



Turun yliopisto  
University of Turku

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# MENTORING

## AS SUPPORT FOR ACADEMIC WORK



**A GUIDE**  
FOR MENTORS  
AND MENTEES

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## **FOREWORD**

Dear participant of the mentoring programme,

The University of Turku is an expert organisation whose success is based on our skilful and motivated staff. Various ways of learning from each other compose an important part of the tool-kit for developing the skills of the personnel. Mentoring is considered well-suited to the academic environment. In a mentoring relationship, a more experienced employee (mentor) is committed to sharing their own knowledge and experience with a younger employee. The method, based on mutual interaction, can be used to identify and transfer relevant tacit knowledge at all the different stages of a career. The method can be used, on the one hand, to promote the career development of those at an early stage of an academic career and, on the other, to transfer the experience-based knowledge of those about to retire. Mentoring can help one learn various working life skills across organisational boundaries. We would like to express our gratitude to all mentors committed to the mentoring programme of the University, as well as for the employees of the University of Turku devoted to developing their skills. We would also like to express our thanks to those at the University who have actively contributed to the birth of the mentoring programme and this guide.

Kalervo Väänänen,  
Rector of the University of Turku.

# **INTRODUCTORY NOTE**

This guide has been compiled to support mentoring relationships in the mentoring programme of the University of Turku staff. The guide contains information on mentoring and its objectives, on the roles of the mentor and mentee, and gives tips for discussion themes.

Mentoring is a guidance process during which a competent, experienced, and distinguished expert (mentor) provides support to a mentee motivated to develop their skills. Mentoring can be used, for example, to transfer tacit knowledge in situations where an employee of a University unit is retiring or moving to other tasks. It can also be used to help in planning or redirecting one's career.

The University of Turku has a long tradition in applying the mentoring process and it has become an established part of the human resource development alongside education and training, on-the-job learning, and development discussions. Any employee of the University can participate as a mentee in the mentoring programme intended for the staff of the University of Turku, whereas a mentor can be either a member of the University staff or an outsider.

The advantage of mentoring as a method of development is that there is no single way to implement its principles but rather it is a process that always resembles its participants. The mentoring pair can decide among themselves on the goals and methods of mentoring. Mentoring can be considered a particularly fertile method, especially now as working life and academic work are in a state of constant change and there is a quest for new kinds of approaches.

In this guide there is extra space for your personal notes. On the pages you can write down personal notes and agreements from the appointments. You can also record questions, observations, and insights that you have come up with in the time between the appointments.

The quotations in the guide are taken from our research material where we studied the personal experiences of the participants of the University of Turku mentoring programme.

*Wishing you a very inspiring mentoring relationship,  
the authors*

# MENTORING IN THE CHANGING ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT



*The origins of mentoring can be traced back to the Greek mythology where King Ulysses is said to have given the task of instructing his son Telemachus to a wise old man named Mentor while Ulysses himself was fighting the Trojan War. Mentor became a trusted friend and teacher of Telemachus. Later on, mentoring was used especially in craftsman trades where younger journeymen would hone their skills under the tutelage and watchful eye of an older master craftsman.*

Universities and the work done in them have recently been in constant change. Changes in academic work manifest themselves particularly as added challenges, greater demands for efficiency, and an emphasis on cost effectiveness and measurability of all work. Additionally, the pace and interconnectedness of the changes have been considerable.

One way of coping with change is developing one's skills and expertise. From an individual employee's point of view, their skills are the cornerstone upon which the success and development in their work is based. Therefore, developing one's skills is important.

Research, teaching, and the societal service mission are the essence of academic work, all of which have remained so for centuries. However, coping with change requires skills which cannot be based on expert knowledge alone.

Routine tasks are becoming less and less common. Instead, work tasks are becoming more varied, comprehensive, unique, project-like, and co-dependent. These in turn require different abilities than before, such as how to anticipate and plan one's tasks, time management, tolerance of uncertainty, and moderating one's workload. Also, work community skills and the skills needed as a supervisor have a critical role in today's universities.

The ancient principles of mentoring are still valid in the academic community. The old academic tradition, where a more experienced individual guides someone younger, is manifested in mentoring. At the same time, it is well suited for the changing nature of academic work as it allows for individual goals and solutions, as well as discussing these from the viewpoint of each participant's own needs and premises.

## THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES HAVE TRADITIONALLY BEEN SET FOR MENTORING:

1. development of operations
2. creation of new practices
3. transfer of skills from an older colleague to a younger one
4. providing emotional support for newly-arrived members of the work community
5. planning the career development of the mentee
6. expansion of social networks
7. encouraging the mentee to assess their own working methods
8. moderating the workload of mentees

Mentoring is therefore about making tacit knowledge more concrete and verbal.

Mentoring takes place in one-to-one interactions.

The aim is to make the situation worthwhile and useful for both parties.

### GLOSSARY:

**MENTOR** = An experienced employee who is committed to providing their skills to the mentee.

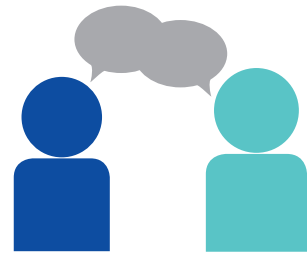
**MENTEE** = A person who is motivated to learn and wishes to discuss their work with a mentor.

**MENTORING RELATIONSHIP** = An interactive relationship that is based on mutual agreement, is target-oriented and confidential, and takes place mainly in the form of face-to-face interactions.



# MENTORING IN PRACTICE

## PRINCIPLES FOR THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF MENTORING



**MENTORING** takes place mainly in face-to-face interactions. However, by mutual agreement, some of the meetings can take place via telephone or e-mail.

**A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP** has a mutually agreed on start and end date.

**A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP** is based on confidentiality, and neither party may disclose to outsiders any of the matters discussed during the mentoring relationship.

**BILATERAL MEETINGS** take place 5-8 times per year, on dates that both parties have agreed on beforehand.

**THE MENTORING GOAL** has been mutually agreed on, and it is sufficiently clear and beneficial to both parties, while still keeping in mind that the main purpose of the mentoring relationship is to further the mentee's development in their work.

**THE MENTORING PAIR** may agree on "homework" or other assignments to be prepared for the next meeting.

**IT IS POSSIBLE** that, for example, a person from the mentor's professional network could participate in a meeting.

**AT THE END OF THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP**, mentor and mentee will assess the mentoring relationship together and create a summary on the best aspects of it.

**THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP** should be discussed by the mentee with their supervisor, so that the supervisor is aware of who the mentor is going to be and what goals have been set for the mentoring.

**MENTORS** receive no monetary compensation for the mentoring.

**MENTEES** have the responsibility to make sure that meetings are arranged beforehand, and also to inform the mentor on the topics that they wish to discuss during the next meeting.

# The course of the University of Turku mentoring programme

The mentoring programme of the University of Turku staff lasts for about a year. At its core are the personal discussions between the mentor and the mentee, which are usually held about 5-8 times a year at a location mutually agreed on by the parties. The duration of a discussion is usually about 2 hours. In addition to this, there are three joint meetings for all participants in the programme.

## Opening seminar

The programme starts with an opening seminar meant for all participants, at which the principles and goals for the mentoring as well as the roles and tasks of the mentors and mentees are discussed. In connection with the opening seminar, the mentors and the mentees meet and can exchange contact information and arrange the first actual mentoring meeting. The opening seminar may also have guest speakers.

*"I'm interested in this sort of self-education and development. How should I put it? Matters concerning professional development and enhancing the skills connected with it. There are a lot of certain routines in my work to which I would like to add some variety. So I could sort of look at my own work from a different angle."*

*(Mentee)*

*"This is a really good system, and I wish this had existed when I was young and insecure and had to cope with different and difficult tasks. I really would have appreciated a mentor then."*

*(Mentor)*

topics raised by the participants. Usually in the mid-programme seminar, the mentors and the mentees work in their own groups, where they can exchange experiences with each other and get ideas for the latter half of the programme.

## Closing seminar

The mentoring programme concludes with a closing seminar at which the experiences of the mentoring year are discussed. Both the mentors and the mentees take part in the closing seminar. There is also often a guest speaker on a theme requested by the participants.

## Mid-programme seminar

Halfway through the programme, the mentoring pairs are invited to a mid-programme seminar. The purpose of the mid-programme seminar is to provide an overview of the work achieved thus far and to discuss



# PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF MENTORING

In Finland, mentoring is in use in several universities, and based on experience, it has proven itself to be useful and rewarding for those taking part in it. There are various benefits.

## Mentees learn new things and gain new perspectives

For a mentee, the mentoring relationship is primarily a place for learning, one where mentees can develop their working methods together with the mentor as well as deepen their understanding of their own personality in the workplace and picture their own working future, its options, opportunities for advancement and limits.

## The mentor feels appreciated

The mentors, in turn, feel that their skills are appreciated when they can convey them to younger colleagues. Discussions with the mentee also give the mentor the opportunity to summarise and analyse their own skills, which can further deepen their understanding on many questions of working life. Other benefits experienced by the mentor are the fact that their ideas of work can be renewed when talking with younger colleagues, and they experience an increase in motivation and job satisfaction.

## The entire work community benefits

The benefits of mentoring do not need to remain just between the parties. When both parties wish to renew and develop themselves, the entire work community does the

same. In addition, concrete new procedures, principles and working methods often arise from the mentoring relationship, and the parties can transfer these to their own immediate work communities.

### The benefits of mentoring experienced by the mentees

- Learning about their own area of expertise
- Learning about the mentor's work
- Help in structuring and rethinking one's work
- Perceiving a new direction in a changing situation
- Strengthening of one's own working role
- Help in controlling one's own resources and well-being at work

### The benefits experienced by the mentors

- Structuring one's own work
- Rethinking one's career
- Obtaining new perspectives on work
- Developing as a person

# THE ROLES AND DUTIES OF THE MENTOR AND THE MENTEE

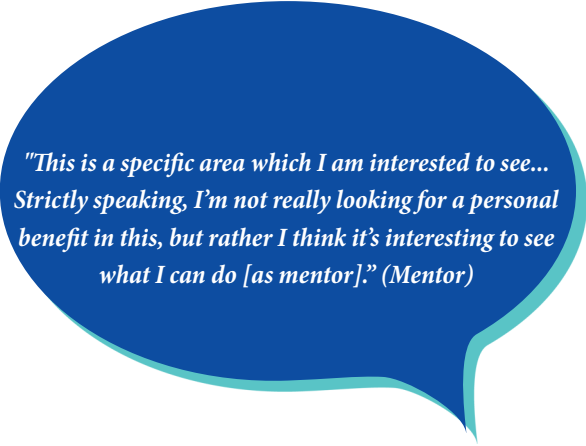
The task for both mentoring parties is to actively maintain the quality of interaction: transparency, honesty, respect for each other, confidentiality, keeping to the agreed objective and discussing the relevant themes in order to achieve the objective.

## What is expected of a mentor?

Mentors are experienced professionals who are committed to offering their expertise to the mentees. The role of the mentor can be described as acting as a coach, a teacher, a master, a sparring partner and a friend. The mentors are expected to be interested in the situation and to be willing to help and share

in addition, compared to a person on the inside, a mentor from outside the work community will be able to bring more new perspectives on the job situation of the mentee. However, in certain cases, the supervisor can also be a suitable mentor. Such a situation may be, for example, when with mutual agreement the desire is to transfer the supervisor's knowledge to the employee.

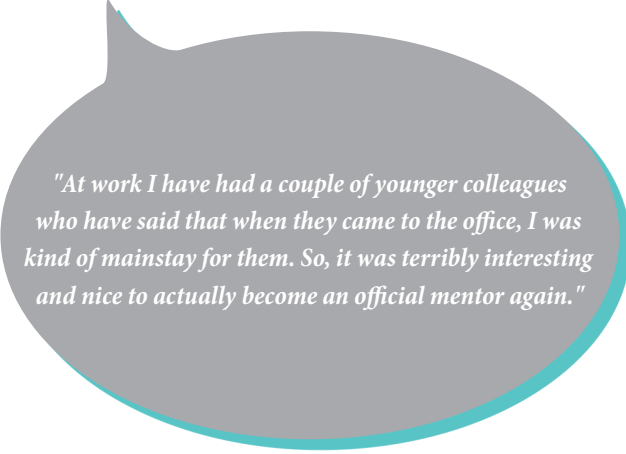
The skills of a good mentor include the skills to listen and ask questions. A good mentor encourages, guides and supports. They build confidence by being able to talk about their own experiences and work successes, but also, where appropriate, about errors, failures and crises they have encountered in their own career. A mentor can also bring up critical issues, but in a constructive way, with the aim of continuing to strengthen the mentee's sense of competence.



*"This is a specific area which I am interested to see... Strictly speaking, I'm not really looking for a personal benefit in this, but rather I think it's interesting to see what I can do [as mentor]." (Mentor)*

their own experiences in order to support the development of the mentee. The mentors have a contact network which they are willing to open up to the benefit of the mentee.

The mentee's own supervisor is usually not the best person to be a mentor, as in that case the opportunity to have some distance from their own work community is lost. Organisational power often interferes with the formation of a confidential relationship. In



*"At work I have had a couple of younger colleagues who have said that when they came to the office, I was kind of mainstay for them. So, it was terribly interesting and nice to actually become an official mentor again."*

*"I think I have received so much from this programme. For me, it's been a fantastic experience that I have been able to talk about these things without having to rush. At the same time, when I've been thinking about it in advance in that situation, the things have become more concrete for me, too." (Mentee)*

In the mentoring discussions, the mentors' role is to keep the conversation going in the direction of the objective that was set out, making use of their own professional experience and life experiences.

It should be noted that the mentor cannot set the mentees' goals for them, and cannot solve all of their problems. Good mentors do not aim to press their own views upon the mentee and do not try to take the place of their administrative supervisor or the role of the doctoral thesis supervisor.

### **What is expected of the mentee?**

The mentees are persons who have agreed to be guided and are willing to process

their work situation with the mentor. They are motivated to learn and willing to take responsibility for their own development. The mentees have the necessary ability to describe their own work situation and the way they do the work. They are prepared to receive feedback and to commit to the mentoring relationship for a sufficient period of time.

In the mentoring relationship, the mentee is an active party who is responsible for negotiating and agreeing the first and the subsequent appointments. The mentee is expected to bring up discussion topics for which the professional opinion of the mentor is sought.

### **CHECK LIST FOR A MENTEE**

- Have an open mind
- Set your own goals. Objectives may, if necessary, be updated during the mentoring period
- Define your expectations for yourself as well as for your mentor
- Make a mentoring agreement with your mentor
- Inform your employer and colleagues about the mentoring
- Prepare for the meetings in advance
- Keep a learning diary or make notes on your conversations and about your own thoughts
- Don't hesitate to make use of your mentor's knowledge, skills and networks
- Address any issues proactively and ensure the maintenance of mentoring relationship

# **MENTORING GOALS**

The mentee may already know their goals when they apply for the mentoring programme, but the goals must be defined at the beginning of the mentoring relationship at the latest. Time should be taken to determine the goals. The more precisely the mentee is able to define their goals, the more they will usually benefit from the programme. On the other hand, it is also beneficial for the mentor to consider their own goals, strengths and development opportunities.

To assist in determining the goals, one may use the SWOT analysis included in this guide, in which the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the activities will be logged. The mentors may also fill out the grid themselves.

The goals may be personal, related to one's own work and development therein or adapted for the group level. They may concern, for example, networking, the outlining of various opportunities and alternatives, development of working methods and time allocation. Furthermore, the goals may be related to coping at work, well-being, reconciliation of work and other areas of life or interaction skills.

*"Thanks to mentoring, I've been able to learn to know people. We have talked about who is involved in this area, who you can ask for advice and, in a way, networking. It is always an advantage to know people."*

*"After defending my doctoral thesis, I was in a situation in which I needed support and guidance on what I should do. My emotions after finishing that long-term research project were also mixed. Even though I was happy as such, my work motivation was in part lost and my coping and enthusiasm were down. I hoped to find a way to make work more meaningful through mentoring." (Mentee)*

Goals should be set out so that it is possible to assess them. These assessment criteria may also be considered in advance: how do I recognise whether my goals have been achieved?

*"...this change of role which I had... it wasn't completely painless. I missed my old tasks - and in a way you have to give up some of your skills and acquire new know-how and rely on other people's expertise in those other things. We have gone through these kinds of things." (Mentee)*

Goals also often change during the mentoring process. New goals may arise and old goals may become less relevant. The relative importance of different goals may change. During mentoring, it is important to pause at some point to consider whether the goals set at the beginning still apply or if they should be reviewed somehow.

# **INTERACTION IN MENTORING**

At its best, interaction in mentoring is a dialogue-like discussion in which people build meaning, a purpose and understanding together for their lives and worlds.

There are many interaction tools in mentoring. These can be understood, for example, with the aid of the following themes and related questions:

## **NEGOTIATING AND AGREEING:**

What are the rules of the game in our work?

## **GOAL SETTING AND ACTION PLANNING:**

Where do you want to get in your career? What kinds of possible futures can you imagine?

## **ASKING AND CLARIFYING:**

What is the current situation?  
What obstacles are there to achieving the goals? Is it possible to clear the obstacles?

## **CONCRETISING:**

What does it mean in practice to choose a specific alternative?  
What skills do I need to achieve my goals? How can I remove the obstacles in my way?

## **CONSTRUCTIVE QUESTIONING:**

Can the situation be seen from an alternative perspective?  
Is your own approach the only correct one?

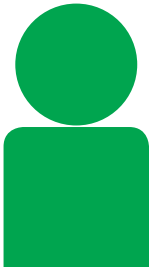
# WHAT CAN BE CONVEYED VIA INTERACTION?

Interaction is not only conveyance of information but a larger entity.



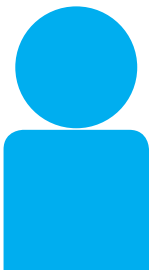
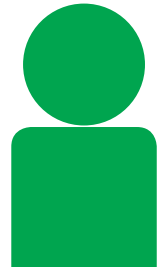
## KNOWLEDGE:

- by talking about your work and the questions raised by it
- by conveying your own expertise by talking about it
- by describing networks through which one can boost career development



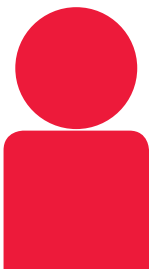
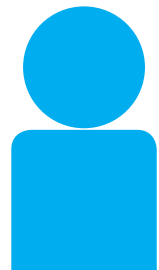
## SKILLS:

- by describing your own skills and competence
- by raising friendly but relevant questions, which make one assess one's own professional skills



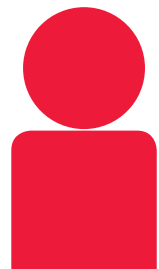
## UNDERSTANDING:

- by being present
- by listening empathically
- by aiming to understand
- by avoiding assessment while listening to another



## EMOTIONS:

- by listening acceptingly
- by talking openly about the emotions caused by work



# POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

Problems rarely occur during a mentoring process. Sometimes, however, problems may arise. Common obstacles in achieving success through the process are: unrealistic goal setting, too great or small expectations, problems with time management and lack of chemistry between the participants.

In case that either the mentor or the mentee feels that their mentoring relationship is problematic, they should first collaboratively consider the possible causes for the problems. If there are insurmountable problems with the mentoring relationship or if maintaining the relationship is, for whatever reason, difficult, the mentee and the mentor are recommended to contact the mentoring contact person at the Human Resources Development of the University.

Particular attention should be paid to the goals of the mentoring process and how realisable they are. The goals should be considered with the mentor during the first meeting and they should be further defined when needed during the process. Not setting any goals can render the mentoring aimless and remove the interest of both participants in the process. It is recommended that realistic goals are set.

Time management is one of the most common problems with mentoring. Due to all the other obligations that the participants have, it may be difficult to find a time for the mentoring sessions that works for both participants. In order to have regular mentor-

ing sessions during the process, it is recommended to agree on the time and date of the sessions well in advance, for example, half a year ahead. It is important for the mentoring relationship that both participants commit themselves to the agreed sessions. Even if the participants feel that nothing in particular requires discussion, the sessions should be held regardless. If it is difficult to arrange a mentoring session, the session can be held via phone or email instead.



After the initial enthusiasm of a long and trusting mentoring relationship, there may come a time when it feels as though no progress is being made or there are feelings of uncertainty about how to continue with the process. This is a natural hurdle in the mentoring process. To overcome this phase, the participants may, for example, reflect upon their original goals and whether or not they should be updated somehow. However, it is often enough to wait for time to pass and continue with the mentoring to overcome such problems. The issue could also be discussed with one's mentoring partner.

# PROPOSALS FOR DISCUSSION TOPICS

## EVERYDAY WORK SKILLS AND TASKS

What are the main tasks of a mentee? Do the tools and facilities enable the mentee to perform at their best? How would the mentee alter their tasks? What would they like to remove from or add to their tasks? What tasks has the mentor found the most agreeable? What kind of know-how does the mentee require in their tasks and how could the mentor guide the mentee in those tasks? How can the mentee evaluate the quality of their performance? In what way does the mentor feel that they have developed as an active seeker of feedback?

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT

What kinds of career advancement opportunities are discernable? How has the mentor advanced their career in the past? What kind of goals has the mentee set for their work? What goals has the mentor had during their career? What kind of education, training and networking could contribute to the participants' career development? What kind of education and training has the mentor received and how have those benefitted them?

## THE PARTICIPANTS' WORK AND DEVELOPING ONESELF AS A WORKER

What, in particular, does the mentee enjoy about their work? What would they like to change? What has the mentor found rewarding about their work at different stages of their career? Which tasks has the mentee found easy to do and, in contrast, in which tasks do they feel that they would need additional competences? In what ways could the mentee's work be

diversified? How could the development of the mentee's expertise be enhanced? In which areas of their work does the mentor feel that they have particularly improved and what factors have supported this development?

## THE PARTICIPANTS' POSITION IN THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE WORK ORGANISATION

Does the mentee have enough colleagues who can support and guide the mentee in their work? In what ways has the mentee themselves contributed to the development of co-operative relationships in their own working unit? What kind of colleague relationships have proven to be especially significant to the mentor during their career? Is the interaction between the mentee and their supervisor functional? How has the mentor improved the interactive relationship with their supervisor through their own conduct? Does the mentee have colleagues to guide? With which colleagues do they find co-operation to be particularly productive?

## MAINTAINING WORK ABILITY

How does the mentee describe their ability to work and well-being at work? By which means has the mentee maintained their ability to work? Which features of the mentee's work are especially demanding from the standpoint of work ability? Which means for maintaining work ability has the mentor seen as particularly effective? What kinds of observations and experiences has the mentor accumulated regarding shifts in well-being at work and opportunities for maintaining work abil-



ity throughout their career? What kinds of activities for maintaining work ability are offered in the mentee's respective unit? Which features related to the mentee's future career might be considered stressful and how can one prepare for them?

### WORK MOTIVATION AND ITS MAINTENANCE

What helps to maintain the mentee's job satisfaction? Which are the best and worst parts of the mentee's work? What has brought the mentor considerable job satisfaction during their career? What can the mentee do in order to improve their own work motivation? How does the mentee determine their level of work motivation? Are there notable changes in the mentee's

work motivation, for example, during different seasons? How has the mentor developed during their respective work career concerning the regulation of their own work motivation?

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING AT WORK AND RELATED DEVELOPMENT

Which situations in the mentee's work have been particularly educational? Which skills does the mentee feel they have learned in different tasks? What kind of experience does the mentor have of on-the-job learning? What kind of knowledge does the mentee wish to further gain? What kind of knowledge does the mentee value in particular?

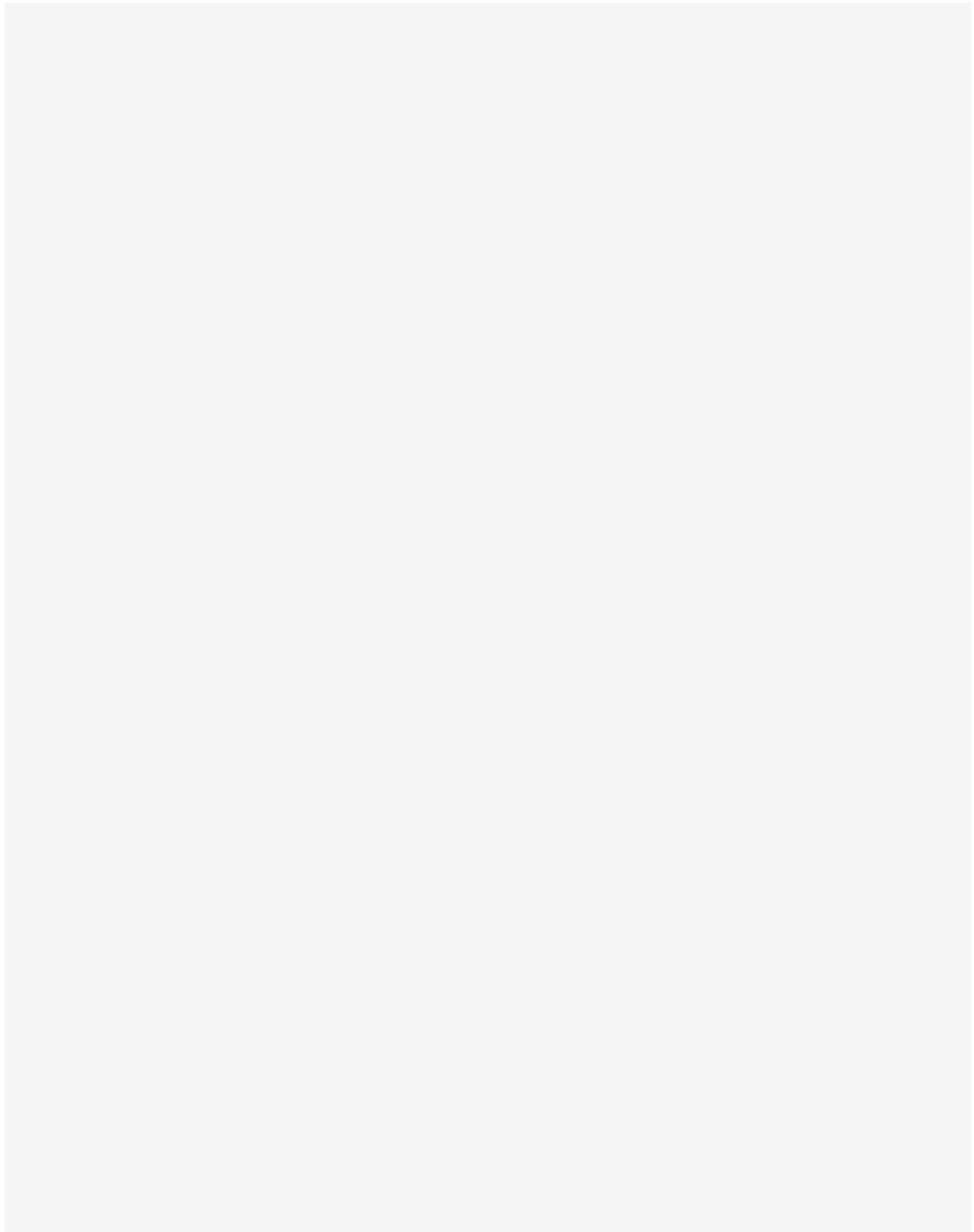
## SUPPORT MATERIAL FOR MENTORING

### Personal mentoring goals

Here you can mark your personal goals and expectations for the mentoring programme. You can also consider which goals are the most important to you and why.

# MENTORING RULES

Here you can mark the agreed rules of the game, such as deciding upon when and where meetings will be held and the method of communication in between meetings.



# SWOT ANALYSIS

The SWOT analysis can be used as a tool for identifying a person's internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats. Using the SWOT analysis can help one to make better sense of one's own work situation and the necessary support for development in that work. It is useful to consider and work through the tool with the mentor at the very beginning of mentoring. It is also possible for the mentor to make their own charts.

In addition to goal setting, the SWOT analysis can be used for the final evaluation of the mentoring process.

## MY CURRENT STRENGTHS

- What do I consider to be my strengths? What do I consider my key strengths?
- What do the others consider to be my strengths? Have I received feedback on what I am good at?

## MY CURRENT WEAKNESSES AND AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

- What do I consider to be my weaknesses?
- Why are these my weaknesses at the current moment?
- In what kinds of situations do they appear?
- What do the others consider to be my weaknesses? Do the others give me feedback on some of my weaknesses?

## FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

- What kinds of opportunities could my future working life offer me?
- What kinds of opportunities does my degree open up for me?
- In which situations do I still have opportunities for development?
- On what would I wish for more information and experience?

## FUTURE THREATS

- What threats could the academic work market pose me?
- What threats do I perceive in the work market in general?
- Can these threats be minimised in some way?
- What threats could my own attitude or worries cause? What do I wish to avoid?

# PERSONAL SWOT ANALYSIS

**MY CURRENT STRENGTHS**

**MY CURRENT WEAKNESSES AND AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT**

**FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES**

**FUTURE THREATS**



# Documentation of a mentoring session

## DATE:

1. The main themes discussed
2. The most important realisation or lesson
3. The theme agreed upon for the next session
4. My observations on interaction

# Evaluation of mentoring

Use this form to evaluate the usefulness of mentoring.

**DATE:**

1. What was particularly relevant, important and pleasing to the mentee during the mentoring relationship?
2. What was pleasing and useful to the mentor in the mentor-mentee activity?
3. What consequences were there and what concrete results were visible in the mentee's actions as a result of the mentoring activities?
4. Which factors led to the mentee's possible failure to carry out the plans, or the development measures discussed with the mentor?
5. What was the best element of the mentor-mentee interaction?
6. How should the mentoring programme be developed further?

# LITERATURE ABOUT MENTORING

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