MARTÍ i FRANQUÈS COFUND
DOCTORAL PROGRAMME
Universitat Rovira i Virgili

NON-ACADEMIC MENTORING PROGRAMME: Exploring new career options with professionals working beyond academia

SUGGESTED SESSIONS CONTENT

SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION[1]

This document is intended to **facilitate the meeting of the mentor-mentee couples**. The aim of this mentoring programme is to team up early-stage researchers of any field of knowledge who are interested in their professional options beyond the traditional academic career, with highly skilled mentors working in professional environments outside of academia. This document is meant to be a **guide** to help facilitate the sessions, and not a booklet of instructions that should be followed strictly. Thus, mentoring couples are welcomed to use it as an **inspiration** for their meetings.

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2. DOS AND DON'TS OF MENTORSHIP

■ Mentorship is a **bidirectional relationship**: both parts must be committed and listen to each other and can learn in the process.

■ Mentorship is about **sharing experiences, know-how and advising**: the mentee is not a pupil, but also a professional, and the mentor is not a head-hunter, although can provide support towards job search.

■ Mentorship is a **guided self-understanding / self-awareness / self-knowledge path** where mentees analyse their strengths and weaknesses and achieve personal and professional growth. Mentors may guide and accompany mentees in this process, they are not professional career coaches nor psychotherapists.

■ **Open and continued dialogue** within the couple is the main tool in mentorship.

3. MENTORS/MENTEES COMMITMENTS

- **Confidentiality and respect** towards each other's comments and time are cornerstones of mentoring.
- The programme kicks off with a **webinar** for mentors and another for mentees. They will be scheduled in two different dates and further exceptional alternatives can be provided, so that we all share the same starting point.
- Every couple will meet **in person or virtually** a **minimum of 4 times along a maximum of 6 months** (between April and September 2023). It is a responsibility of the mentee to approach the mentor to find the best time for both for each meeting.
- The sessions will take place **outside working hours** and most of them will be conducted in **English**, unless otherwise specified from the beginning.
- Mentees are strongly recommended to work on a **personal career plan** in order to make the most out of this mentoring programme.
- Mentors and mentees will be asked to fill a **satisfaction and evaluation survey** at the end of the programme. Meanwhile they may feel absolute confident to contact the organisers at MFP COFUND project to provide them with any **feedback**, **suggestions** or **concerns**.

4. MATCHING PROCESS

This programme aims at connecting early-stage researchers with professionals working in a non-academic environment in order to open up their minds to the full range of professional possibilities after the PhD.

Matching is done by **MFP COFUND Management team**, in basis of CVs and insights provided through the presentations

5. SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR THE MEETINGS

Based on the nature and aim of this programme, mentoring couples are suggested to address some or all of these **topics** during their meetings:

1. Professional career aspirations
2. What is "Moving Beyond Academia" about?
3. Key soft skills
4. Deepen into some soft skills:
   I. Gender considerations for STEM professionals
   II. How to network
   III. Conflict management
   IV. Time management: life-work balance
5. Self-awareness: over qualification vs impostor syndrome
6. What have we achieved? What comes next?

In order to make each session more profitable for both of you we suggest you do some **previous thinking**, try to analyse some concrete and predefined questions during the session and pursue a predefined, measurable and reachable **goal**. You might not be an expert in some of the suggested topics; yet it will be a healthy and useful exercise to discuss about them. If you want to learn more about any of the topics, you could maybe contact more experienced colleagues, friends, etc.

6. GENERAL TIPS FOR THE MENTORING MEETINGS

■ Meetings are proposed to be **once a month**. If once a month is not possible, other approaches suiting both members of the couple best will be equally fine.

■ In order to optimize time investment in this programme, we would recommend to set up a **calendar for regular meetings** from the beginning (e.g., first Thursday of the month) and try to stick to it. Afterwards, you can reschedule as needed under mutual agreement. In any case, it will be the responsibility of the mentee to contact the mentor and confirm every meeting.

■ Take some time to build up a **space of trust and connection** among the two of you: introduce yourself to each other, agree on some basic items that will define your mentoring relationship. Try to answer the following questions as a guidance in this step:

- In what ways do you believe your experience and knowledge could be beneficial for each other?
- Can you think in each other's (mentor/mentee) mind-sets?
- What are your expectations of each other's (mentee/mentor)?
- What is the best way you can communicate your concerns/suggestions to each other?

■ Do some **preparatory work for each meeting** like some reading around the topic to address or compiling personal experiences about situations, attitudes and behaviours related to the topic to be addressed. Some ideas about what to think about before each session are provided below, together with the suggestions for content for some of the meetings.

■ In order to make meetings more productive, you can also **share in advance** items and documents to address in the next mentoring session.

■ To share experiences, articulate conversation around:

- Stories of your professional life (your own, or from colleagues and relatives).
- Specific situations: how did you face them, what could you have done differently, etc.
- Self-awareness: see yourself as others see you.
- Skill-Building: review skills you had or needed at that moment. How did you develop them? How were they useful?

7. CONSIDER WORKING ON A PERSONAL CAREER PLAN

Participating in a mentoring programme is expected to be a great opportunity, particularly for the mentees. To make the most out of this experience we suggest the mentees to work on **defining a personal career plan at the beginning of the process** and use it to guide the meetings with the mentors.

This plan can be the map that should take the mentees to **the goal they want to reach**: mentees will need to define where they want to go, what they need to get there, and how they are going to do it.

This is not mandatory, but we think that this is a good way to summarise findings and save all the useful feedback mentees get from their mentors.

8. WHAT TO DO IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT OF UNSUCCESFUL PAIRING

All the participants in this programme have been selected by their willingness to participate, their sensitivity towards the goal of the programme and their CV. We expect all mentoring relationships to be successful and gratifying. However, mentoring relies very much on a **good connection** among two people and we expect different degrees of satisfaction in the programme that we will consider normal and that we will analyse to see how to improve.

However, if by any reason, any mentor or mentee feels uncomfortable or uneasy with their partner in a way that exceeds these different levels of connection, we ask you to **get in touch with us immediately** so we can decide together on how to proceed.

9. SUGGESTED SESSIONS CONTENT

In this section we try to help you with some guidelines on **how to approach** each session. We have structured it in different sections: **previous thinking**, **goal of the session** and some **topics to discuss** during the session.

A. PROFESSIONAL CAREER ASPIRATIONS

Previous thinking:
▪ Why did you enrol your PhD? Did you get what you expected? Is it what you still want?
▪ Why and when did you take those critical decisions that changed/set up your career aspirations?

Goal:
▪ Define possible professional aspirations and discuss on what you may need to get there and how to do it.

Some topics to deal with during the session:
▪ What is your work history? What organization are you currently working for?
▪ What do you enjoy the best/least about your work?
▪ What are you currently working on (professionally, personally, developmentally)?
▪ How did you get to where you are now? What types of obstacles did you have to overcome?
▪ Was there a time you messed up and felt like you'd failed? How did you bounce back?
▪ Think back to five years ago. Did you envision your career as it is today?
▪ What is your dream job?
▪ Where do you want your career to go over the next three years?
▪ How can we weigh in different career path options to help make the correct decision?
▪ This topic has been especially relevant for you? Who else can you talk/what information can you check to look into it?

B. WHAT IS "MOVING BEYOND ACADEMIA" ABOUT?

Previous thinking:
▪ What are/were your expectations and fears when considering moving beyond academia?
▪ Check some success stories: https://www.vitae.ac.uk/researcher-careers/euraxess-uk-career-development-centre/euraxind/euraxind-career-stories

Goal:
▪ Identify pros & cons of moving beyond academia.

Some topics to deal with during the session:
▪ I'm considering a career transition. What are the options beyond academia?
▪ What are some other areas of the business that might be a good fit for me?

- What were the biggest obstacles you (the mentor) faced at my point in your career and how did you overcome them?
- What do you wish you (the mentor) had known before moving beyond academia?
- How should I prepare for the next career stage?
- This topic has been especially relevant for you. Who else can you talk to/what information can you check to look into it?

C. KEY SOFT SKILLS

Previous thinking:
- What are in your opinion key soft skills developed in academia and needed beyond academia?
- Check and compare your previous answer with:
✓ The Vitae Researcher Development Framework:
https://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers-professional-development/about-the-vitae-researcher-development-framework
✓ Check EURAXIND surveys to researchers and researcher's employers about most valued skills: https://www.vitae.ac.uk/researcher-careers/euraxess-uk-career-development-centre/euraxind/euraxind-survey
✓ Check EURAXESS "What do you want to be?" tool:
https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/career-development/researchers/discover-careers-beyond-academia/competencies-occupation-and-sectors

Goal:
- Identify 6 key soft skills: 2 you are good at, 2 you could improve, and 2 you definitely need to start working on.

Some topics to deal with during the session:
- What do you consider are your strengths? Do your colleagues agree?
- What would be your blind spots and how can you improve?
- What new skills do you need to move ahead?
- How do you plan to continue developing your professional skills and knowledge?
- Do you have a template that you use for long-range visioning and strategic planning?
- What skills do you think you could work on to help you in your career aspirations?
- This topic has been especially relevant for you. Who else can you talk to/what information can you check to look into it?

D. DEEPEN INTO SOME OF THESE SOFT SKILLS

Previous thinking:
- Think out of the box: maybe you never considered these skills really important or useful. Try to discuss about them.

Goal:
- Open your mind to a new set of skills that you may have not considered before. (Try with these or others).

Soft skills suggested: Gender considerations, how to network, conflict management, and time management.

D.I. GENDER CONSIDERATIONS

Previous thinking:
- Watch "Understanding unconscious bias":
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVp9Z5k0dEE
- Watch "Gendered innovations: Harnessing the Creative Power of Gender Analysis to Create New Knowledge": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sktr6vbW1P8
- Watch "Understanding gender dimension for MSCA projects":
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hq4eWo30RfY
- Have you faced any professional situations in which gender has had a clear influence?

Some topics to deal with during the session:
- Gender dimension in research; gender balance in decision making, equal opportunities for men and women.
- Maternity and paternity leaves, are they a problem towards professional development?
- Gender related barriers in STEM or other professions
- Do you perceive any gender trends within your professional environment?
- Is gender an issue in any way in your professional life?
- Do you lead or participate in any activity within your organization aimed at supporting gender equality?
- This topic has been especially relevant for you. Who else can you talk/what information can you check to look into it?

D.II. HOW TO NETWORK

Previous thinking:
- Are you good at networking?
- Is it any different beyond academia?

Some topics to deal with during the session:
- What are some good avenues for academia-business networking?
- How can I stay connected to key influencers who do not work in same office or geographical area?
- Are social and digital media any helpful?
- How many emails/calls are too much?
- How to behave at networking events?
- Where to network?
- Spontaneous self-introduction vs introduction through a shared contact
- Who are the people you need to align to within a new organization to succeed?
- What is best way to suggest/better communicate new ideas?

D.III. CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Previous thinking:
▪ Think of potential uneasy situations. Do you need/wish have had any special training about how to deal with them?

Some topics to deal with during the session:
▪ Was there ever a role you applied for and landed, but weren't 100% qualified to do?
▪ Have you ever had a difficult boss or colleague?
▪ How to deal with new responsibilities or minions?
▪ Re-energizing overloaded, unsatisfied or frustrated employees (or yourself)

D.IV. TIME MANAGEMENT: LIFE-WORK BALANCE

Previous thinking:
▪ Can you help creating your own balance or does your employer define it?
▪ How to better organise your working time.

Some topics to deal with during the session:
▪ Personal /work-life balance.
▪ How to avoid wasting time.
▪ Task prioritisation: a waste of time or a time saver.
▪ How to find balance between focusing in current job and looking for promotions or preparing for new jobs.
▪ How to deal with extracurricular activities or additional formation?
▪ How can you get involved in different initiatives without seeming unfocused?

E. SELF-AWARENESS

Previous thinking:
▪ Over qualification vs impostor syndrome.
▪ How do you see yourself, how do others, how will they see you in a non-academic sector?

Goal:
▪ Set up your personal brand. Personal branding refers to the practice of marketing yourself and your career. A strong personal brand maximizes your appeal as a candidate for a new job, seeking a promotion or simply expanding your network of influence. Personal brands are visible in our online social media profiles, in the clothes we wear, on our resumes and in the way we speak.

Some topics to deal with during the session:
▪ What is that that makes you unique?
▪ What else can you bring to a new employment?
▪ What is what you don't know your new employer to know about you?
▪ What is the achievement you are most proud of? Is it also the important in your career?

▪ Is it possible to transform weaknesses into strengths? How?
▪ How to find balance between focusing on current job and looking for the next one?
▪ Is this mentoring experience encouraged/incentivized by your academic manager?
▪ How can I get involved with extra projects, volunteer work or professional development without seeming unfocused to my supervisor?
▪ This topic has been especially relevant for you. Who else can you talk to/what information can you check to look into it?

F. WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED? WHAT COMES NEXT?

Previous thinking:
▪ What have you done during this programme? Have you attended the meeting as programmed?
▪ Have you prepared the meetings? Have you taken notes of the meetings? Have you gone any further?

Goal:
▪ Think about all you have already done and what will be your future steps. Ideally you will improve your personal career plan.

Some topics to deal with during the session:
▪ Have you filled and used a personal career plan?
▪ Do you think it's useful?
▪ Will you follow it?
▪ What else could you have done or can you still do to get the most out of this experience?
▪ Are you willing to accomplish your next personal career plan?

10. CONCLUSIONS

- **Number of sessions**: minimum 4 times, during maximum 6 months.
- The **mentee is responsible for contacting the mentor** in order to schedule the sessions.
- It is suggested to set up a **calendar** of sessions with the mentee
- The sessions will take place **outside working hours** (approx. 35-45 minutes).
- Language of the sessions: **English** (or Spanish in some cases).
- Discussions centered on the **career development** of the mentees.
- You will receive:
  - ✓ 1 **Guide** with suggested sessions' contents
  - ✓ 1 **Survey** upon completion of the programme.
  - ✓ **Certificate** of completion (by request)

11. CONTACT INFORMATION

- **Web** https://www.urv.cat/en/research/support/programmes/marti-franques/cofund/
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- **Video** (First edition of the Martí i Franquès COFUND Doctoral Programme, 2017-2022): https://youtu.be/P_TIIDNZSE0