

Training packet for mentors

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This guide was made to help train **mentors** who are interested or involved in supporting **women** in STEM fields.

Mentoring has been found to be a **key success factor** for marginalised groups within STEM. Specifically for **women**, it has been shown to increase the number who enter and stay in STEM fields.

Mentoring can be used for both **recruiting women and keeping them**, throughout the educational and career path.



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What will you learn about in this guide?

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What are the key terms to know about mentoring?



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Note!

“Having a good mentor early in your career can mean the difference between success and failure in any field.”

Nature 447, 791-797 (14 June 2007) | doi:10.1038/447791a



What is mentoring?

Multiple definitions exist. For example, mentoring is often considered to be “a relationship between a **more experienced mentor** and a typically younger, less **experienced protégé** for the purpose of helping and **developing the protégé’s career**”. For the protégé we often use the term **mentee**.

Mentoring, however, can also be looked at more broadly: **peer mentoring** has also been shown to work well, as the mentor is more relatable having a smaller age gap.

The essence of mentoring is to **offer support to the mentee in personal and career development**, and as such, it is usually a series of guided conversations.



Who are the mentors and mentees?

Mentors can be:

- Professors
- Experts from the field
- People in senior positions working in the industry
- Undergraduate students
- PhD students
- Peers

A mentor does not need to have the exact same expertise as the mentee. Their role is to facilitate the mentee, professionally and/or personally.

Mentees can be ...anyone! But are often people early in their career or making a career change:

- Undergraduate students
- Graduate students
- PhD students
- Professors
- People working in the industry
- Peers

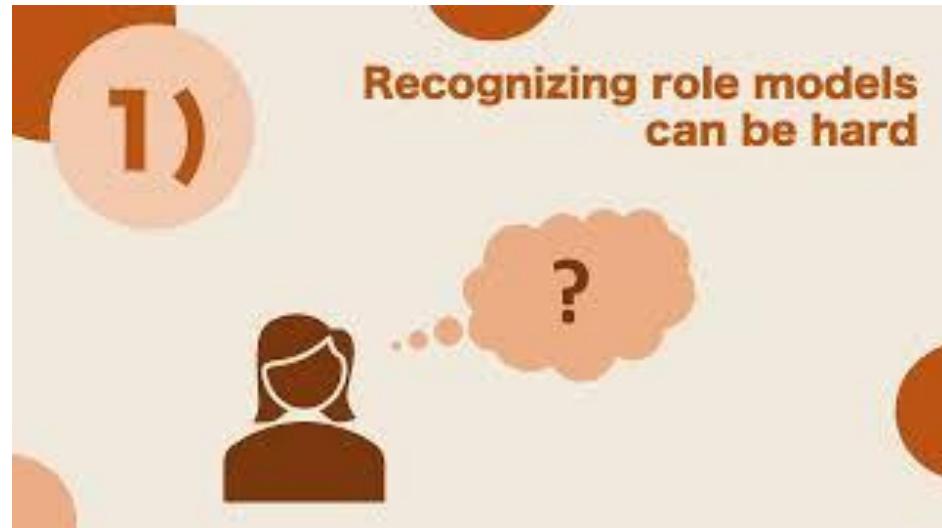
Anybody can be a mentee and can benefit from being mentored. It is valuable to get feedback and guidance from another person.



Peers as mentors and role models

You can be a **mentor** and a **role model** even if you are a **peer**. You don't need to be a lot more experienced or a lot older than the mentee.

The closer you are in age, the **more relatable** you often are for your mentee, which can build connection.





What is your role as a mentor?

As a mentor, you are not a supervisor, but an **adviser** or a **facilitator**.

Your role is to learn about the **needs of the mentee**, which can be career development, emotional support, practical help, etc., and try to **provide this help** for the mentee to **grow and develop**.

As mentoring is often a series of conversations, it is often best to apply a **coaching mindset**, ie. to guide and help your mentee **find the solution themselves**, rather than giving them the solution.



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VIENNA, AUSTRIA

Mentor Testimonial



Geraldine Fitzpatrick

Professor and Mentor
Technische Universität Wien

"MENTORING IS NOT ONLY A MUTUAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE, IT IS ALSO A JOY TO BE ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE CIRCLE OF 'GIVE AND TAKE' THAT CREATES COLLEGIAL CULTURES OF SUPPORT AND CARE."



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What qualities should you as a mentor have?



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Note!

The success of mentoring depends a lot on your ability to connect with, support, and guide your mentee.



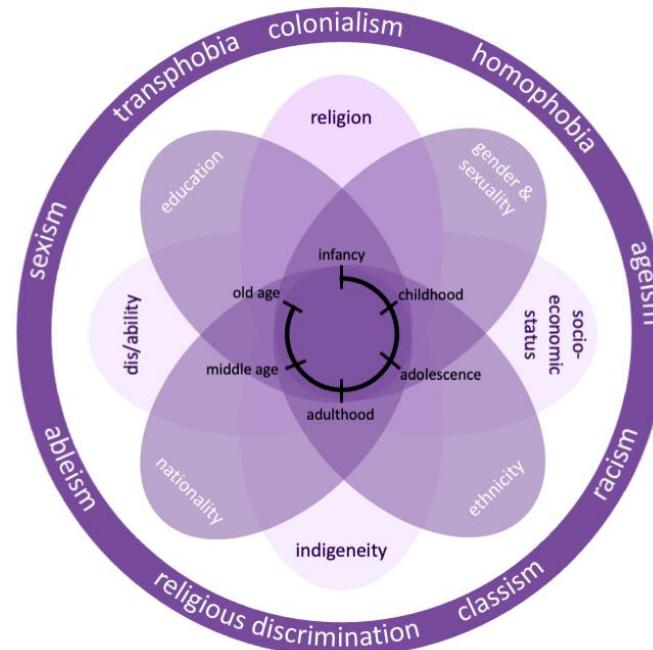
- Be **empathic and supportive**. Because you are mentoring in a mentoring program to support women in STEM, you need to **understand the needs and challenges of women in the field** while also being open to hearing the **specific experiences and needs** of this particular mentee.
- Be **inclusive**. **Inclusive language** is vital. If you haven't yet, take part in gender/diversity training to raise your awareness of your own **stereotypes and biases**.
- Be **relatable**. Share your personal story, but try not to overshare to avoid distracting from the focus on the mentee.
- Be **proactive**. If you feel your mentee could benefit from assignments, give them tasks beyond the usual conversations.
- Be open to **sharing your resources** with your mentee.



Most importantly: Be inclusive and open-minded.

Keep in mind that your mentee's identity is complex, as is yours. The concept of **intersectionality**, as seen in this figure, underlines the idea that the different identity segments are intertwined and affect our experiences.

Try to find aspects in which you and your mentee are similar.



UN's Intersectionality Model



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TRONDHEIM, NORWAY

Mentor Testimonial

Anna Szlavi

**Researcher and Mentor,
Norwegian University of
Science and Technology**

"I HAVE A STRONG BELIEF IN THE POWER OF INTERSECTIONAL MENTORING. ONE OF THE MOST FULFILLING LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES IN MY CAREER HAS BEEN WHEN A MENTEE TOLD ME I WAS THE FIRST LEADER THEY FELT COMFORTABLE TO COME OUT TO AND BE THEMSELVES."



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What are the expectations of you as a mentor within the mentoring program?



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Note!

Many mentoring programs with great potential end up with not very good reviews because the expectations have not been made clear in advance.



Ask the **organizers of the mentoring program** what the **goal and scope** of the specific mentoring program is if it's unclear. Discuss them with your mentee at the first meeting. To support you in clarifying their goals, we have created a **mentorship agreement** you can use with your mentee(s). You can find the downloadable draft [here](#).

Note that you are **not their supervisor**: you do not need to have perfectly matching professional competences. It is not about joint publications or a specific project.

Always start by asking your mentee **what they need support in**, from profile building, emotional support, or professional advice, and try to provide that. Most often this will mean **coaching conversations**, and occasionally **specific assignments**.

Ask for **feedback** regularly so that you can change course as needed to meet their expectations.



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AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS

Mentor Testimonial

Patricia Lago

Professor and Mentor
VU

"AS A MENTOR I HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY
TO GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITY AND
PROVIDE THE SUPPORT AND THE FEELING
OF INCLUSIVITY I WISH FOR EVERYBODY.."



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How can you make the best of the mentor-mentee matching?



Note!

Matching can be tricky, and you may not have complete control over who you will be paired with. It is always a learning process: make the most of it, instead of trying to be perfect.



Mentoring is a practical skill, not a theoretical one, and it depends a great deal on who you end up mentoring.

Although the organizers of the mentoring program will do their best to **optimize the matching process**, you may still feel it did not end up in an ideal match.

It's okay to be different from your mentee! It can even be helpful. You do **not need to have professional expertise** on the mentee's field. You may also be **different in personality** or certain identity traits, but note that you can always find ways to relate and connect. Try to find those and **meet them with empathy**.

It is important that you are open to **learning about your mentee's needs**, both **regarding focus and activity types**.



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BELFAST, UNITED KINGDOM

Mentor Testimonial

Austen Rainer

Professor and Mentor
Queen's University

"I FIND MENTORING HELPS ME TO GROW
THROUGH HELPING ANOTHER PERSON TO
GROW.."



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What should you consider regarding
the logistics of the mentoring
experience?



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Note!

The mentoring program has a defined duration and usually a suggested frequency of meetings. Nevertheless, you do have some flexibility with the meetings, based on the needs of your mentee and yourself.



The organizers of the mentoring program define the **length of the mentoring program**, which can vary from a month to several years. They also often define the **expected frequency and sometimes even the length of the meetings**.

You do normally have some flexibility. First, be realistic about **your availability**: how frequently can you meet, and what is the ideal length of a meeting for you? It is best to be clear about this from the start than having to disappoint the mentee later. Of course, the frames of the program need to be respected.

Discuss with the mentee **what frequency and length would work best for both of you**. For some it is once a month, for some it is less or more. A meeting can last from 20 minutes to an hour.

There are no “ideal” numbers here: **it all depends on you and your mentee**. Respect their needs and availability.



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TRONDHEIM, NORWAY

Mentee Testimonial

Farzana Quayyum

PhD Student
Norwegian University of
Science and Technology

"PARTICIPATING AS A MENTEE IN THE IDUN
PROGRAM PROVIDED ME WITH THE
OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN, REFLECT, AND
ENVISION MY CAREER AS A RESEARCHER."



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What are the benefits of individual vs group mentoring?



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Note!

**Both individual and group mentoring have their benefits
- different setups work better for different people. Be
open to experimenting.**



The mentoring program often provides the **framework** for your mentoring sessions, defining whether they are **one-on-one sessions** or **group mentoring**, or a **mix**.

Keep in mind that both setups have pros. In one-on-one mentoring, the mentee gets more **individual attention** from the mentor, which may give more tailored feedback to them. In group settings, however, **peers** can also function as a source of **support** and information. Make sure to arrange those meetings with activities where peers can share experiences.

If you have more mentees and the program allows for flexibility, try to **combine the two** setups. People are different and their needs are also different. You may be more comfortable with one, but try to put the interests of your mentees first and experiment with what works best for them personally.



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ROME, ITALY

Mentee Testimonial

Daniel Raffini

Researcher
Universita di Roma La Sapienza

“THE PEER SUPPORT OF EUGAIN HAS TAUGHT ME THAT TO STAND UP FOR A COMMON PURPOSE CAN HELP YOU OVERCOME EVEN YOUR OWN LIMITATIONS AND DISCOVER POSSIBILITIES YOU HAD NEVER IMAGINED FOR YOURSELF.”



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What are the benefits of online vs face-to-face mentoring?



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Note!

Both online mentoring and face-to-face mentoring have their benefits. It is usually more effective to be present, but online/hybrid solutions can overcome geographical boundaries.



The mentoring program often provides the **framework** for your mentoring sessions by defining whether it is **face-to-face mentoring** or **online**, or a mix of these (**hybrid**).

Typically, it has an **added value** if the mentor and the mentee are in the same space, as it can **increase their bond**, strengthen the connection, and add to the perceived efficiency of the mentoring.

However, when COVID forced mentoring programs to shift to online sessions, it opened up more opportunities. When applying **e-mentoring**, people who are otherwise far away can learn from each other, which can **widen perspectives**. If you do e-mentoring, make sure you allocate extra time for building a personal bond.



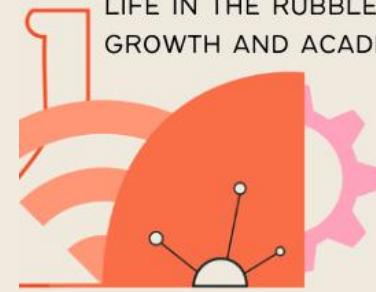
The mentoring program often provides the **framework** for your mentoring sessions by defining whether it is **face-to-face**, **online**, or a mix of the two (**hybrid**).

Typically, if the mentor and the mentee are doing their mentoring sessions in person, it can **increase their bond**, strengthen the connection, and add to the perceived efficacy of the mentoring.

However, when COVID forced mentoring programs to shift to online, it opened up more opportunities. With **e-mentoring**, people who are otherwise too far away can learn from each other, which can **widen their perspectives**. However, it's important to allocate extra time for building a personal bond.



Mentee Testimonial



Sonay Caner-Yildirim

**Research Assistant
Erzincan University**

"THE ONLINE PEER SUPPORT OF EUGAIN WAS MY BEACON OF HOPE AND STRENGTH AS I NAVIGATED LIFE AMIDST THE RUBBLE FROM THE DEVASTATING 2023 EARTHQUAKE. THIS PHOTO, TAKEN ON THE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS WHERE I LIVE, CAPTURES MY JOURNEY 18 MONTHS LATER—BALANCING LIFE IN THE RUBBLE WITH PERSONAL GROWTH AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE."



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What are your benefits as a mentor?



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Note!

“Those who are good mentors get incalculably more out of it than they put into it.”

Nature 447, 791-797 (14 June 2007) | doi:10.1038/447791a



Serving as a mentor can be a truly **rewarding and inspirational** experience.

Mentoring is not a one-way process: as much as your mentee learns from you, **you can also learn from them**. In the reflection process mentoring entails, you **often learn the most about yourself**.

Keep in mind that as a mentor you are looked at as a **role model**, which is not only a huge responsibility but also an uplifting realization.

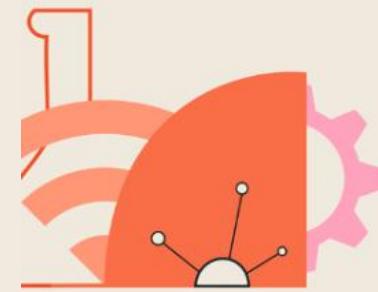
Besides **self-reflection and inspiration**, mentoring can help you grow as a professional in many ways, including developing your **leadership, coaching, and communication skills**.



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TRONDHEIM, NORWAY

Mentor Testimonial



Letizia Jaccheri

**Professor and Mentor
NTNU**

"AS A MENTOR I AM IMPRESSED BY THE
AMBITIONS AND STRENGTHS OF MY
MENTEES AND THROUGH THEM I LEARN TO
SEE THE FUTURE."



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Mentor's Toolkit - Additional Resources

This training package provided you with the necessary overview. If you want to learn more or whenever you feel stuck, here are some additional resources we recommend:

- More mentoring resources on [our project's website](#)
- Inspirational and leadership stories on [our project's website](#)
- More on mentoring on the undergraduate level: [EUGAIN booklet \(D6\)](#)
- More on mentoring on the graduate and postgraduate level: [EUGAIN booklet \(D3\)](#)
- More career pathway videos on [CareerGirls - Role Models, Why Choose IT? - Role Models](#)
- More instructional videos about mentoring on [LinkedIn Learning](#).



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This guide was made based on scientific research involving systematic literature reviews and focus group interviews, along with partners' mentoring practices, within the framework of the Erasmus+ project Women STEM Up. See the references on the next pages.



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