

MENTORING (ENG)



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This handbook provides a basic overview of the general principles of mentoring as a method of professional and personal development of an individual and presents how the mentoring programme at UCT Prague works.

It is intended both for students and graduates who are considering participation in the programme as well as for those who accept the role of a mentor.

About mentoring

What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a method of individual learning and development in which the mentor passes on their experience and knowledge in a specific area to the mentee, thus helping them in their professional and personal growth. It establishes a partnership that creates a space for dialogue and leads to mutual self-reflection. As an effective tool for the promotion and development of human potential, it is used both in the academic and commercial spheres.

Mentoring does not involve a supervisor–subordinate or trainer–learner relationship, which is a great advantage of this method. It allows for a more open relationship and more personal sharing. The information is kept confidential – neither party discloses it to others. If the mentee is studying or working in the same institution as the mentor, it is better if each is from a different faculty or department.

Individual meetings consist of individual collaboration between the mentor and mentee. Together they discuss various topics and areas from the work and/or personal sphere, and the mentee has the opportunity for site visits or ‘shadowing’ (i.e., observing the mentor at work, such as conducting meetings, dealing with clients, or working in the lab). Each mentoring process is different and is always based on the needs and goals of the pair.

Who makes up the mentoring pair?

Mentee

A mentee is a student, a PhD student, a postdoc or a graduate, in short, anyone interested in support on the path of professional and personal development. It's someone who wants to get information, advice and consultation on ways of scientific work and/or job opportunities in a given field, looking for contacts and ways to reach their goal or to set such a goal.

Mentor

A mentor is the mentee's guide through a period of change on the way to their goal. They help the mentee in self-discovery and in discovering their potential and unused abilities. They are usually an experienced and respected scientist or a specialist from the academic or private sector who is interested in passing on their knowledge and experience gained during their professional career.

What are the goals and benefits of mentoring?

The main and overarching goal is to transfer experience and knowledge from mentors to mentees. It is important to clarify the specific needs of the mentee at the beginning of the meeting period and to formulate clear objectives based on these needs, which both parties involved agree on.

The mentee learns how to successfully advance in their career and can also learn how to better know themselves, their potential and their abilities. They will get support and inspiration from practice, which will help them take a more holistic view of the issues at hand, discover new career opportunities, and make decisions about the future. With the help of a mentor, they can develop a plan to achieve set goals or to formulate such goals collaboratively.

The mentor, by working with a mentee, will become aware of the path they have already taken in practice and what was important to them, and they will improve the transfer of their knowledge and experience to those who are just starting their careers. Meeting a mentee is also usually an opportunity to break out of the normal work routine, develop communication skills and self-reflection, and learn a different way of thinking.

Both will make much-needed new contacts and experience new environments. Thanks to joint workshops and networking sessions that usually form part of a mentoring programme, mentors and mentees not only get to know the other participants involved, but they can also share their experience and advice.

Most frequently addressed topics

The topics and areas discussed are individual and always depend on the needs and expectations of the mentee.

At UCT Prague, mentoring pairs most often address:

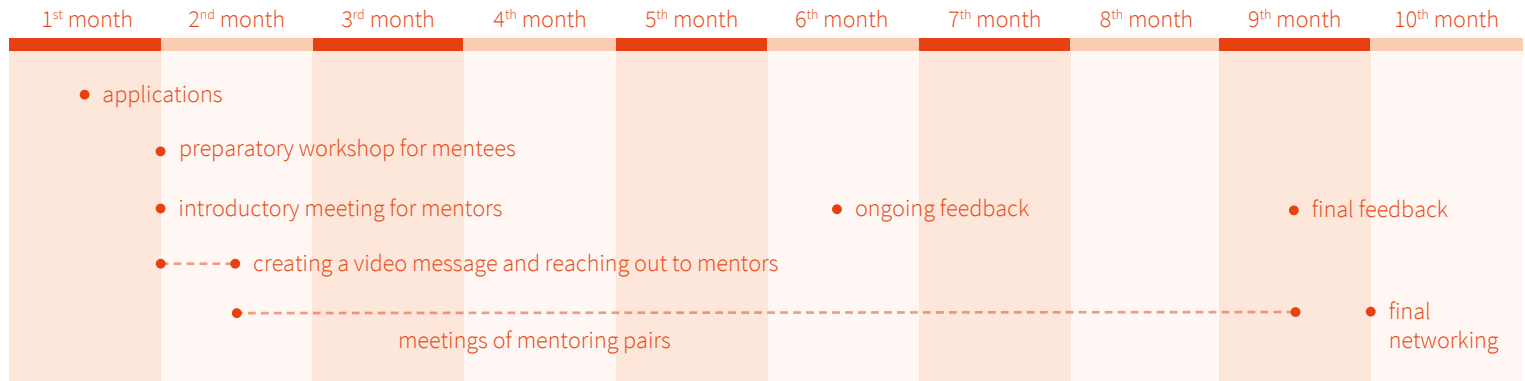
- the mentor's experience from workplaces in the Czech Republic and abroad
- starting a career in science / in a company / in your own business
- skills and knowledge valued in practice, the successful completion of the admission procedure for the selected position
- the acquisition of key soft skills
- the mentor's life story – how they got into the position they are currently working in, what was needed to get there
- balancing work and personal life, coping with challenging situations, stress, conflicts
- tips for science and research: how to write scientific papers, advice on getting grants, working in a group



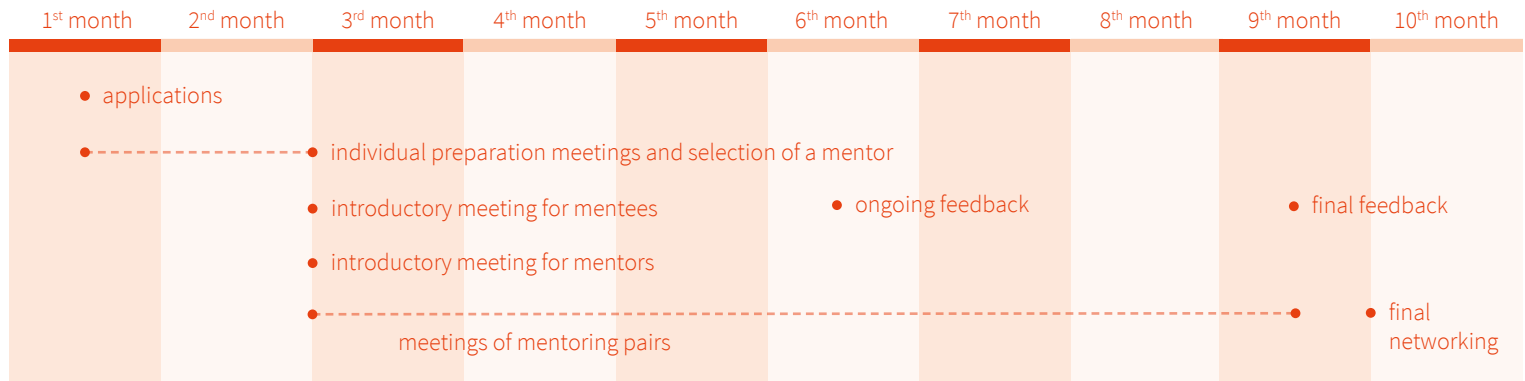
Final networking of mentoring pairs

The mentoring programme at UCT Prague

■ Undergraduate mentoring



▲ Postgraduate mentoring



Mentoring at UCT Prague is divided into undergraduate and postgraduate mentoring.

■ **Undergraduate mentoring** is intended for students from the 2nd year of the Bachelor's programme upwards. Students usually choose a mentor from a list of selected individuals, and the matching is done through a competition.

▲ **Postgraduate mentoring** is for PhD students, postdocs, graduate students, and staff members. Applicants can also choose a mentor from a list of selected professionals, but in most cases they search for a mentor themselves with the help of the programme coordinator so that the mentor matches their specific needs.

A mentoring cycle lasts 9 to 10 months. It usually starts in February and follows the calendar year, or in October and follows the academic year. The length or timing of a particular cycle may vary. It always depends on the agreement between the mentee and mentor, as the programme places great emphasis on individual needs.

■ **Applications**

To apply, it's necessary to fill in a short form, which is always published on the website of the Counselling and Career Centre. Students are informed by e-mail and other channels in advance of the date when the application process will be open and how to apply.

■ **Preparatory workshop for mentees**

It usually takes place in groups of about 10 students and is led by a career counselling professional.

Topics addressed:

- the principles and benefits of mentoring
- the mutual sharing of expectations among workshop participants
- selecting a mentor, how to approach them
- the preparation for and conduct of the first meeting
- practical tips for meetings with the mentor
- the organisation of the mentoring programme, deadlines

▲ **Introductory meeting for mentors**

In addition to addressing the mentoring methodology, the introductory meeting has an important networking overlap.

Mentors have the opportunity to clarify with the career counsellor any questions and uncertainties about their role.

Topics addressed:

- the effective transfer of experience and knowledge for true mentee development
- achieving mutual satisfaction
- the proven structure of the mentoring meeting and other practical tips

■ **Creating a video message and reaching out to mentors**

Pairing is done through a competition system – the mentee makes a short video message for the selected mentor, the mentors decide on the basis of the video with whom they will work.

For mentees who didn't succeed to form a pair with the selected mentor, a second round of matching is announced. In most cases, all mentees successfully find their mentors.

If a mentee has their own idea of who could be their mentor, they can approach them individually in cooperation with the programme coordinator.

▲ **Individual preparation meetings and mentor selection**

In several individual meetings with the programme coordinator and a career counselling professional, participants clarify their motivation to join the mentoring programme, who exactly they are looking for and what they want to focus on in the cooperation.

Participants are expected to take their own initiative in selecting a mentor who should reflect their individual and often more specific needs. The approach to the selected mentor is usually in the form of a motivation letter.

▲ **Introductory meeting for mentees**

It usually takes place when all participants have selected a mentor and are ready to approach them. In addition to sharing expectations and mentoring goals among participants, the meeting also has an important networking dimension.

■ **Meeting of mentoring pairs**

Each mentoring collaboration is individual and should reflect the needs of the mentees. We recommend at least 5 meetings within a mentoring period with the interval of approximately 3 to 4 weeks between them. In addition to interviews or visits to the workplace, the mentee can also observe their mentor at work, meeting with colleagues or clients, and can also take an active role if the situation allows. Contact can also take place in an online environment.

■ **Progress monitoring and feedback**

Ongoing monitoring of the meetings is carried out by the programme coordinator. Approximately halfway through the programme, the mentees fill in a feedback form, which gives space to evaluate and reflect on the cooperation so far. At the end of the meeting period, feedback from both parties is collected through a questionnaire.

■ **Final networking**

The programme ends with a networking meeting for participants of both mentoring programmes (under- and post-graduate). Usually, the event is also attended by university representatives.

Mentoring tips and tricks

What is the best way to reach a goal?

Preferably at your first meeting, create a plan to follow. Together as a pair, first discuss the goal(s) and topics you will work on. Be specific and, if possible, try to make the topics logically build on each other.

Are you heading towards a given goal?

As you plan each subsequent meeting and its content, reflect on whether you are still working towards the goal(s) you set at the beginning of the programme. The goal(s) you set can also be adjusted during the course of your work together according to your current needs. However, refer back to your original plans so that you do not forget something important.

Preparing for meetings

Mentoring works best when the mentee is truly proactive and comes to each meeting well-prepared – with questions written down, topics to discuss, etc.

Records of meetings

As a mentee, take notes of the meetings in consultation with your mentor so that you can later refer back to the topics discussed. At the end of each meeting, summarise what you found interesting and what new things you learned. As well as making the learning more memorable, this shows the mentor what type of information is most interesting to you.

When to make the next appointment?

At the end of each meeting, make your next appointment right away. Of course, it may happen that something changes in the meantime and the appointment needs to be rescheduled for either one of you. If such an unexpected change occurs, the mentee should initiate the rescheduling.

Tip for mentors: If possible, suggest going on a first-name basis. It will ease the communication between you and mentees.

Previous participant experience

Mentees

“The biggest benefit for me was the opportunity to get a glimpse into the professional world already at school and to hear from my mentor how he retrospectively approaches the information and skills he gained at school and what was relevant to him. And how to start preparing for a professional career during my studies.”

“Although I have a chemical engineering background, I know that in the future I want to work more with people than with machines. That’s why I chose a mentor who has a lot of experience in a management environment that I am just entering. He is a person who can see around the corner, so to speak, and the opportunities to be in regular contact with him and to apply the knowledge directly have really enriched me.”

“That trust is definitely binding. There is a certain amount of responsibility, but I think that’s right, I don’t see it as something negative or pressure. It’s more like a kind of engine that drives you to get the best results.”

“I had the exceptional opportunity to meet an inspiring person with whom I also had great rapport, and I often felt that I had the opportunity to talk to my ‘future self’. It was very beneficial to get feedback and opinion on my next steps and support in them. I hope we will meet in the future for a joint work project.”

Mentors

"It's a great opportunity to tap into the mindset of the mentees, the representatives of the generation that comes into our work environment every year and with whom we will collaborate and interact. Through this collaboration, we can develop as mentors and tune into the needs, thinking and attitude of recent graduates."

"It's a way for me to keep up with the field and the science that I've enjoyed all my life, and I welcomed the fact that I could work with a PhD student doing a PhD on a technology that we were running in a manufacturing practice."

"Most students will leave school one day and mentoring is one of the ways for them to get a glimpse of what it is like in science, industry and business outside the boundaries of their alma mater during their studies. For me personally, mentoring is a way to pass on my experience and stay in touch with young scientists. My goal is then to make it easier for students to navigate what awaits them after graduation."

"Mentoring is a great opportunity for me to be in contact with young students at UCT and to show them what can be achieved scientifically after graduation if one has the effort, will and, of course, a lot of luck. At the same time, I use my experience to make the students learn that not all that glitters is gold and that it is definitely not true that the grass is always greener on the other side (or across the pond)."

"I find mentoring to be a great and natural way of passing on work experience and effectively supporting the mentee. Both mentor and mentee are enriched with new perspectives, tips and contacts to help them move forward with their lives when set up correctly."

Rules of cooperation

Mentor

1. In my conduct, I observe the rules of equal treatment of all persons, regardless of gender, race, religion, and age. I observe the rules of fair and decent conduct. I undertake to comply with generally binding legal regulations, the principles of academic rights and freedoms and the rules set out in the internal documents of UCT Prague, in particular the *Code of Ethics of UCT Prague* and the *Directive on Prevention of Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment at UCT Prague*.
2. I participate in a mentoring role in a field in which I have expertise and life experience that matches the mentee's requirements and expectations. I will not create false expectations of mentoring beyond what I can realistically bring to the mentee.
3. I treat information, including personal information, obtained from the mentee as confidential during and after the mentoring program. The only exception is information that the mentee gives me explicit consent to disclose.
4. I will never pass off the opinions, results and achievements of my mentee's work as my own.
5. I will keep the agreed dates of mutual meetings, and in unavoidable cases, I will agree on a change of date well in advance. I will respond to telephone or e-mail calls and messages as soon as possible.

6. In situations of potential conflicts of interest that arise in the relationship with the mentee, I will conduct myself in such a way that no harm is done to the mentee, their supervisor or employer, or to my employer.
7. I will not take advantage or abuse the relationship with the mentee in any way (especially financially, professionally, sexually) in my actions as a mentor. I will not take advantage of the mentee's trust.
8. If the mentoring relationship is not satisfactory or beneficial to the mentee, I respect the mentee's right to terminate the relationship in accordance with the terms of the *Mentor/Mentee Agreement*.
9. I agree to abide by these rules of conduct and I understand that if I violate them, the situation will be addressed with the mentoring programme coordinator and may lead to early termination of the mentoring relationship.

Mentee

- 1.** In my conduct, I observe the rules of equal treatment of all persons, regardless of gender, race, religion, and age. I observe the rules of fair and decent conduct. I undertake to comply with generally binding legal regulations, the principles of academic rights and freedoms and the rules set out in the internal documents of UCT Prague, in particular the *Code of Ethics of UCT Prague* and the *Directive on Prevention of Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment at UCT Prague*.
- 2.** I am aware that I am co-responsible for the mentoring process. I am responsible for ensuring that the *Mentor/Mentee Agreement* is made realistically and in accordance with my needs and expectations. I will approach my commitments honestly and proactively with a commitment to achieve the goals set forth.
- 3.** I will treat information, including personal data, obtained from the mentor as confidential during and after the mentoring program. The only exception is information that the mentor gives me explicit consent to disclose.
- 4.** I will never pass off the opinions, results and achievements of my mentor's work as my own.
- 5.** I will keep the agreed dates of mutual meetings, and in unavoidable cases, I will agree on a change of date well in advance. I will respond to telephone or e-mail calls and messages as soon as possible.

6. In situations of potential conflict of interest that arise in the relationship with the mentor, I will conduct myself in such a way as to avoid harm to the mentor or their employer, or to my supervisor or my employer.
7. I will not take advantage or abuse the relationship with my mentor in any way (especially financially, professionally, sexually) in my mentoring activities. I will not take advantage of the mentor's trust.
8. If I find that the mentoring relationship is not beneficial to me, I will make this known in a timely and appropriate manner. In collaboration with the mentoring programme coordinator, I will propose further solutions in accordance with the terms of the *Mentor/Mentee Agreement*.
9. I agree to abide by these rules of conduct, and I understand that if I violate them, the situation will be addressed with the mentoring programme coordinator and may lead to early termination of the mentoring relationship.

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