

Good Practices in Mentoring at ISEA PAS

I. What is Mentoring?

In the academic environment (e.g., at a research institute or university), **mentoring**, according to the principles of HR Excellence in Research, **refers to the support provided by more experienced researchers (mentors) to less experienced researchers (mentees) in their professional (scientific) and personal development.**

Thus, mentoring is not limited to the relationship between a senior and a junior employee or a doctoral candidate, although such a relationship is the most likely. Rather, it refers to any form of support characterized by the following relationship:

Master (Mentor) – Apprentice (Mentee)

Mentoring can focus on the **transfer of competences**, as is the case in the relationship between a doctoral supervisor and a PhD candidate, or between a supervisor and an employee, where knowledge and specific skills play a key role. However, it can also have a **developmental dimension**. Developmental mentoring involves drawing on another person's knowledge and experience, as well as benefiting from their advice and guidance, not only in terms of work but also personal growth.

One definition of mentoring emphasizes that it is one person supporting another in making significant changes in knowledge, career, or mindset. Such mentors are sometimes referred to as “**momentary mentors**,” because a single insightful word or remark can be enough to broaden our perspective or completely change how we perceive reality.

Mentoring is also a voluntary relationship, independent of the formal institutional hierarchy, aimed at sharing knowledge and supporting professional development in the research environment. It is characterized by open communication, free from excessive judgment, supervision, or the sanctions typically associated with professional or academic relationships.

Mentoring may focus on the achievement of a specific scientific goal or broader development, often combining both aspects. Specific goals are jointly established by the mentor and the mentee, tailoring the process to their individual needs and expectations.

II. Scope of Mentoring

In the context of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, which form the foundation of the HR Excellence in Research initiative, mentoring encompasses several key aspects:

- **support for scientific development** – assistance in career planning, selection of research topics, and the development of research and publishing skills;

- **building research networks** – mentors should help mentees build professional networks by involving early-career researchers in national and international research collaborations;
- **fostering research independence** – while supporting the mentee's development, the mentor should not limit their autonomy;
- **development of soft skills** – mentors can support the development of skills such as project management, teamwork (including communication skills), and grant writing;
- **support in ethics and good research practices** – an essential component of mentoring is the promotion and transmission of scientific integrity, responsibility, and academic honesty;
- **Individual guidance and psychological support** – mentors should help mentees cope with academic pressure and the challenges of competitiveness in the scientific world.

III. Examples of Good Mentoring Practices at ISEA PAS

1. Direct supervisors (heads of departments, research project leaders) serve as mentors to their subordinates and collaborators. A similar role is also played by more experienced staff members at ISEA PAS.
2. The regulations for awarding the doctoral degree at ISEA PAS define the responsibilities of the doctoral supervisor (scientific advisor) toward the PhD candidate.
3. ISEA PAS regularly organizes institute-wide seminars as well as more informal meetings within individual departments. These events offer opportunities to establish valuable relationships with experienced researchers, both from ISEA PAS and other institutions, who share expert knowledge, often related to the seminar topics.
4. During informal meetings, such as departmental gatherings, participants engage in peer consultations on project proposals before submission to funding agencies or on manuscripts before journal submission.
5. Every employee or PhD candidate preparing a doctoral dissertation, planning to submit a habilitation or professorial application, has the opportunity to present their achievements at an institute seminar.

6. Field trips and training in new laboratory or bioinformatics techniques, led by more experienced staff members, also constitute a form of mentoring. Individuals who have participated in external courses on field, lab, or bioinformatics methods (funded by ISEA PAS) are encouraged to give short presentations to share the knowledge they have acquired.
7. Mentoring also includes any individual conversation initiated by an employee or doctoral student with someone acting as a mentor in a specific context. This may be someone with more experience in a given area, such as grant acquisition, international mobility, or academic advancement, regardless of their age or academic title.

IV. Summary

Institutions awarded the HR Excellence in Research logo are obliged to ensure high-quality mentor–mentee relationships, by the principles of openness, transparency, and equal treatment. Furthermore, they are expected to implement mentoring programs tailored to the specific needs of their institution.

The examples provided above do not represent an exhaustive list of good practices, they may be expanded with additional mentoring activities or adapted according to the evolving needs of current and future employees and doctoral candidates at the Institute. Moreover, these practices aim to raise awareness of the importance of cultivating a positive work culture at ISEA PAS, one grounded in mutual respect, a commitment to continuous development, and the enhancement of skills in sharing one's expertise.

V. References

In preparing the Good Practices in Mentoring at ISEA PAS, information from the following sources was used:

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