



## Career & Gender Factsheet – Mentoring

Samuel Abiven, Debra Zuppinger-Dingley, Katherine Horgan

### Objectives

The mentoring program aims at helping career development of the junior scientific staff (PhD candidate and post-doc), by looking at the career development from an experienced outsider perspective and sharing positive and negative experiences.

### What is mentoring?

Mentoring consists in a dialogue where a more experienced person helps or guides a less knowledgeable person in her/his personal development. The mentor helps the mentee to develop a personal career plan and rise her/his awareness on the next steps to take, based on his/her experience. Mentoring is not...

- Supervising: the mentor should not give any orientation in the research topic or any technical aspect of the work. The mentor should not direct or be in charge of the mentee research field
- Coaching: the mentor does not train the mentee, but can propose some specific training or the acquisition of certain skills

### Method

The mentoring program consists in a series of informal meetings between a mentor (PI and experienced scientific staff) and a mentee (PhD candidate and post-doc employed or affiliated to the URPP program). The aim of these meetings is the career development of the junior scientific staff. The mentee will expose her/his plans for the future and the mentor will share her/his experience and advices. The meeting should take place every six months or more frequently if the two parties agree. This means that a mentor should invest 2 or 4 hours per semester (1 or 2 hours to meet the mentee and 1 or 2 hours to prepare the meeting).

### Choice of mentor

The junior scientific staff will be asked to propose the name of two senior scientists from the URPP whom they would like to have as mentors. The gender and career committee will then contact directly the potential mentor and organise the two-person teams. The participation to this program is based on volunteering.

The mentor cannot be part of the mentee's work unit or be involved in her/his dissertation supervision in order to avoid potential conflict of interest between the two persons. By no means should the mentor serve as a substitute to the supervisor (see below "what is mentoring?")

### First session

During the first session, the mentor and the mentee will describe their careers so far, and discuss their plans for the future. In particular, the mentor will describe the choices she/he had to take during her/his career. The mentee will explain how she/he sees the next step after the PhD or the post-doc,



and what could be the alternatives. The mentor could/should propose additional ideas. The two persons should also identify the strength and weakness of the mentee and discuss them.

At the end of the session, the two persons should agree on a list of objectives the mentee should achieve by the next meeting. The objectives could be diverse, for example learning a new skill that could be useful or exploring a type of professional activity not yet considered.

### **Following sessions**

The following sessions will start from the objectives proposed previously. The two persons will check if they were fulfilled or not. Where were the difficulties? Are there ways around it...?

Then, the session will be focussed on one particular topic. Here is an indicative list of topics:

- The steps of an academic career
- Balancing private life and work
- What are supervisors expecting?
- The life after PhD
- Is gender an issue in academia / outside academia?
- How to manage the stress during a PhD or short term post-doc
- ...

Each session should finish with a set of objectives to be completed by the next session.

### **Tool evaluation**

The tool “mentoring” will be evaluated at the beginning of the year 2015 (after 1 year). A survey will be sent to mentees and mentors and will determine the future of this program.

### **Useful links about mentoring**

A series of articles about mentoring in Science:

[http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career\\_magazine/previous\\_issues/articles/2012\\_02\\_03/caredit.a1200015](http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_magazine/previous_issues/articles/2012_02_03/caredit.a1200015)