

# Guidelines for Mentoring Independent group leaders

Young principal investigators of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (MNF) who wish to officially supervise the doctoral candidates in their research group are obliged to find a mentor and to become a member of the Graduate School for Biological Sciences (GSfBS). They should meet with their mentors once or twice per year.

## Purpose

A mentoring relationship is designed to enable experienced professionals to share their knowledge, skills, and insights with mentees through a one-on-one relationship. Mentees benefit from gaining knowledge and support in achieving their professional development goals, while mentors sharpen their skills as they teach others and make a personal impact on the professional development of others. The guidelines below are meant to help in designing an individual mentoring agreement.

## Choice of Mentor

The mentor needs to have in-depth experience as a research group leader at the University of Cologne or the University Clinic. She/he has to be member of the GSfBS and a professor with *Promotionsrecht* of the MNF. The mentor needs to be different from the professor who is hosting the young independent group leader.

## Initial Meeting

The main purpose of the initial meeting is to get acquainted with each other and to define a mentoring plan including a written mentorship agreement that is signed by both mentor and mentee. You as the mentee benefit most if you are as **specific** as possible in stating your needs, skills you want to get help with, and time commitment you expect (e.g., help in career progress, understanding the tenure process, grant writing, networking within the field, introduction to potential collaborators, being effective in a group or committee etc.).

## Suggestions for topics of regular meetings

1. Sharing experiences related to professional issues, career strategies, Work-Life-Balance
2. Development of individual career strategies (**short**, **medium** or **long**-term objectives), necessary steps of action and solution strategies, how to develop into an independent, internationally visible scientist
  - how to guide and supervise students and postdocs; how to solve conflicts with or between co-workers; how to teach them to follow the rules of good scientific conduct
  - how to best set up a laboratory; consider financing, group structure, organisation of meetings etc. according to the size of the group
  - grant writing, publications, and project strategies (bread and butter baseline versus riskier)
  - Networking within the scientific system: access to contacts, research cooperation, etc.
  - becoming visible in the institution by teaching MSc and advanced BSc classes
  - continuity in group composition
  - encourage mentee to become a member of search committees (*Berufungskommissionen*) to see how they function
  - encourage undergrad teaching (important for professorship applications)

3. Advice on personal development, reflection on personal competence, definition of performance. Mentor addresses weaknesses and strengths of mentee, encouragement and suggestions for individual improvement (e.g. participation in [professional workshops offered by \*Personalentwicklung Wissenschaft of the UoC \(PE Wiss\)\*, EMBO, DFG, or others](#))
4. Transfer of knowledge regarding rules and formalities at the UoC and in scientific communities
5. Discussion of gender-specific stereotypes and gender biases
7. Outline agenda for next meeting
6. Agree on milestones