



# MENTORING PROGRAMME

Professional development support for junior scientists



## 1. Generally about mentoring

### What is mentoring?

Mentoring is defined as professional, collegial and wise guidance to learn and grow in a profession. Mentoring is usually based on professional communication and a relationship between two people (called mentors and mentees) in the form of providing support, advice and expert help to a less experienced and junior worker.

Mentoring is understood as a longer-term, continuous process of assistance without control aspects, where the basic condition for success is primarily a relationship based on mutual trust, respect and voluntariness of both parties involved.

### Stages of mentoring

The mentoring process is dynamic and goes through several phases over time:

- The first phase is the initiation phase, where the initial building of trust between mentor and mentee occurs.
- This is followed by the cultivation phase, which consists of learning new skills and achieving a desired level of professional competence.
- This phase is followed by the separation phase, where the mentor, conscious of having fulfilled his or her function, gradually moves away from the mentee.
- The final phase, related to the end of mentoring, is referred to as the redefinition of the relationship, where mentor and mentee become mostly friends and colleagues, sharing a common interest in the best possible performance of the profession.

### Functions and fields of mentoring

Mentoring mainly serves three basic functions, which enable the mentee to further develop professionally or academically. Mentoring provides:

- (a) professional and human role models (e.g. a mentor can provide advice to the mentee on work arrangements or approach to research methodology)
- (b) psychological support
- (c) practical help (e.g. the mentor can provide the mentee with his/her own resources to use)

In general, it can be said that mentoring focuses on overcoming individual obstacles to career and professional development, for example in the form of strengthening the mentee's competencies and their position in the professional community and institution.



## 2. Mentoring in scientific practice

In the field of education, science and research, mentoring programs are primarily created as a tool to support groups with a lack of informal mentoring, i.e. support from supervisors, teachers, or more experienced colleagues.

### Mentoring goals

The main goal of the mentoring program in science is to support the professional development of (post) Ph.D. students, where the mentoring program is intended to help them start their scientific careers and clarify their direction.

Other goals of the mentoring program in scientific practice can also be considered to facilitate orientation in the scientific career system, to facilitate important contacts with more experienced scientists in the Czech Republic and abroad, to strengthen their integration into the international professional community, or even to support their self-confidence in further scientific research.

### Target groups

Mentors tend to be scientists and scholars in more senior positions in public universities and research institutions than mentees.

Mentees are mostly budding scientists in their Ph.D. or postdoctoral phase interested in advice, support, information, and contacts from more experienced scientists, especially in their (or related) field.



### 3. Roles

#### The role of the mentor

A more professionally experienced person acts as a mentor, offering to share his/her experience and knowledge with the mentee, while also being willing to consult with him/her on the decisions the mentee is facing. Unlike professional training, the relationship between mentor and mentee is formally independent (the mentee should not be the mentor's student or subordinate) - the goal of the mentoring relationship is thus determined by the mentees themselves based on their own needs.

The mentor also provides his mentee with:

- ⇒ moral and emotional support
- ⇒ access to resources relevant to the mentee's professional development
- ⇒ feedback on specific performances
- ⇒ source of inspiration
- ⇒ help in organising work and personal life

The mentor can support their mentee in the following areas:

- ⇒ participation in professional networks (in the Czech Republic and abroad),  
participation in professional conferences
- ⇒ help with orientation in the academic sphere
- ⇒ cooperation on professional texts
- ⇒ inspiration for defining research and career goals
- ⇒ discussion of research opportunities



## The role of the mentee

The basis for a well-functioning mentoring relationship is activity on the part of the mentee. The mentee needs to know what kind of support he/she expects from his/her mentor and thus approach him/her in advance with a concrete idea of the scope of their collaboration. The main activity is thus primarily on the part of the mentee throughout the mentoring relationship.

### Mentee should be in advance:

- ⇒ be ready to start a mentoring relationship, i.e. have identified areas of focus within the collaboration and independently seek opportunities for further development
- ⇒ ready to learn new knowledge and practical skills
- ⇒ open to constructive criticism from your mentor
- ⇒ willing to share own knowledge, experience and opinions with mentor/mentee
- ⇒ reliable, i.e. prepare in advance for scheduled meetings with the mentor/mentee (prepare relevant questions)

### Mentee can get from his/her mentor:

- ⇒ advice on professional life
- ⇒ access to professionally relevant contacts
- ⇒ support in scientific research
- ⇒ better orientation in the field
- ⇒ better information, e.g. on research funding or involvement in international projects