mentoring is often mistaken for coaching, managing, educating and socialising. Mentoring represents a relationship focusing on a personal development, progress in knowledge, work and thinking. The main feature of the mentoring is an exclusive relationship between the mentor and the mentee, i.e. a relationship, where somebody more experienced imparts strategic counselling to facilitate personal and professional development to somebody less experienced.

Definition: mentoring generally designates a relationship which is provided by a more experienced person = mentor to a less experienced person = mentee within a counselling (Daloz, 2012). Mentor procures confidence, initiates challenges, encourages and offers more possible ways of development.

Mentoring can also be defined as an off-line help of one person to another, who should perceive an important progress in knowledge, work or thinking. (Megginson et al., 2006).

## Why to mentor

Nowadays, within the HR management, it is generally recommended to the companies, organizations and the universities as well to provide a mentoring program, i.e. a process which helps people in their professional and personal development. Moreover, the surveys show, that mentoring can have a positive impact on job satisfaction, remuneration, relationship to the organization and career advancement (Bilimoria, Perry, Liang, Palo, Higgins a Taylor, 2006; Çetin, Kizil a Zengin, 2013; Gardiner a kol., 2007; Kirchmeyer, 2005).

Many of these findings certainly depend on a specific type of mentoring and institution, which is being monitored, but positive effect of the mentoring is visible and undeniable. Creating of a mentoring program can be useful especially when dealing with a problem of inequality. For instance, it can provide crucial sources for the development and career advancement of the minorities. For example, mentoring for female academics is commonly used in the majority of the universities in the Great Britain (Hawkes, 2012), Switzerland (Jäger, 2010), Germany (Gottschall, 2010; Zuber, 2010), as well as in the EU (European Commission) and the USA (the National Science Foundation) support creation of mentoring programs and a network to support careers of women (Nöbauer & Genetti, 2008; Rosser, 2010).

Mentorship dedicated to ethnic minorities (BME) is also more and more common, especially in the Great Britain. The universities have specialized mentoring programs (eg. B-Mentor Initiative carried out in cooperation with these universities: University College London, London School of Economics, King's College and Queen Mary University of London).

In the Czech Republic, we can use this experience for incoming foreign doctoral students and researchers. These programs are very useful for them; they help them to integrate and to realize the potential of their professional path.

## Who is a mentor?

In English-written literature, the term mentor is used in the meaning of an advisor. It must be said that it does not stand for an authoritative advisor but for a person, who is of assistance to an unexperienced/beginner (mentee).

Thus, a mentor can be defined as usually more experienced person, who is a trustworthy friend, advisor and teacher.



## Why to be a mentor

Effective mentoring is beneficial to the faculty members and students by ensuring successful transfer of knowledge in specific areas and fields. Good mentoring is not a task that necessitates some formal time, but rather an occasion to interconnect generations of researchers and experts.

Mentoring is beneficial for mentees, because (Paglis et al., 2006):

- It supports students' progress in research, presentations at conferences, publication activities, pedagogical skills and writing of grants.
- Students have higher probability to successfully go through stressful or difficult times in their career of junior researcher.
- The experience and contacts (networking), that mentors help students to attain, may improve their prospects for achieving professional level and building a career.
- The level of stress lowers and their confidence grows, if they know, that somebody is willing to help them to make some progress and that he/she can advise them and stand for them.

Mentoring also rewards the mentors in many ways:

- Your students will help you to keep up with new knowledge and technologies and they will inform you about the prospective ways for research.
- Reputation of faculty members is represented also by the work of its former students; your professional status will also rise if you contribute to "production" of new successful researchers
- Your network of contacts is enriched. If you help students to create professional and personal connections, which might help them to succeed, your own network of contacts will significantly grow as well.
- It is a personal satisfaction. The fact, that your students succeed, may be as satisfying as a large publication or a significant grant.

Effective mentoring supports the ability to effective self-management, because students often start to significantly publish and present long before the end of their studies. Such students tend to be more productive and they have higher chance to build their career, which will reflect the credit of their mentors and enrich the scientific discipline. Effective mentoring helps to ensure the quality of research, scholarships and teaching in the future.

## What does a mentor do?

- Advises mentee.
- Helps mentee to establish goals according to his/her individual needs.
- Communicates and cooperates with the mentee.
- Helps mentee to seek the way and does not allow her/him to go to blind alleys.
- Provides mentee with a feedback and inspires him/her.
- Makes progress himself/herself and wants to be even better.

## General instructions for mentors

Time and energy required by attending a mentoring program represent a personal challenge. Management of needs and expectations of the mentee can be demanding, nevertheless, for a trained and interested mentor, these processes become natural.

Below, we have some advice, which might help to manage mentoring.

- It is important to understand the situation, needs and expectations of the mentee. If any of the needs or expectations seems to be extra demanding, try to be open and discuss it. It is useful to talk openly about the things where you feel able to advise. Mentees are advised to discuss their goals with the mentors as soon as possible.
- Time is a problem. During the first meeting, it is recommended to discuss the frequency and length of your meetings and try to make clear how much time you can devote to this activity. It can also help to handle the expectations of the mentee.
- It is good to stay in touch also between the meetings in person. Therefore, it is recommended to discuss as soon as possible what form of contact you will choose (e.g. e-mail, telephone, Skype, WhatsApp, Teams, etc.). It is useful to briefly discuss between the meetings what problems or questions will be opened at the following meeting.
- Respect the time planned for the mentee.
- Be open in sharing your experience with the mentee. And if it is useful, present him/her your network of contacts, or suggest him/her some activities in compliance with his/her dispositions.
- Do not hesitate to advise, but avoid judgement.
- If you feel that there is a problem in fulfilling mutual expectations, do not hesitate to discuss it.
- Other mentors can be a precious source of information and advice, which can be useful for the mentor in his/her mentoring practice, and which will teach him/her, how to manage the mentoring relationship in the best way. Therefore, do not hesitate to openly share your experience with them.
- Confidentiality is important and it is expected that it will be treated cautiously. Mutually shared information between the mentor and the mentee are confidential.
- If you perceive that there is a problem that you feel unable to solve adequately during the mentoring program, or that there is a problem that cause you some doubts, do not hesitate to contact the coordinator of the mentoring program.

## Who is a mentee?

Within the mentoring relationship, mentee is the inexperienced/less-experienced person, who wants to grow and is professionally guided and developed by the mentor. Mentee does not necessarily need to be a younger person, because it is never strictly given, that an older person is also a person with better knowledge and with more experience. In some areas, it is the opposite.



## Why to become a mentee?

Do you think about your own life situation, in which you currently are, about your overall goals, which you would like to achieve in the near future? Then the mentoring program might be the right way for you. Mentoring can be extra useful in times of changes, e.g. when starting new job position, when transferring to new job role, etc.

It is important to realise, that a good mentoring relationship (mentor – mentee) always takes some time, which might seem as an obstacle at the beginning. In fact, this investment (not only in time) is precious. It gives you room for thinking about your own path and it helps to prevent that the daily routine overwhelms you and that you forget your established goals. Some questions that the mentoring process contains, might be:

- Do I feel the need to get some further advice relating to my career and personal development?
- In what areas of my professional life it might be useful to get some advice?
- What kind of advice do I need?
- From whom?
- How could a mentoring program help?
- Can these needs be accomplished by this mentoring program?
- What is expected from me, if I take part in this program?
- What does it mean to be a mentee?

Other important aspect of participation in the mentoring program is that it represents an opportunity to talk to other participants, enlarge own network of contacts and to learn by sharing experience and challenges. That is why the participation at a training or introductory meetings can be very enriching, because it also gives room for peer mentoring.

Generally, the studies show, that the mentoring increases the success of the mentees in their activities and it also contributes to higher satisfaction with a job position, a role, etc. (Gardiner, Tiggemann, Kearns a Marshall, 2007).

## What does a mentee do?

- Listens to the mentor.
- Together with the mentor, he/she clarifies the goals according to his/her individual needs.
- Communicates and cooperates with the mentor.
- Actively seeks a way and accepts and processes mentor's advice.
- Accepts a feedback and let the mentor motivate him/her.
- Provides the mentor with a feedback and information which can be useful for him.

## General instructions for mentees

Below, there are some recommended processes, which are not binding, but which might be useful for a well started mentorship, especially to make you realise your potential. As every relationship, the mentoring needs time and attention.

- Try to explain to the mentor as clearly as possible your reasons to enter the program and your expectations. This might help him/her not only to get to know you as a person, but also to indicate how to treat your needs.
- Your goals in mentoring can be quite large, but it is always important to be as specific as possible. Remember, that the mentor cannot read your thoughts!
- Establishing goals may seem to be a boring and administrative process, but keep in mind, that it is very important to specify the path of your mentoring. One of the reasons of unsuccessful mentoring is insufficient specification of its goals or disharmony between the mentee's and the mentor's expectations.
- Be proactive when managing the mutual relationship. Think about some general goals and consider timing. It is very probable, that you and your mentor will be very busy. Therefore, it might help you to set the frequency, times and length of your meetings.
- It is good to be in touch also between the meetings in person, therefore discuss as soon as possible the form of contact that you will choose (e.g. e-mail, telephone, skype, WhatsApp, Teams, etc.). It is useful to shortly discuss between the meetings what problems and questions will be opened at the following meeting.
- Respect the time of your mentor.
- Give it some time so that the relationship can grow. During the first meeting, you cannot discuss everything. If there are some problems, that you cannot discuss during the meeting, explain it. Inform the mentor in advance about the important topics that you would like to open during the upcoming meeting. If you have some extra important topics that you want to concentrate on, it is better to write them to your mentor a couple of days in advance, which can help him/her to better prepare for your meeting.
- Do not be afraid to share your thoughts, opinions and ideas relating to your situation and your mentoring needs with the mentor; it will help the mentor to advise you better. Remember, that the role of your mentor is to advise you. This advice should ideally inspire your actions or your approach to work and life.
- Keep in mind, that confidentiality is important. Maybe you would like to ask your mentor not to pass the information that you share with him to anyone else as you consider it to be confidential, and vice versa.
- Remember, that your mentor should ideally be your ally for a change and development. Thus, do not be afraid to share your experience and be open. By the exchange of good practice, the program can be beneficial for both of you.
- Remember, that the mentoring program is here for you during the whole mentoring duration. If you are uncertain, if you have any problem that you are not able to deal with, do not hesitate to contact your mentor or the coordinator of the mentoring program.





## Development of shared expectations

If the mentor was mentored during his/her postgraduate studies, it can be a useful starting point to think about this period and how he/she felt as a mentee.

Questions to start:

- What kind of mentorship did I have?
- What I did not like about the mentoring I went through?
- How well did my mentors help me to grow within my postgraduate studies?
- How well did my mentors help me to be prepared for a research and academic career?
- What did I miss in my mentoring program?

This reflection can significantly help to develop a vision of what type of a mentor you would like to be, and to ensure the most effective ways to mentor students within your field and beyond.

Before the first meeting, the mentee should perform a self-evaluation, which will subsequently be discussed during the first meeting with the mentor.

Questions for self-evaluation:

- What is your experience with the schooling so far? Why did you decide to continue with postgraduate studies?
- What do you expect from graduating from the postgraduate studies?
- If you have previous experience with mentoring, describe it (pros and cons, what did you miss?)

Topics for the first meeting of the mentor and the mentee:

- To discuss mentee's previous experience with schooling, mentor's preferences and needs, and why did he/she decide to study the postgraduate program. What expectations does the mentee have from graduating from the postgraduate studies?
- To discuss own research projects and how they relate to or differ from the interests of the mentee.
- To suggest some courses that the mentee should attend apart from the basic module, available research possibilities, and to discuss other professional experience, in which the mentee could be interested.
- To share the contacts within the university and beyond, so that the mentee can meet these people and start to develop professional networks.
- Warning for a mentee, that postgraduate studies can be stressful, and therefore it is necessary not to forget mental health and well-being with a recommendation for supplementary courses related to this topic.

## Basic mentoring course

Source: Mentoring-instrumental (Curtin, Malley & Stewart, 2016).

Variable name	Item	
Interest in academic career	How attractive is this goal to you:	Become a professor at a top research university
Mentoring sponsorship	- My primary advisor:	Helps me develop professional relationships with others in the field
		Advocates for me with others when necessary
		Encourages me to attend and present at professional meetings
Mentoring - instrumental		Helps me secure funding for my graduate studies
		Assists me in writing presentations or publications
		Advises about getting my work published
		Gives me regular and constructive feedback on my research
		Teaches me the details of good research practice
		Instructs me in teaching methods
		Teaches me to write grant/research proposals
Mentoring - psychosocial		Treats my ideas with respect
		Is easy to discuss ideas with
		Treats me as a colleague
		Treats me as a whole person – not just a scholar
		Inspires me intellectually
		Builds my confidence
		Encourages me in my research interests and goals
		Provides emotional support when I need it
Would support me in any career path I might choose		
Career self efficacy	I feel confident:	That I can become a professor in a top research university

## **“Scientific Academy” – module – as a parallel development activity**

Together with the mentoring program, junior or minority researchers should have an opportunity to take part in a basic development activity, which will provide them with a sufficient amount of information for a successful research path. The mentees can then reflect the gained knowledge into the mentoring with the mentor.

Example of the offer from the basic module:

- Financial literacy for researchers.
- Good practice in research.
- Orientation in bibliographic and citation databases (WoS, SCOPUS etc.), search and work with the sources.
- Academic writing.
- Academic presentations and communication with publishers.
- Basics of university didactics.
- Project management.

## **Additional offer of partial courses**

Other development activities offered alongside with the mentoring program are designated to mentees as well as to mentors according to their choice and need.

Other courses would be offered individually according to the needs of the specific focus of the mentee/mentor in the field:

- a) Professional – provided by the departments, centres;
- b) Operation-organisational – provided by specific workplaces e.g. Knowledge and Technology Transfer Centre, HR department, Research and development department;
- c) Personality-cultivating – provided by the Counselling Centre.

The recommendation to prefer primarily option of the on-line education combined with the webinars and also on-site group courses to share best practice. Furthermore, the mentee would be in contact with the mentor within the mentoring program.

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<https://gradschool.duke.edu/search/node/Cultivating%20a%20culture%20of%20mentoring>

## Annexes

### 1. Template of the agreement between a mentor and a mentee including the specification of the goals

Mentor's name and surname:

Mentee's name and surname:

The length of the mentorship:

Mentoring goals:

Goal	Fulfillment	Indicator

#### Forms of communication during the mentoring and their frequency:

In person  
Online  
Electronic

#### Obligations of the mentor and the mentee

##### Mentor undertakes to support mentee in the following way:

- To provide adequate help with establishing goals of the mentoring itself.
- To provide mentee with advice stimulating his/her personal development.
- To appropriately react to the mentee's questions, without delay, and using the agreed form of communication.
- To keep the meeting dates or communication via online tools.
- To be open in sharing of good practice with the mentee. If it might be beneficial to the mentee, to introduce useful contacts to him/her or to suggest some activities in compliance with his/her talent.
- To discuss possible problems that might occur.
- To be discreet about the shared information with the mentee.

##### Mentee undertakes to participate in a mentoring program in the following way:

- To fully listen to the mentor, to accept his/her advice and to process them.
- Together with the mentor, to actively participate in the mentoring program, to set the goals and to cooperate during the communication with the mentor.
- To accept mentor's feedback and to be motivated. To provide the mentor with a feedback too.
- To keep the scheduled meeting dates or communication via online tools.

- To react adequately, with no delay and using the agreed forms of communication during the communication with the mentor.

**Protection of confidential information:**

Both mentor and mentee undertake that all the information provided during the whole mentoring program will be considered as confidential and will not be spread. Breach of the agreement will be considered as gross violation of the agreement between the mentor and the mentee and will lead to the termination of the agreement.

**Termination of the agreement:**

If the mentor or the mentee decides to terminate the reciprocal mentoring relationship, they will do so with the highest respect and also they will try to solve the existing problem and set a “trial period” dedicated to its solving before they make the final decision.

The will to terminate the mentoring relationship must be communicated to the other party without delay and with clear reasons.

.....

Date and mentee’s signature

.....

Date and mentor’s signature



## 2. Final questionnaire of the basic mentoring course for mentee

Mentee's name and surname:

The length of the mentorship:

Mentoring goals:

1) Was the mentoring course helpful for you?

- Yes
- Rather yes
- Rather no
- No

2) Were all the established goals fulfilled during the mentoring program?

- Yes
- Rather yes
- Rather no
- No

3) Was the communication with the mentor problem-free during the whole mentoring program?

- Yes
- Rather yes
- Rather no
- No

4) Was the established form of communication followed?

- Yes
- Rather yes
- Rather no
- No

5) How much were you satisfied with the mentoring program?

- A lot
- Rather yes
- Rather no
- Not at all

6) If you were not satisfied, please explain your reasons:

7) How would you assess the mentoring of your mentor?



### 3. Final questionnaire of the basic mentoring course for mentors

Mentor's name and surname:

The length of the mentorship:

Mentoring goals:

1) Was the mentoring program helpful for you?

- Yes
- Rather yes
- Rather no
- No

2) Were all the established goals fulfilled during the mentoring program?

- Yes
- Rather yes
- Rather no
- No

3) Was the communication with the mentee problem-free during the mentoring program?

- Yes
- Rather yes
- Rather no
- No

4) Was the established form of communication followed?

- Yes
- Rather yes
- Rather no
- No

5) Was the mentee fulfilling the goals conscientiously?

- Yes
- Rather yes
- Rather no
- No

6) Was the mentee fulfilling the tasks conscientiously?

- Yes
- Rather yes
- Rather no
- No

7) How would you assess the mentee's work?

#### 4. Monitoring questionnaire for mentee

Mentee's name and surname:

Mentor's name and surname:

The length of the mentorship:

Mentoring goals:

- 1) Did your mentor clearly explain all the rules and principles of mentoring program to you?  
 Yes  
 Rather yes  
 Rather no  
 No
- 2) Did the mentor set any long-term goals to you?  
 Yes  
 Rather yes  
 Rather no  
 No
- 3) Does the mentor meet you regularly?  
 Yes  
 Rather yes  
 Rather no  
 No
- 4) Does the mentor keep the scheduled meeting dates?  
 Yes  
 Rather yes  
 Rather no  
 No
- 5) Does the mentor spend enough time with you on the meetings?  
 Yes  
 Rather yes  
 Rather no  
 No
- 6) Does the mentor give you enough room for your questions?  
 Yes  
 Rather yes  
 Rather no  
 No
- 7) Does the mentor reply to all of your questions?  
 Yes  
 Rather yes  
 Rather no  
 No

8) What is your overall impression from mentoring you have been provided?

- It is great, no problem
- It seems to be ok
- It could be better
- I find it pretty bad

9) Are there any reasons why you would change your mentor?

- Yes
- No

10) If your answer was “yes”, then specify the reasons why:

11) If you have any other comments, please write them here:

## 5. Monitoring questionnaire for mentors

Mentor's name and surname:

Mentee's name and surname:

The length of the mentorship:

Mentoring goals:

1) Do you have the impression that the mentee understood all the rules and principles of mentoring that you explained to him?

- Yes
- Rather yes
- Rather no
- No

2) Have you set all the long-term goals with the mentee?

- Yes
- Rather yes
- Rather no
- No

3) Does the mentee meet you regularly?

- Yes
- Rather yes
- Rather no
- No

4) Does the mentee respect scheduled dates of your meetings?

- Yes
- Rather yes
- Rather no
- No

5) Do you spend enough time with the mentee on your meetings?

- Yes
- Rather yes
- Rather no
- No

6) Is there enough room to answer all the mentee's questions?

- Yes
- Rather yes
- Rather no
- No

7) Do you think that the mentee fulfils his/her tasks conscientiously?

- Yes
- Rather yes
- Rather no
- No

8) What is your overall impression from the work that the mentee performs?

- He/she works conscientiously, without any problems
- He/she works without any problems, but there is room for improvement
- There are some issues but they can be solved
- The cooperation is problematic

9) If you have stated that you perceive some issues in your cooperation or that the cooperation is problematic, please explain the reasons:

10) If you have any other comments, please write them here: