MENTORING GUIDELINES

Bellaterra, 9 November 2023

Principle 28 of the Charter & Code further states that the career development strategy for researchers must specify the availability of mentors in providing support and guidance for the personal and professional development of researchers. In turn, principle 36 states that researchers in training should establish a structured and regular relationship with their supervisor(s).

All the CED researchers (and especially experienced researchers of categories R3 and R4) are expected to play a mentoring role to the CED researchers in training, either postdoctoral (R2) or predoctoral (R1), by providing various advice and support. In the case of research group heads and the scientific director, this role extends to all of the researchers of their group or the whole institution, respectively. In turn, mentorship must also be provided by the CED researchers to undergraduate students that collaborate or volunteer in research activities, as well as graduate students that are enrolled in the master degrees in which the CED researchers regularly teach.

In agreement with principles 36 and 40 of the Charter & Code, supervision implies sufficient knowledge and expertise in the field of research, as well as enough time availability and willingness to commit to the task. In particular, it includes (but is not limited to) providing guidance and support, keeping records of and reviewer research progress and findings, giving feedback by various means in both written or oral form, and the establishment of schedules for the delivery of research outputs or other milestones.

Welcome to the CED!

The new PhD student who joins a research line or a project is under the supervision of the PI of the project or research line. However, they may also have a mentor (R3) or a junior mentor (R2 or R2+ level), designed by the PI, to help them in their insertion in the CED and in the Spanish university environment and their career possibilities.

A similar procedure, especially with regard to career information and activity monitoring, can be applied to a postdoc in their first R2 year, by an R2+ or R3 mentor, in case this task cannot be performed by his/her line or project PI supervisor.

A few general notes:
- All PhD students in CED have access to the same information and opportunities, regardless of whether they decide to stay in academia after finishing their PhD, or not.
- The CED do not tolerate abuse or discrimination. Our goal is to create a safe, inclusive, and respectful working environment for guests and employees of all countries of origin, ethnicities, language abilities, religions, gender, sexual orientations, body sizes, economic backgrounds, and other differences.
- The target group for this document are PhDs core students that are directly and primarily affiliated with the CED. The spirit of this document also applies to any other students that spend time in our Centre, such as UAB external students, EDSD students, or guest visitors. However, not all individual points will apply to these other students because their primary PhD directors or mentors are not in our institution.

This document is intended to help mentors and mentees in our institution navigate their mentoring relationship more smoothly and to ensure a positive PhD experience for all our students.

What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a professional and working alliance in which people work together over time to support the growth, development, and personal and professional success of relational partners through support the personal and professional growth, development and success of mentees through the provision of professional and psychosocial support.

The mentor at the beginning of the mentoring relationship, in order to get to know the person to be mentored, it is to get to know the person to be mentored, it is recommended that he/she inquire about their expectations:

- - What do they want to do in their career?

- - How do they currently feel about their career?

- - What do they hope to get out of mentoring?

- - How do they think the mentor can help them?

Mentoring includes listening, advice and guidance on career options, helping the mentee learn to maintain a good balance between life and career.

Mentoring typically provides feedback on specific questions. It includes assessment of the person's strengths and weaknesses, interests and abilities. It helps the mentee to think critically about his/her critically in relation to their goals, facilitates and supports them in exploring ideas, reviews progress against goals, assists them in making objectives, assists them in decision making and on the path to the realization of their career aspirations.

Mentoring can take on different forms depending on the experience of the mentor and the stage of the thesis. For instance, mentor and mentee could work like co-authors, meaning they actively help in the research activity and in producing articles. Alternatively, mentees can work more independently and mentors work as helpers and advice-givers.

Mentors typically commit for one year and the mentor-mentee relationship can be re-evaluated after one year. Possible reasons for not continuing such a relationship include that the student's research interests may have changed and another mentor would be a better fit, or that the mentor may be leaving the Centre. If the mentor-mentee relationship is not continued, the student, the CED's Director and the area PI will together find another mentor for the student.

To more junior mentors advising PhD students: If there are any warning signs that a student may be struggling in any aspect, they may express their needs more to the postdoc mentors than to the PI, so please be aware of those needs and translate them into actions or into conversations with higher levels.

Mentoring from a gender perspective

Mentors should be trained in mentoring and in gender perspective from the point of view of the mentoring.

In any case, the mentor will take into account the following aspects from a gender perspective:

- The mentor must be sensitive to conscious or unconscious discriminations and biases towards women that may exist in the institution or on their own part.

- It must be able to support the mentored persons through its own experience. If this is not possible, due to the circumstances of each person, a change can be requested, both by the mentor and the mentee.

- The mentor should be aware of the institution's policies and resources that can support the mentee.

- The mentor should be aware of the differences between your position and that of your mentee that may interfere with the trusting relationship necessary to carry out the mentoring.

Mentor responsibilities

Intended purpose: getting all mentors on the same page, and developing shared expectations between mentors and mentees.

Central responsibilities:

- Give opportunities to learn the topics the student needs to learn - see sample list below (either through hands-on teaching, or through pointing to resources/people who can help and then being available for questions)
- Provide opportunities for regular meetings, including big-picture mutual evaluation meetings 1-2 times a year
    - The mentee has primary responsibility for scheduling regular meetings. We recommend that these meetings happen weekly at least at first, or later perhaps biweekly. If the mentee is not proactively scheduling meetings, it is the mentor's responsibility to step in and schedule meetings.
    - At the "big" professional development meetings, mentors and mentee will (among other things) go through the Sample Topics below and determine which areas should be emphasized in the next months
    - The training chair will send reminders for mentors to schedule these meetings once a year. If a second meeting is desired per year, the mentor or mentee are responsible for scheduling this.
- Give feedback on proposals, study materials, analyses, manuscripts, posters, presentations, grant applications, and personal statements
- Avoid to create unrealistic expectations or unhealthy uses (e.g., when you send tons of emails late at night or during your holidays, you may unwittingly make your mentee feel that they are expected to do the same)

Providing behind-the-scenes insights:

- Explain how the publication process and conference process work
- Explain how the tenure process and funding mechanisms work
- Provide opportunities to review papers once the mentee is more advanced
- Provide opportunities to mentor more junior students once the mentee is more advanced
- Encourage collecting public outreach experience (blogs, social media, science events, …)
- Encourage collaborations outside of the institution (possibly with researchers from other fields)

Professional development:

- Write reference letters
- Provide support in job search (provide opportunity to discuss different career plans and ideas, forward job openings, give feedback on personal statements and job talks)
- Reflect on big-picture view of research program (whose research programs, the mentor's or the mentee's?) together and discuss possible career directions and goals
- Introduce to people in your network
- Point out appropriate award, fellowship, grant, and talk opportunities
- Make students' work visible where appropriate (e.g., mention it to others, include in own talks - with recognition of course)

Mentee responsibilities

When you first start (to be continued throughout):

- Set up meetings and discuss how these are going to be scheduled (e.g., how often, who is responsible for scheduling, whether the meetings are going to be documented/how). We recommend that these meetings happen weekly, at least at first.
- Schedule larger meeting that includes "more big picture evaluation", career development, etc. about every 6 months or a year (include UAB commission)

Throughout the Ph.D.:

- Be proactive about requesting feedback and communicating career goals (if we don't know where you want to go, we can't help you get there (if you don't know yet where you want to go, we can discuss that too); plus it will help us to know your timing - talk to your supervisor about when you should start applying for jobs)
- Communicate well in advance on anything that needs feedback (e.g., send in a first draft at least two weeks before the final version is due), and if possible, let us know by which deadline you need something
- Communicate well in advance on any potential problems or mistakes
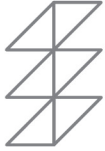
- Be open to feedback
- Keep track of meetings (e.g., outlook) and work - e.g., logbook in shared folder/google doc/github/…, documenting in zotero, rmarkdown, …
- Document work and make it usable to others (reproducibility, code sharing, archiving)
- Try to solve a problem yourself before coming to us, then come show us where you got stuck (aka make an effort, but don't waste hours on something that together, we could solve in minutes)
- Let us know what you need and let us know when something isn't working for you

Output expectations (from our institution only - your university may have additional requirements):

- The EPC conference are very important to our field and you are strongly encouraged to submit. Other conferences may additionally be important to your discipline, please discuss expectations with your mentor or mentors.
- There are no strict regulations on which publications you need and how many. In general, you should have 3 papers in your dissertation by the end (they don't all have to be published yet, but should be presentable and ready for publication). The speed and spacing of these papers will depend on the individual project (e.g., it may take a long time to set up data collection infrastructure)

USEFUL DOCUMENTATION

1. Sample Topics

Below you can find a list of things that are useful for a researcher to know and that you should have experienced by the end of your PhD. Some of these you may already have learned, others might be completely new to you. Please rate your current experience with each of these:

- Do not feel confident with this, need to learn more
- Have some basic knowledge/experience with this, but want to learn more to feel confident
- Feel confident with this, do not need to learn more

Optional: If there is anything in particular that you already know / that you particularly want to learn, feel free to leave a comment on that bullet point.

- Academia as a work environment - negative feedback, setbacks, health + mental health, and perseverance
- Literature reviews (incl. reference managers, databases, keyword generation, and how to read articles)
- Keeping up to date with the literature and the field
- Ethics training and awareness of meta-scientific biases
- Effective collaborations and teamwork, scheduling meetings, authorship agreements
- Time management, organizing notes, academic overwork culture
- Biases in academia and how to navigate them, institution politics
- Idea generation, narrowing down a research question and hypothesis
- Writing proposals and grants
- Open science, spotting and avoiding questionable research practices, preregistration
- Study design, operationalization, validity, and (for primary data collection) generating materials (e.g., items, instructions, cover stories)
- Logistics of conducting studies (e.g., for primary data: preparing materials and programming studies; for secondary data: identifying relevant data sources, requesting data access; both: data storage, data confidentiality, long-term storage/dissemination)
- Documenting and organizing work, backups, version control
- Basic skills in analysis program of choice and basic stats skills
- Analysis techniques specific to your chosen specialization
- Data/code hygiene, reproducibility
- Writing + revising (on the outline level, paragraph level, sentence level, and word level)
- Presenting and visualizations
- Networking
- Publishing process (incl. considerations for choosing an outlet) and archiving
- Is the level of supervision enough? How could your supervisors improve that?
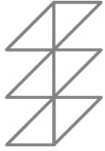
2. Protection from Abuse and Discrimination

All interactions between mentors and mentees are subject to the CERCA Code of Conduct, the Policy against Sexualized Discrimination, Harassment, and Violence, and the Rules of Good Scientific Practice.

For mentees: If you experience or observe any incidents of academic misconduct, sexual harassment, other discrimination, or mental health struggles:

- Find support for yourself or the affected person contacting your mentor
- Write a thought of the incident as soon as possible (where, when, who was involved, what happened, who else may have witnessed the situation, how did the situation make you feel, how did the situation end): see the Gender Commission Protocol.
- Consider sharing your experience with people in the Centre, even if the incident happened outside of work. We want to support you and are willing to help you with situations of abuse or discrimination, whether those occur at work, in stores, with landlords, or on the street.

For mentors: If a student discloses incidents of academic misconduct, sexual harassment, other discrimination, or mental health struggles to you:

- Stay calm and listen, take their concerns and feelings seriously
- Affirm that they have done the right thing by disclosing this incident
- You do not have the legal obligation to disclose such incidents to the Centre, the CED, or anyone else (exception: if you have reason to believe that a life is at stake). It will, however, likely be advisable to contact someone and report the incident (you may choose to report to a person who can keep the report confidential, such as a Commission gender equality member).

See procedures and gender tools from CED web page https://ced.cat/en/about-ced/equality/
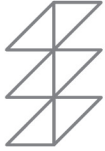
3. Proposal for the preparation of a postdoctoral mentoring meeting

For our meeting please think of where you'd like to be in your career in 3 to 5 years (kind of position, where, etc.) and please fill out the following form that can serve as a starting point to come to a set of concrete plans and goals for the coming academic year.

a) Thinking about your profile as an academic and how you could make it more competitive, which outputs do you think your profile needs more of/most?
(please rank the outputs from 1 to 7):

Academic service (reviewing, editorial experience, conference duties) ___
International experience / networks ___
Media coverage ___
Projects led as principal investigator ___
Academic publications ___
Supervision of PhD students ___
Teaching experience ___
Other, please specify:

b) Which research skills would you like to improve over the next years?
(please rank from 1 to 7):

Academic writing ___
Constructing research proposals ___
Data management ___
Formulating relevant research questions ___
Knowledge of theory, a substantive topic ___
Methods ___
Research design ___
Other, please specify:

c) Which professional skills would you like to improve over the next years?
(please rank from 1 to 11):

Giving classes ___
Giving feedback ___
Job interviews ___
Languages ___
Networking ___
Public speaking ___
Receiving feedback ___
Supervision/mentoring ___
Teamwork ___
Working independently ___
Writing for general audiences ___
Other, please specify:

d) Do you have any specific goals for the academic year 2023/2024?

4. Guidelines for assigning junior mentors to PhD students

The CED gives great significance to the supervisory role performed by researchers, being of utmost significance for attesting research independence. Therefore, postdoctoral researchers are urged to perform this task in order to be able to transition toward a more stable position. However, it must be taken into account that supervision involves the establishment of a close working relationship between the supervisor and the trainee, and hence the CED recognizes that no researcher should be obligated or pushed to supervise anyone against their will.

This document provides recommendations to be taken into account in the case that the PI as a PhD supervisor, consider that a junior mentor figure would be a beneficial to the PhD project.

The goals related to adding the possibility of a mentor figure include the following:

a) For the PhD student:
- Access to hands-on knowledge related to research and academia
- An extra figure to discuss progress and challenges related to the PhD project
- To establish connections with researchers at CED
- Experience collaborating
b) For the mentor:
- Experience supervising
- Experience collaborating
- Establish connections with PhD students
c) For the PhD-supervisor
- Help with tutoring on more practical issues

Junior mentors commit for the duration of one year, and the collaboration is reviewed at the end of this period. Circumstances that might lead to discontinuing the relationship could involve shifts in the student's research interests or the mentor's departure from the institution. Supervisor, PhD student and mentor together agree on responsibilities of all three persons, but below we provide some recommendations.

The junior mentor's responsibilities can include the following:

- Help with the integration in the centre at arrival
- Resolve doubts regarding practical research skills: writing, data management, models, interpretation of results.
- Provide feedback on presentations
- Help navigating the academic world: careers, publishing, conferences, networking.
- The PhD supervisor holds a early meeting with the junior mentor to discuss progress and possibly provide feedback on supervision style and experiences. We recommend that the junior mentor write an annual report. See annex 5.
- PhD students should aim to try and resolve emerging issues first themselves, and when they are stuck bring the issue to the mentor.
- Feedback will be more effective if PhD students ask for advice or feedback on specific skills or issues.
- The junior mentor is an addition to the figure of PhD-advisor, meaning that the PhD-advisor remains the main responsible for supervision and tutoring.
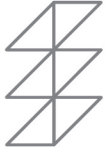
5. Proposal for the preparation of a junior mentoring report

In the case of a junior mentor, it is important to carry out an annual self-evaluation that will be shared with the PI of the line or project of the doctoral student. An outline to follow is presented below.

The mentoring report is a descriptive and reflective document of the hosting experience (it should not exceed 5 pages plus annexes).

In any case, it must show evidence of the accompaniment provided to the assigned students.

It will be delivered to the senior mentor digitally at the end of the mentoring year (and within the month following its completion).

1. Personal presentation and description of the motivations for participating in the Mentor program.

2. Copy of email sent to host student prior to arrival at CED. Response obtained from the host student. Reflection.

3. Introduction of the host student(s).

4. Contributions made in the follow-up meeting held jointly with the senior mentor.

5. List of the recreational and cultural activities in which the host student has participated during his/her stay.

6. Description of the activity that has been co-organized and provision of evidence (photographs, e-mails, documents of dissemination of the activity, etc.). Reflection of the benefits that each party (junior doctor/mentor and host student) has obtained from this activity:
    a) Has there been active participation on the part of exchange students and other mentors?
    b) Has there been the expected response, and has it been positive?
    c) Has it helped to improve the host students' stay?
    d) Do you think that the organized activity has helped the host student to overcome the challenges of a stay abroad or outside his/her usual environment? (e.g. solving practical day-to-day problems inside and outside the university, learning the language, overcoming cultural barriers, etc.).
    e) Has it been useful in preparing you for hosting future students or for your own stay abroad?

7. Evaluation of the experience and suggestions.