

Mentoring for Junior Research Group Leaders and Junior and Tenure-Track Professors at Paderborn University

Handout for Mentors and Mentees

Paderborn University recommends that all junior research group leaders as well as junior and tenure-track professors (hereafter: mentees) make use of the individual support of a mentor. This handout aims to provide mentees and mentors with assistance and orientation to shape their mentoring relationship.

The Characteristics of Mentoring

Mentoring is an effective instrument for targeted career promotion and leadership development and is a tried and tested practice in the context of academic careers. The core of mentoring is the informal transfer of experience and knowledge by experienced professors to their mentees, individual support and guidance, and joint reflection.

Mentoring does not involve a hierarchical relationship or the authority to issue directives. It represents a consultation and cooperation between academic peers with a varying range of experience. Mentoring is a reciprocal process of give and take, which the mentor can also benefit from for his or her personal and professional development. A successful mentoring relationship requires voluntariness, mutual goodwill, trust and respect as well as commitment, obligation and time availability on both sides. The content of any meetings or conversations should remain confidential.

The Selection of a Mentor

The mentee selects a mentor from his*her own, or another department. The dean assists in the selection process and usually takes charge of contacting the desired person. Participation in mentoring is voluntary on both sides.

The following general conditions apply to the selection¹ :

- The mentor is a professor, usually at Paderborn University.
- The mentor must not be part of the mentee's evaluation committee.
- For tenure-track professors, the dean of the faculty appoints the mentor and informs the chairperson of the tenure board and the respective tenure committee.
- The following applies to junior research group leaders: The mentor is selected in consultation with the dean, who informs the chairperson of the tenure board.
- It is recommended to choose a mentor with sufficient distance to the mentee's previous career path (e.g. not the doctoral supervisor).
- In the event that a mentor leaves Paderborn University, the mentoring relationship can be continued by mutual agreement. Alternatively, a new mentor can be selected.

¹ Cf. tenure track regulations (2018) § 7 and junior research group leader regulations (2019) § 4.

The Roles and Duties of the MENTOR

The mentor supports and advises the mentee with regard to:

- the development of future research activities and the formation of a scientific profile,
- planning and developing the mentee's further academic career,
- integrating the mentee into the national and international scientific community,
- strengthening individual competences.

The mentor provides support in which he*she:

- assists the mentee in the development of realistic goals, plans and ideas and encourages critical reflection.
- gives honest and constructive feedback and supports reflection on strengths and weaknesses,
- shares his*her own experiences,
- passes on informal knowledge, e.g. about the "rules" of the science and higher education system or the specifications within the framework of a professorship,
- advises the mentee on the preparation of the interim evaluation, if necessary,
- supports the mentee in challenging situations as well as in the decision-making processes,
- and grants access to important networks.

Checklist: How do you support your mentee?²

Listen and ask questions: Really try to understand the mentee's concern or situation

Affirm and encourage: Support mentees in realistically assessing and valuing their own abilities.

Advise: Let mentees find their own solutions and contribute their own views and experiences by asking specific questions.

Looking ahead: Make mentee aware of possible obstacles and difficulties

Support: Encourage mentee in case they make mistakes or face difficulties and look for solutions together.

Confront: If necessary, address the mentee's unproductive behaviour.

The Roles and Duties of the MENTEE

The mentee remains responsible for his or her own development throughout the process. It is his or her responsibility,

- formulate goals and aspirations for the mentoring process,
- Initiate meetings and maintain contact,
- actively contribute to the issues that are important to him or her,
- be open to critical feedback or questions,
- independently implement ideas and plans that have been developed.

² Cf. Haasen, Nele (2001): Mentoring. Personal Career Development as a Concept for Success. Wilhelm Heyne Verlag, Munich.

The Process of Mentoring

The mentoring process generally extends over the entire period of the junior research group leadership or the fixed-term professorship, whereby focal phases can be agreed upon as needed. The number and duration of the mentoring meetings are arranged by the participants themselves. Initially, two in-person meetings per semester are recommended; subsequently, these can be reduced to one meeting per semester as needed. Confidentiality is agreed upon regarding the content of meetings or conversations. Mentoring is flanked by qualification offers from Human Resources Development or the Jenny Aloni Center.

Recommendations for the Initial Interview

In order for the mentoring process to proceed to the satisfaction of both parties, the framework conditions, expectations and goals should be clarified in the initial meeting. In this way, both participants can reflect on their ideas and clarify the nature of the arrangement from the start.

The following questions can be addressed in the initial interview³ :

- What are your respective goals?
- What topics should be discussed in mentoring?
- What expectations do you have of each other? What do you hope to gain from the mentoring relationship?
- What will be contributed to the mentoring relationship in order for it to be a success and by whom?
- In what way can the mentee substantively prepare the meetings?
- Should the results of the individual meetings be recorded or followed up on and if so, in what way?
- How should feedback be given?
- How often do you want to meet? How many meetings can you set in advance?
- Which party will take the initiative for the meetings?
- In what way/where should the meetings take place?

Contact

- For questions regarding the selection of a mentor: Dean of the respective faculty
- For questions regarding the framework conditions for junior research group leadership or junior or tenure-track professorships: Subject area 4.2
- For questions about this guide and accompanying qualification offers: Subject area 4.5 Human Resources Development

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³ See also Schmid, Bernd & Nele Haasen (2011): Introduction to Systematic Mentoring. Carl-Auer Verlag, Heidelberg.