



# career mentoring

Universität Graz

## Guideline

for Mentors and Mentees

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# 1 Mentoring

Mentoring is a relationship between a person seeking advice in a transition process (mentee) and a person who has already successfully gone through this process (mentor) and can thus provide support. Over a longer period of time, the two exchange views on issues relating to everyday professional life and related topics.

## 1.1 Goal

The goal is to further develop the personality and skills of the mentee, as well as to accompany her:his next professional steps in the chosen mentoring area. The mentee is supported by the mentor reflecting on her:his own wishes, recognizing her:his scope for action, and pursuing goals.

## 1.2 Time required

Mentoring means process support. We therefore recommend a mentoring period of at least three to a maximum of twelve months. We recommend about one meeting per month. Including preparation, travel time, and meetings, mentoring requires an average of about 20 hours of time for mentors and somewhat more for mentees over the course of a year. Each mentoring team agrees on the schedule together.

## 1.3 Mentoring – what it can be

The topics to be dealt with in a mentorship are agreed upon individually in the tandem. The framework conditions, objectives, and the experience of mentor and mentee play an important role here. Mentoring does not have to follow a fixed pattern but is an individually designed process between mentor and mentee.

### Examples of what mentoring can be:

- Discussing possible career paths
- Joint development of professional strategies
- Reflection of the mentor's own experiences
- Advice on concrete situations or current questions of the mentees
- Giving feedback on behavioral patterns
- Personal support and encouragement
- Participation in the mentor's everyday professional life, for example through a job shadowing day
- Introduction to informal knowledge about an organization or processes in professional life
- Opportunity to learn from examples from everyday working life
- Support for network development
- Deepening of advisory skills and sense-making on the part of the mentors

## 1.4 Mentoring – what it is not

### **Coaching**

Mentoring is not coaching but offers the opportunity to develop one's own transition process through reflection and exchange with more experienced individuals.

### **Job placement**

Mentoring is not a career or job guarantee. It is not the task of mentors to provide mentees with a job or related contacts.

### **Therapy**

Mentoring is not therapeutic life counseling. Personal issues naturally have a place in mentoring. However, always remain aware of your role as mentor and mentee and the topics of your mentorship.

### **Legally binding advice**

For mentees, mentoring is not a substitute for necessary visits to official counseling centers, offices or authorities.

## 1.5 The Mentoring-Relationship

Mentoring is a professional but also a personal relationship between two people. Mutual goodwill and respect for each other are therefore prerequisites for the success of the mentoring relationship. Both sides can be sure that personal issues will not be divulged to third parties. The conversations take place in an atmosphere in which learning, making mistakes and talking about one's own weaknesses are accepted and there is a genuine interest in advancing the mentee in the sense of the above-mentioned goal.

## 2 Mentors

First and foremost, being a mentor means giving time and experience to help another person overcome a situation that the mentor has already successfully gone through. Mentors therefore do not have to worry about having to prepare intensively for their role, since their experience and the knowledge acquired in connection with it form the basis for the mentorship. It is also part of the mentorship that mentees are strengthened to research information themselves and to remain active throughout the process.

### 2.1 Tasks as a Mentor

#### **Spreading ideas**

As a mentor, you have a head start on your mentee in terms of experience in the chosen mentoring area. Against this background, you can help your mentee to find his or her own, personally appropriate solutions. Bouncing ideas around may be more effective than direct instructions and assertions in this context. Help with decisions but leave the responsibility with the mentee.

#### **Ask questions, give feedback, encourage strengths**

It is the responsibility of the mentor to moderate the mentoring discussions in such a way that solutions are found, and the strengths of the mentee are promoted. A framework that provides space for mentees to reflect and organize their thoughts is supportive. If possible, mentees should walk away from the conversations with insights, concrete ideas, or plans that they can implement by the next meeting.

#### **Finding space**

An important responsibility of the mentor is to find a suitable space for the mentoring for analogous meetings. Due to the working nature of the mentoring relationship, we recommend holding mentoring meetings in rooms with a work-like atmosphere. This may make it easier to address confidential topics than, for example, in public spaces that are heavily frequented.

### 2.2 Opportunities and benefits for Mentors

#### **Self-reflection**

The questions and views of the mentee encourage them to consciously reflect on their own professional development.

#### **Feedback**

The mentee sees your behavior as an outsider and can give you interesting feedback about it. From the mentee's perspective, you may gain insights into how your own leadership behavior might affect younger employees.

#### **Strengthening your consulting skills**

You will practice active listening, responding to others, and empathic counseling.

#### **Image**

You strengthen your reputation as an influential and good leader and as a supporter of talent.

### **Influence on personnel development**

You can influence personnel development by promoting the mentee, suggesting additional measures, making suggestions.

### **Networks**

As part of the mentoring community, you receive invitations to all events and can expand your personal network.

### **Passing on your own values**

You can pass on values and beliefs that have proven helpful and successful in your life.

### **Personal connection**

You can build a personal relationship with a younger person, which is often not possible in leadership positions with colleagues.

## 2.3 Matching-Process: The Roadmap for Mentors

### **Being found as a mentor**

Once you have registered as a mentor on the platform, the ball is in the mentees' court. In the first step, they search the platform's database for suitable mentors who match their own defined search criteria. This is how you will be found.

### **First written contact**

The mentee will be the first to contact you and send you a mentorship request via the platform. You will then have access to the professional and mentoring-related details of the mentee and can decide for yourself whether to agree to an initial meeting or to decline the request.

### **The initial meeting, initiated by the mentee**

After successful contact and appointment in the mentoring platform, initiated by the mentee, the first personal meeting takes place. It serves to get to know each other and to clarify basic questions for the upcoming mentorship, such as the intended period for the mentorship, the number of meetings or the type and frequency of contact.

We recommend that you agree on a rough content plan for the individual meetings at this meeting.

The topics result from the application details of the mentee and the offers of the mentor.

**TIP:** Mentees should immediately take notes on the agreements discussed. They will need these for the mentorship agreement, which they must fill out in the mentoring platform and send to the mentor for approval.

### **Mentorship agreement**

To start the mentorship, the mentee fills out the mentorship agreement in his:her profile, which is confirmed by you as the mentor on the platform. This agreement should contain (approximately) a period and the frequency of meetings and, if you wish, already those topics that you want to work on in the mentorship.

After approval, the mentorship agreement will be displayed in the "Mentoring" section of your profile, and you can plan all meetings together via the platform.

*For more details on the mentorship process, see Chapter 4 - The Mentorship.*

## 3 Mentees

As a mentee, you are responsible for introducing your questions and topics as well as the organizational processes of your mentorship. The mentoring platform will help you with this. There you arrange the mentoring appointments and record the topics and contents of your mentorship in the mentoring agreement.

### 3.1 Tasks of the Mentees

#### **Activity and initiative**

- **Arrange and keep appointments**
- **Note topics, questions and cases in everyday life and bring them into the mentoring process**
- Define goals: Beyond current issues, mentees can set goals they want to achieve with the help of mentoring, such as discussing possible next career steps. Together with their mentor, they can define what exactly they want to achieve, what steps are necessary to achieve it, and how they will be recognized when they have achieved their goals.
- Implement the solutions discussed and bring their experiences back to the mentoring process.

#### **Self-responsibility**

- Do not accept suggestions for action unchecked.
- Discuss with the mentor which of the solutions developed are actually suitable for your own person and situation.
- Contact the mentoring organization team if mentoring with the current mentor is not productive, if disagreements arise, and if these cannot be discussed directly within the mentoring tandem.
- Ending the mentoring if there is pressure to implement unsuitable solutions and no clarification is possible.

#### **Implementation**

- Implementation of discussed solutions.
- Feedback to the mentor about successes or setbacks in implementation.
- Willingness to deal constructively with setbacks.
- Finding basic agreements on how to deal with implementation difficulties.

## 3.2 Opportunities and benefits for mentees

### **Personality development**

Mentoring makes your skills visible to others and gives you the opportunity to expand them even further.

### **Orientation**

Mentoring broadens your horizons because you get to know other perspectives and other experiences through your mentor.

### **Qualification**

You will learn new things from a professional point of view: This can be insights into professional practice or other professional fields as well as topics on leadership techniques, preparation of meetings, conducting presentations and the like.

### **Social competence**

You train your social competence and can talk about it specifically with your mentor.

### **Career planning**

You gain more clarity about your professional and personal goals and can plan your next career steps with your mentor. You have the opportunity to work out individual solutions, possibly also for the compatibility of family and career.

### **Joining networks**

Through new networks, you can receive tips for vacancies and get to know other mentors. You will receive collegial contacts and further information.



## 4 The Mentorship

### 4.1 Starting the Mentorship

#### The initial meeting

After successfully establishing contact and making an appointment in the mentoring platform, the first personal meeting takes place. The purpose of this meeting is to get to know each other and to clarify basic questions for the upcoming mentorship, such as the intended time period for the mentorship, the number of meetings, or the type and frequency of contact.

We recommend that you agree on a rough content plan for the individual meetings at this meeting. The topics result from the application details of the mentee and the offers of the mentor.

**TIP:** Mentees should immediately take notes on the agreements discussed. They need these for the mentoring agreement, which they must fill out in the mentoring platform and send to the mentor for approval.

#### Check list for the initial meeting

##### Organization and procedure

- How often do you want to meet? How many meetings can you schedule in advance?
- Is it okay for the mentor if the mentee takes the initiative for the meetings?
- Should there also be telephone or online appointments? Are questions allowed to be sent via email?
- Are there certain times when the mentee should not call?
- How will you handle rescheduled appointments?
- Where will you meet? At the office, at a coffee shop, or on your run?
- Can you do something together that will bring you closer to the mentoring goal, such as attending a networking event together, visiting a company, attending a trade show?
- Is "job shadowing" possible? (Time-limited accompaniment in everyday professional life, e.g. one afternoon).

##### Contents

- Which topics are already identifiable that can be discussed in mentoring?
- Who contributes what to the success of the mentoring relationship?
- What goals do you each have?
- How will you both know that the goals have been achieved?
- What expectations do you have of each other? What do you hope for/expect from the mentoring relationship?
- In what form can the mentee prepare the content of the meetings?
- In what form are the results of the individual meetings recorded or followed up?
- Are there any topics that should not be addressed?

## Trust

- Explicitly agree on secrecy and confidentiality: To which group of people does this apply? What may be passed on, what not?
- How should feedback be given? How can you make it clear if you are no longer satisfied with the mentoring process?

## Revision

- How will you keep taking stock to see what you have achieved?
- What happens if your agreements on the process and organization of mentoring are no longer adhered to by one side?
- What would have to happen for you to come to the conclusion that you do not want to continue mentoring?
- What could be signs for the tandem partner that show that you are dissatisfied with the mentoring relationship?

Only after the first meeting, if there is mutual agreement, will a mentorship be established. To start the mentorship, the mentee has to fill out the mentorship agreement in his/her profile, which the mentor confirms or edits on the platform.

**TIP:** If you have determined at the meeting that a joint mentorship does not make sense on a content-related and/or personal level, discuss this and, if necessary, refrain from starting a mentorship. This shows that you value the time resources of your counterpart and can start a new search or are open to new inquiries.

## 4.2 Mentorship-Agreement

### Creating the agreement: Mentees

The content-related and organizational agreements discussed at the first meeting are entered by the mentees on the mentoring platform in the mentorship agreement, which is only accessible to them. This can be found in the "Mentoring" profile area as soon as a mentorship request has been positively answered. The agreement is saved in the platform by the mentee and then sent to the mentor for approval.

### Confirmation of the agreement: Mentor

Mentors receive information via the platform when a mentoring agreement is to be confirmed for them. This can also be revised by them.

If both sides have agreed, you are officially in a mentorship together. Of course, the mentoring agreement can be changed and adapted at any time with mutual consent.

If changes are made during the mentorship, for example to the content or the planned period, it is advisable to update the mentoring agreement and have it confirmed again by both parties.

## 4.3 During the Mentorship

### Topics

Mentees are primarily responsible both for finding appointments and for actively contributing questions and topics. They therefore take a very active role and make a decisive contribution to the success of the mentorship through their initiative.

The focus is on the topics and questions formulated by the mentees in the mentoring application, as well as the offers made by the mentors. The list of topics in Chapter 5 may provide further ideas.

### Appointments

Appointments are primarily suggested by the mentees via the mentoring platform and confirmed there by the mentor. After the meetings have taken place, participation in them can be confirmed in one's own profile. This is then saved as a success.

## 4.4 End the Mentorship

### Final meeting

It is important for both sides to officially end the mentorship and leave the mentor-role or the mentee role, even if you want to stay in contact beyond that. To this end, we recommend a final meeting defined as such. The mentoring network events, for example, provide an opportunity for this.

### Concluding mentorship on the platform and receiving confirmation

A mentorship can only be concluded on the platform by the mentor. They will see the "Complete mentoring" button in their profile. As soon as mentors click on this button, both mentor and mentee can download a confirmation of participation.

## 5 Examples of topics and questions

### Career and current job of the mentor

- What was the career path of the mentor - what led from one to the other, what hurdles had to be overcome, what "coincidences" played a role?
- Which practical experiences were helpful, which were not?
- Looking back, what would my mentor do differently when starting a career?
- What were the decision-making criteria for career development?
- Were there any wrong decisions in retrospect? How were they resolved?
- What is exciting about the job?

### **Focus on career entry: Questions about the application process and the job entry phase**

- Rules for job applications
- No-go's in the industry or company during the entry phase
- What is required?
- What does my mentor look for in the application process?
- How important are grades/study abroad/volunteer work?
- Are you open to everything or do you just go for it?
- What professional experience is required?
- How long does it take to find the "dream job"?

### **International focus: Questions about the application process in your favorite country**

- Rules for job applications, differences to rules in Austria
- No-go's in foreign countries concerning the entry into the job market
- Cultural differences
- Working hours and break rules
- Work-life balance
- What is required?
- How important are grades / semester abroad / volunteer work / specific field of study or university?
- How long does it take from the decision to starting the job in the new country?
- Is it easier to start via an international company? (internal transfer abroad)

### **Focus on self-employment: Questions about the start-up phase**

- How did the decision to become self-employed or to start a company come about?
- What decisions had to be made in advance?
- Where did the mentor receive support and legal advice?
- Are there any start-up advice or support programs for founders?
- How much time did it take and when did self-employment pay off?
- Office vs. home office - what experiences did the mentor have?

### **Networks**

- Important contacts - professional networks
- Tips on social media profiles and platforms
- Trade fairs/events/workshops
- How to use networks sensibly?

### **Subject-specific**

- Where is a good place to find out about companies and organizations?
- How important is the professional link between the thesis and the desired job/professional field?

### **Job/professional field?**

- Development & further education
- In which industries are there many development opportunities?
- In which cities is there development potential?
- Recommendations for further training/additional qualifications/further master's studies
- What did the mentor need to learn after graduation?

### **General questions**

- How much can one control one's own professional development? Which areas do you have a lot of influence on, and which do you have little influence on?
- Obtain personal feedback from the mentor

## **6 Recommendations**

### **Mentoring logbook**

We recommend that mentees keep a mentoring logbook. Dates, topics, questions as well as results and further plans should be recorded in the logbook. The logbook is a multiple help: It supports the planning of the current mentorship, it records processed topics and results and documents the personal development of the mentees, which the mentoring has brought about. An example of what a logbook page might look like can be found in the appendix.

### **“Du” or “Sie”?**

Should mentors and mentees be on a first-name basis? We would like to stick to etiquette here, which means: Mentees should address their mentor with “Sie” as long as they are not offered the “du” word as it is common in the German language. Mentors can offer the “du” word if they consider it appropriate. Whether you stay with the “Sie” or switch to the “du”, what is important is an appreciative and confidential interaction.

### **Testimonials**

On the mentoring platform you will find reports on the experiences of mentors and mentees. Perhaps you will find one or two suggestions there for designing your own mentorship.

## 7 Appendix

### 7.1 Checklist for mentees to prepare for the meeting

- What topic did you work on at the last meeting? What is in the logbook? What has happened in the meantime in this regard?
- What topics may have remained open at the last meeting that you would like to address again?
- What topic would you like to talk about at the upcoming meeting? Do you have specific examples of how you are affected by the issue?
- How can you outline this topic in about 5 minutes? Write down keywords, if necessary, so that you do not forget important aspects.
- What are your expectations/wishes of your Mentor? How could the support look like? Would you like feedback, advice or are you interested in the experiences of your mentor?
- Are you satisfied with the mentoring relationship? What could be improved from your point of view? In what form do you want to express this? What happens if you don't say it?
- Do you have all the paraphernalia you need for the upcoming appointment?

## 7.2 Mentoring-Logbook

**Date:**

**Review of events since the last meeting**

**Topics and goals for today's appointment**

**Contents**

**Topics and goals for the next appointment**

**Time and place for the next meeting**

## 8 Contact

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