

EURICLEA MENTORING PROGRAMME: Guidelines for meetings



European Projects Office EPO

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1. GENERAL MEETING TIPS

It is important to build up a space of trust and connection between the mentor and mentee by introducing each other and agreeing on some basic points that will define the mentoring relationship. The following questions may serve as a useful guideline:

1. In what ways do you think your experience and knowledge could be beneficial for each other?
2. Can you think in each other's (mentor/mentee) mind-sets?
3. What are your expectations (mentor/mentee)?
4. What is the best way to communicate your concerns/suggestions?

It is essential to do some preparatory work for each meeting, such as reading or collecting personal experiences about situations, attitudes and behaviors related to the topic to be discussed. To make meetings more productive, information and documents that will be addressed in the next session can also be shared in advance.

To make the most of this experience, experts suggest keeping some tracking of each meeting; recalling key points discussed and stating whether you agreed or disagreed can be very useful after a few sessions. This can be done using post-meeting forms.

The following tips can help to share experiences:

1. Professional life stories (yours or from colleagues and relatives)
2. Specific situations: how did you face them? What could have been done differently?...
3. Self-awareness: see yourself as others see you.
4. Skill-Building: review the skills you had or needed at that time: how did you develop them? To what extent were they useful?

2. FOLLOW-UP OF THE PROCESS

To keep track of meetings, we will be in contact through e-mail (programa.euriclea@urjc.es), and the EURICLEA Teams group.

The mentee is required to fill out a form after each meeting: <https://forms.office.com/e/f71Xzu2PZE>. This form may only be used to check that the meetings are taking place and to identify possible improvements. No details from the meeting itself are requested, as these are highly confidential.

If either a mentee or a mentor has any kind of issue in the pairing or any comment/suggestion arises during the program, we ask that you contact us directly through the following e-mail address programa.euriclea@urjc.es

3. SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR MEETINGS

To work on the design of the research career, we suggest the following topics to be discussed during the meetings (see diagram in Figure 1):

1. Development of the research career plan
2. Career options
3. Required skills in a research career.
4. Networking
5. Gender issues in research
6. Ethics and scientific integrity in research
7. Research career progression



Figure 1. Topics to be discussed during the meetings.

It is not mandatory to address each of the topics listed in Figure 1, nor do all of them need to be widely discussed. Participants should feel free to discuss and suggest their own topics. However, we recommend that topics 1 and 7, related to the development of a career plan, are one of the essential pillars of the program and be addressed in at least two sessions, at the beginning and end of the program.

Each of the following sections details some proposals for meetings. They have been designed with a view to facilitating the preliminary reflection, a development of the meetings and the achievement of the goals.

3.1. DEVELOPMENT OF A RESEARCH CAREER PLAN

Participating in a mentoring program is a great opportunity, especially for the mentees. To get the most of this experience, we suggest working on the definition of a personal career plan at the beginning of the process and, use it to guide the meetings with your mentors. This plan can be the map that sets the goal to be achieved: you will need to define the goals, what you need to get there and how you are going to do it.

We suggest that mentees fill in the career plan template (Appendix I of this guide) and update the file as needed along the following meetings. This is not mandatory, but it is a good way to summarize the results and save all the useful feedback you get from your mentor.

Preliminary reflection:

- Consider the motivations that lead you to think about a career plan.
- Analyze the goals you have achieved so far, and what actions and skills led you to achieve them.
- Why and when did you make those critical decisions that changed or set up your career aspirations?
- Think about what is important to you, what has motivated you and what can continue to motivate you throughout your career.
- What are your medium and long-term goals?

Goal:

Define professional aspirations and discuss on what you may need to get there and how to do it.

Some topics to be discussed during the session:

1. What is your work history?
2. What is your current employment status?
3. How did you get to the point where you are? What kind of obstacles did you have to overcome?
4. Was there ever a time when you messed up and felt you had failed? How did you back?
5. Think back your status to five years ago. Did you imagine your career as it is today?
6. What is your dream job and where do you want your career to go over the next few years?

Inspiring reading material:

- *The Paradox of Choice: Why More is Less* by Barry Schwartz
- *Letters to a Young Scientist* by Edward O. Wilson

3.2. EXPLORING CAREER OPTIONS

It is important to consider different career options. By delving deeper into this topic, new opportunities might arise that fit the mentee's skills, interests, values, and personality.

Preliminary reflection:

Try to think of some alternative career paths to the academic sector and related to the scientific field. This could also further our understanding of those that are more attractive to learn about the labor market, its conditions and job prospects.

What do researchers do to follow these paths? Do you see yourself working in the future in any of them?

Goal:

To be familiar with the most common career paths for research personnel.

Some topics to be discussed during the session:

1. Do you value other non-academic career options (e.g., public administration, industry, consulting)? Do you know the scope of these alternative careers?
2. Are you aware of the entrepreneurial possibilities available to researchers?
3. Do you know the different non-academic positions that you could have in higher education institutions?
4. Do you find any of these positions more attractive than your current position?

3.3. REQUIRED SKILLS IN A RESEARCH CAREER

Preliminary reflection:

- Know yourself: reflect on your skills and strengths.
- What is the difference between *hard skills* and *soft skills* for research staff?
- What are the main skills required in academia?
- Think differently: maybe you have never considered these skills important or useful. Try to discuss about them

Goals:

- ✓ Identify the necessary skills for researchers and resources to improve them.
- ✓ Identify 6 key interpersonal skills: 2 that you are good at, 2 you could improve on and 2 you need to start working on.

Some topics to be discussed during the session:

1. What do you consider are your strengths? Do your colleagues agree?
2. What would be your weaknesses and how can you improve?
3. What new skills do you need to move ahead?
4. How do you plan to further develop your professional skills and knowledge?
5. What skills do you think you could work on to help you achieve your career aspirations?

Inspiring reading material:

- Discover: careers beyond academia: <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/ca-reer-development/researchers/discover-careers-beyond-academia>
- McGuire J, Baggott S. 'Hard' skills from our PhDs remain relevant beyond academia. Nature. 2021 Dec 15. doi: 10.1038/d41586-021-03756-0. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 34912056: <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-03756-0>
- Guidelines for improving European HEIs Student's employability – SKILLS4EMPLOYABILITY:
<http://skills4employability.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Guidelines-for-improving-European-HEIs-student%E2%80%99s-employability-SKILLS4EMPLOYABILITY-.pdf>

This section may be of great interest to the researcher. There are interpersonal skills that may be interesting to deepen at some point in the program. To work on this section, you can use the skills form in this guide. The following are some guidelines in case you want to deepen into this topic:

Conflict management

Preliminary reflection:

Think about potential uncomfortable experiences. Do you need/ wish have had any special training on how to deal with them?

Some topics to discuss during the session:

1. Was there ever a position you worked in that you were not 100% qualified for?
2. Have you ever had a difficult boss or colleague?
3. How to cope with new responsibilities and subordinates?

Time management: work-life balance

Preliminary reflection:

Can you help creating your own balance, or does your boss/organization define it?

How to better organize your working time?

Some topics to be discussed during the session:

1. Work-life balance
2. How to avoid wasting time
3. Task prioritization: Time-saving vs time-consuming
4. How to find the balance between your current job and the search for new opportunities.
5. How not to neglect additional training that may be necessary for your professional development.
6. How to successfully get involved in different initiatives.

Communication

Preliminary reflection:

Think about a situation where you have experienced a misunderstanding or communication problem that has had negative consequences.

How do you consider you manage your response to emails/messages?

What do you think your body language reveals when you speak in public?

Do you usually make eye contact with your audience when speaking in public?

Some topics to discuss during the session:

1. Active listening to improve communication at work.
2. Emotional intelligence and handling of difficult conversations.
3. Public speaking and leadership
4. Nonverbal communication and public perception

Self-awareness

Preliminary reflection:

Over-qualification vs *impostor syndrome*.

How do you see yourself; how do others, how will they see you in a non-academic sphere?

Some topics to discuss during the session:

1. What makes you unique?
2. What could you bring to a new professional activity?
3. Is there anything your new employer should not know about you?

4. What are you most proud of? Is it also the most important in your career?
5. Is it possible to turn your weaknesses into strengths? How?
6. Is the participation in the EURICLEA Program encouraged/incentivized by your academic manager?

3.4. HOW TO BUILD CONTACT NETWORKS

Preliminary reflection:

Are you good at networking?

Is it any different beyond academia?

Some topics to be discussed during the session:

1. What are your possibilities to create/participate in research and business networks?
2. How can you stay connected to influencers who do not work in your geographical area?
3. Are social networks useful in your professional field?
4. Do you think that belonging to a network can lead to an excess of e-mails/calls?
5. How to behave at *networking events*
6. Where to network?
7. Spontaneous self-introduction vs introduction through a shared contact
8. Who are the people you need to contact within a new organization to be successful?
9. What is the best way to suggest/communicate new ideas?

Inspiring reading material:

- Networking for scientists: How to start a successful conversation from scratch:
<https://neosciencia.com/conversacion/>
- How to build a strong network in the era of teleworking:
<https://elpais.com/economia/estar-donde-estes/2021-06-02/como-construir-una-red-de-contactos-solida-en-la-era-del-teletrabajo.html>

3.5. GENDER ISSUES IN RESEARCH

Preliminary reflection:

Try to research on unconscious bias.

Watch video on "Gender Innovations: Harnessing the Creative Power of Gender Analysis to Create New Knowledge": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sktr6vbW1P8>

Have you faced any professional situation in which gender has had a clear influence?

Some topics to be discussed during the session:

1. Gender dimension in research: gender balance in decision making, equal opportunities for men and women, and gender equality.
2. Do parental leaves affect professional development?
3. Gender-related barriers in STEM careers (*Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics*).
4. Do you perceive any gender bias within your professional environment?
5. In any way, is gender an issue in your professional life?
6. Do you lead or participate in any activity within your organization aimed at supporting gender equality?
7. Is this issue particularly relevant to you? Who else can you talk to for information?

Inspiring reading and videos material:

- The future of STEM depends on diversity - TED talks by NicoleCabrera Salazar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-v8aDo4dV3Q>
- Science needs women (and the data proves it): <https://ethic.es/2021/02/dia-de-la-mujer-y-la-nina-en-la-ciencia-brecha-genero-muje-res-cientificas/>
- Women scientists do not need fixing: <https://mujeresconciencia.com/2021/09/21/no-es-necesario-arreglar-a-las-cientificas-no-estan-estropeadas/>

3.6. ETHICS AND SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY IN RESEARCH

Preliminary reflection:

What do you know about ethics and integrity in your profession? Reflect on the importance of these two concepts in a research career.

Do you know your institution's policies regarding research ethics?

What are your personal ethical values? Do you think you could work in a place where your ethical principles would not be accomplished?

Goal:

To know the ethical issues affecting researchers and to be aware of the duties and rights deriving therefrom.

Some topics to be discussed during the session:

1. Policies of your institution or similar institutions regarding research ethics. URJC *Manual on Best Practices in Research*.
2. Personal priority of ethical principles.
3. Basic principles of bioethics: nonmaleficence, beneficence, respect for autonomy and justice.
4. Other aspects: open science, data protection, intellectual and industrial property.

Reading

- URJC Manual on Best Practices in Research:
https://www.urjc.es/images/facultades/hrs4r/documentos/Manual_Buenas_Pr%C3%A1cticas_traducido_rev.pdf
- THE EUROPEAN CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RESEARCH INTEGRITY:
<https://allea.org/code-of-conduct/>
- National Statement on Scientific Integrity: CRUE, CSIC, COSCE:
<https://www.crue.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Declaraci%C3%B3n-Nacional-Integridad-Cient%C3%ADfica-ingl%C3%A9s.pdf>

3.7. RESEARCH CAREER PROGRESSION

Preliminary reflection:

Progression *versus* promotion: reflect on these two concepts.

What have you achieved throughout the EURICLEA Program?

Have you attended the meetings as scheduled? Have you prepared for the meetings? Have you taken notes of the meetings? Have you gone deeper into any topic than suggested in this document? Have you proposed any topic to discuss with your mentor? Have you discussed it with your mentor?

Do you think you should modify the career plan you designed in the first meeting? After having participated in the EURICLEA Program, do you think you can elaborate a better career plan?

Goal:

Review the research career plan that you prepared at the beginning and, based on the experience acquired during the fellowship, make the improvements that you consider.

Some topics to be discussed during the session:

1. Have you filled out EURICLEA research career plan? Do you think it is useful? Will you follow it?
2. What else could you have done, or can you still do to get the most of this experience?
3. What rewards and recognition are most important to you?
4. Are you willing to pursue the goals you have set for yourself in your research career plan? To this end, draw up specific actions.

Inspiring reading material:

- The Essential Guide to Moving Up the Academic Career Ladder:
<https://www.jobs.ac.uk/media/pdf/careers/resources/the-essential-guide-to-moving-up-the-academic-career-ladder.pdf>

OTHER TOPICS TO BE COVERED INCLUDE:



Researcher Profile Visibility.

Updating CVs of participants on the institutional web page, review of research profiles in WoS, Google Scholar, Scopus, and others (depending on each area of knowledge). Completion/updating of the Standardized Curriculum Vitae (SCV).



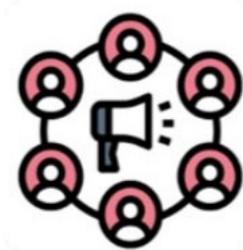
How to belong to a recognized URJC research group.

In case the mentee does not belong to a URJC research group recognized as such, we recommend reviewing the already existing groups, as well as the procedures/requirements to apply for the assignment or to create a new research group. (<https://urjc.es/i-d-i/programa-propio-investigacion>).



Internationalization of researchers.

Benefits and promotion of internationalization: attendance to congresses, mobility: (Erasmus+ Teaching Staff, research stays, etc.). (<https://urjc.es/i-d-i/programa-propio-investigacion>).



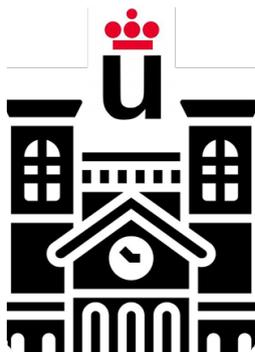
Dissemination of Research Results.

- Publication in open access through Transformative Agreements (<https://www.urjc.es/burjc/investiga/publicar>)
- URJC Free Knowledge and Culture Office (<https://www.urjc.es/ofilibre>)
- Intellectual Property (<https://urjc.libguides.com/derechosautor/propiedad>),
- Copyright and intellectual property (<https://www.urjc.es/proteccion-de-datos/646-informacion-y-documentacion-proteccion>)
- URJC Scientific Culture and Innovation Unit (<https://www.urjc.es/i-d-i/cultura-cientifica>)
- Participation in activities of the "European Researchers' Night". (<https://lanochedelosinvestigadores.fundaciondescubre.es/>)
- Participation in the "Pint of Science" Festival (<https://pintofscience.es/>) and others.



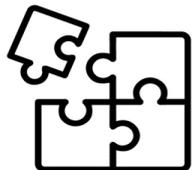
ANECA Accreditation

Review of the scales applied in ANECA's assessment programs for academic staff.



Leveraging your institution's resources.

Acquisition of knowledge related to both research topics and transversal competences: MOOC, language courses, Healthy University courses (e.g., "Time management"). Review of URJC research grants: project applications, research triennia, publication of scientific papers (including translation service) (<https://urjc.es/i-d-i/programa-propio-investigacion>).



Proactivity in Research.

For project evaluator and peer reviewer registration:
(<http://mcyt.educa.madrid.org/madrid-ciencia-tecnologia/red-evaluadores>).