# **Appendix G:**

# **Mentoring Guidelines - Examples from Mentoring in the Postdoc Action pilot**

1. ***What is mentoring?***

Mentoring is an inter-personal relationship, in which typically a more experienced colleague or peer (i.e., the “mentor”) supports and encourages the professional (e.g., career path, skills, ...) and personal developments of another individual (i.e., the “mentee”).

Mentoring can take different forms (e.g., formal vs. more informal) and has been defined as *“to support and encourage people to manage their own learning in order that they maximize their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be”* (Eric Parsloe, Oxford School of Coaching and Mentoring).

Essential elements in the relationship between mentor and mentee are mutual trust, confidentiality and respect. A successful mentoring relationship is beneficial and valuable for both the mentee and mentor. In addition, it goes beyond getting/giving advice about e.g., career decisions or next steps to take. It is about empowering and motivating the other person in the mentoring relationship to maximize her or his own potential, to reflect more profoundly on professional and personal aspirations, to deal with difficult situations, to be self-confident, …

1. ***Mentoring in the Postdoc Action Pilot***

The general aim of the Postdoc Action is *to ensure a well-functioning process for appointment to postdoctoral positions and a sound framework for ensuring a good postdoctoral period at the institution. The purpose as a whole is to achieve optimal career development for the individual.* Several instruments are offered to the individual postdocs participating in the pilot program, in order to reach this goal. The mentoring scheme is one of these.

All mentors participating in the pilot are experienced members of the scientific staff at NTNU, coming from a range of fields and disciplines. They have been invited to act as mentor for their mentee by the faculty and/or head of department (and in some cases, in dialogue with the mentee). In principle, the mentoring relationship lasts for the duration of the Postdoc Action pilot (until autumn 2019). It can also continue beyond the Postdoc Action, if both mentee and mentor agree.

It is up to the individual mentees and mentors to agree on how frequently they want to meet (see further: how to start the mentoring relationship). However, in order to be able to make the most of the mentoring program as part of this pilot, we suggest that the mentor-mentee pairs have at least 4 meetings throughout the year (January-December), Mentors and mentees will also be invited to certain joint activities and workshops.

1. ***What’s in it for you?***

So what’s in it for you, both as a mentor and as a mentee? Keep in mind that every mentoring relationship is different and essentially depends on the commitment and match between mentor and mentee, but having or being a mentor can and will hopefully be valuable in many ways.

For the **mentee**, a mentor can

* serve as a valuable sounding board, someone who can give you honest and impartial feedback
* motivate you and support you to identify your goals and how to reach them
* help you by sharing own experiences, knowledge, external viewpoints, …
* help you to build your professional network
* help to increase your self-confidence
* …

**Mentors** on the other hand can gain in many ways as well

* personal enrichment
* professional development and stimulation
* further development of inter-personal skills
* better insights in issues / challenges / barriers for early-career researchers
* ...
1. ***What makes a good mentee / mentor?***

Again, it is impossible to provide the perfect recipe or blueprint for a successful mentor-mentee relationship, but a lot depends on the mindset and attitude of both mentor and mentee.

**A good mentor**

* is motivated by helping others to succeed
* is empathic, is able to listen actively
* is honest, open and constructive
* is committed and is willing to make time for the mentee
* respects different ways of working
* helps to open doors to opportunities
* ...

**A good mentee**

* takes initiative, sets the agenda, is proactive
* is open, honest, positive
* is willing to share and willing to listen
* is willing to receive critical feedback and to be challenged
* is committed and has the time and willingness to develop a good mentoring relationship
* ...
1. **How to start the mentoring relationship?**

It is recommended that the mentee and mentor take the time to openly discuss their expectations towards the mentoring relationship in the first meeting(s). This discussion can result in a formal mentoring agreement or can take the form of a set of informal guidelines.

Potential topics to discuss/clarify are:

* **Time**: how often and how long do you want to meet? Do you want to have regular meetings or more ad-hoc meetings? How much time do you commit to reserve for your mentee/mentor?
* **Format**: where and how do you want to meet? (e.g., at work or rather outside of work? Combined with another activity or not?)
* **Confidentiality:** Make an agreement on how you will handle what is discussed during the mentoring meetings
* **Expectations:** what do you want to get out of the mentoring relationship? What do you expect from the mentor? What does the mentor expect from you?
* **Evaluation**: discuss whether you want to set a date in the future to evaluate whether the mentoring relationship is working out for both mentor and mentee, whether some changes are needed, etc.
* Any other topic that you consider essential to take up in the beginning
1. **What kind of themes can you take up with your mentor?**

Again, there is no exhaustive checklist here, as this essentially depends on the situation, the needs and expectations of both parties, but some potential topics to take up with your mentor are:

* Development and/or discussion of one’s career plan (where am I? Where do I want to get and how can I increase my chances of getting there?)
* Other professional goals and personal aspirations
* Difficult situations / dilemmas / problems related to or having an impact on your work
* How to prioritize different tasks, commitments, ...
* Networking opportunities
* Internationalization and mobility
* Project acquisition
* Potential alternative career paths (e.g., in industry)
* ...
1. **What if it doesn’t work out?**

If for some reason the mentoring relationship is not working out, you should discuss this with your head of department, so that a solution can be found (e.g., identify a potential new mentor).

1. **References and further reading**

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