

Guide for Mentors and Mentees



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1. PALS – Pathways into Life Science Professions

1.1 Overview

Pathways into Life Science Professions is a mentoring and training program for International and German doctoral candidates of the GGL. Already during your doctoral studies, you should prepare for your entry into the life science job market. Especially when you have an international background, your chances will improve through early consultation, German language courses and job application training. In addition to general career orientation in the life science market, our training program will offer a specialization in pharmaceutical-biotechnological profiles.

Our mentors will be alumni of the GGL who work successfully in the life science industry. In a one-to-one mentoring relationship, mentors support you as pals in regular meetings. Ideally, a job shadowing with the mentor will also be part of the mentoring program.

1.2 Mentoring process

The program will be designed as follows:

The First meeting

The first meeting between mentor and mentee will take place on **February 21, 2019** on 10. GGL Career Day. If the mentee and / or the mentor are unable to attend this appointment, your first meeting can be planned individually. However, the meeting should be as close as possible to February 21, 2019.

At this meeting, you get to know your mentor or mentee and design your mentoring agreement together (<https://www.uni-giessen.de/pals-downloads>). Here you can define goals and frequencies of appointments together. You can use the questions at the end (page 12) to make the first conversation purposeful.

Individual meetings once a month from February to December

Depending on the agreement, you will meet with your mentor or mentee to achieve the defined goals and strengthen the mentoring relationship.

Interim meeting for mentees

In the group of the mentees an interim meeting (June/July) is planned, which provides opportunities for feedback, the presentation of the mentors' companies by the mentees and exchange of important topics.

Closing ceremony

On **December 04, 2019** the closing ceremony will take place. Here you will meet your mentor or mentee for the last time within the PALS program. This event is the festive completion of your mentoring, which also serves to summarize and evaluate the period to improve the program in the future. If you cannot attend this event, please arrange a personal meeting with your mentor or mentee. For this, you will receive further materials from the GGL team.

The mentoring program is complemented by **workshops** and **company visits** offered by the GGL for the mentee. Information about planned events can be found here:

<https://www.uni-giessen.de/ggl-workshops>

<https://www.uni-giessen.de/ggl-visits>

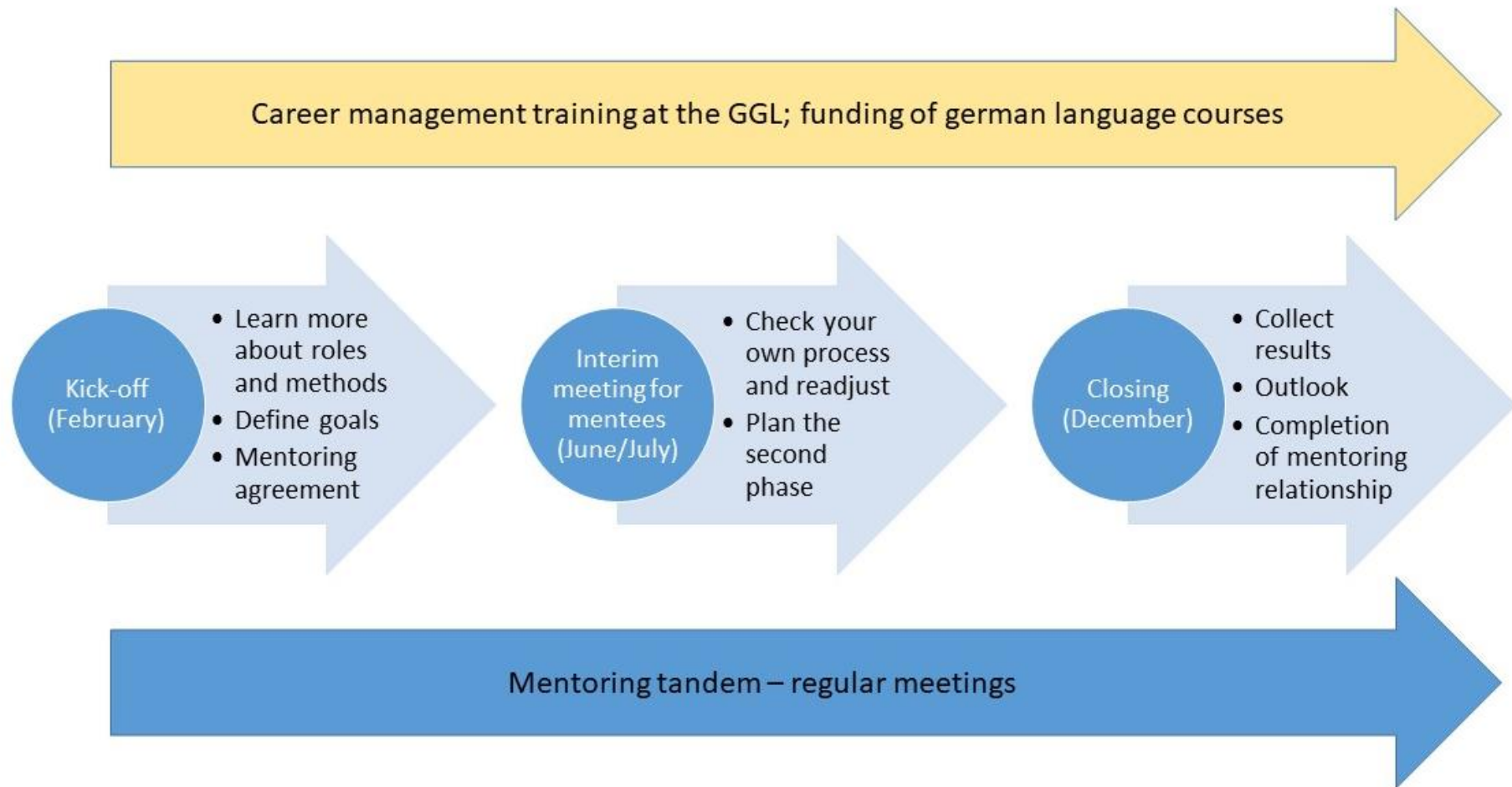


Fig. 1: PALS mentoring process

2. What is Mentoring?

2.1 Origin and meaning of the word mentor

The term mentoring goes back to Greek mythology: Odysseus asked his friend and confidant Mentos/Mentor to teach and advise his son Telemachos during his absence. During Odysseus' 12-year odyssey, the goddess Pallas Athene temporarily performed these tasks in the shape of Mentor. Today, mentoring is a proven and effective instrument for the targeted support of young talents and often used for management development. It is used successfully at more than 100 universities in Germany. Mentoring is based on the informal transfer of experience and knowledge and the individual support of a junior staff (mentee) by an experienced specialist or manager (mentor).

Both mentors and mentees should voluntarily and gladly enter into the relationship, treating the content of the conversation confidentially and benefiting equally. The support can consist of the following elements:

- Regular talks
- Concrete instructions
- Imparting knowledge and contacts

2.2 Features and content of the mentoring

- Mentoring is a reciprocal process of giving and taking. The mentor can also benefit for his / her personal and professional development.
- Mentoring is practiced in the "public space": the program structure and the existence of funding relationships are visible and transparent.
- Mentoring requires volunteering, mutual benevolence, respect and trust. Mentoring is not a professional advice and cannot replace it.
- Mentoring takes place outside dependent relationships and has no authority to issue instructions.
- The duration of a mentoring relationship is limited in time. Within this period, there is regular contact and exchange.
- Mentoring is age independent, even though the mentors are generally older than the mentees or more experienced in the relevant field.

2.3 Roles and benefits of mentors

2.3.1 Roles and responsibilities of mentors

To become a mentor is a good idea if...

- you are interested in strengthening the professional and interpersonal competences of your mentee
- you are prepared to share your experience and provide your mentee with insights into your experience and everyday work
- you are open to also learn from your mentee and to recognize this as an enriching aspect of the mentoring partnership
- you are ready to invest time in the mentoring partnership and meet regularly for personal exchange with your mentee

The role of a mentor is broad, including tasks as knowledge facilitator, advisor, supporter and frequently as role model. A mentor for us is not a substitute for a professional coach, supervisor, professor or tutor in the classical sense.

Supporting the mentee

You encourage your mentee in his/her personal and career development. You make the mentee aware of their technical and interdisciplinary strengths and empower the mentee in the pursuit of their goals. You encourage doctoral candidates to learn new skills. You point out perspectives, give tips and suggest possible solutions to problems. You share your own experiences and your competences with your mentee.

Defining the mentoring relationship

For this purpose, you will receive specific support during the introductory workshop and through the exchange with the other mentors. At the beginning of the mentoring partnership, you will communicate with the mentee and agree in writing on the specific nature of the support, scope, content and location of the meetings.

Facilitating knowledge and advice

The mentee comes to you with wishes and expectations. As a mentor, you can offer support and help. You advise your mentee on specific issues and assist them in making important decisions.

Reflecting your own role

By the contact to the mentee, you will be able to reflect your own role repeatedly. However, you are not responsible for the mentee's problems. If the mentee brings topics where you cannot help with your experience and knowledge, then you should make it clear. Some topics may be better discussed with a professional coach or psychologist and you should not feel obliged to take on these roles.

2.3.2 The benefits for mentors

Passing on own experience

You have an interested and grateful listener in the mentee when sharing knowledge, support and advice. Through the questions and views of the mentee you are stimulated to rethink your own knowledge.

New suggestions and ideas

By supporting the mentee, you will be confronted with new ideas, views, behaviors, and possibly new topics that broaden your horizons.

Strengthening your own competencies

By practicing active listening, professional communication and empathetic counseling, you can develop your own consulting competence further. You could also acquire new advisory and leadership skills through this role.

Networking

You could build interesting, new contacts or renew existing contacts with other GGL alumni. You might even get to know potential new junior staff for your company.

2.4 Roles and benefits of mentees

2.4.1 Roles and responsibilities of mentees

To become a mentee is a good idea if...

- you are interested in building relationships with other people
- you speak openly about your ideas, support wishes, fears and difficulties
- you are ready to accept support from a mentor and implement it if necessary
- you are responsible for yourself and express gratitude and appreciation
- you are able and willing to take responsibility and initiative

As a mentee you take an active role in the mentoring relationship. At the center of the mentoring is the learning process of mentees. For instance, you define in which areas you wish to develop yourself with the help of your mentor. That means your openness to new ideas, strategies and constructive criticism is the key to the success of your relationship.

Responsibilities of mentees

Set goals

You formulate clear objectives for the cooperation in tandem. It is your job to develop your own mentoring plans and goals. You will receive concrete support during the introductory workshop and through the exchange with the other mentees. At the beginning of the mentoring partnership, you will communicate with the mentor and agree in writing on the specific nature of the support, scope, content and location of the meetings.

Keep in touch

It is also your job to keep in contact and to inform the mentor of your current situation and progress. Write emails, make phone calls and / or skype between the arranged meetings.

Be open

Mentoring is more beneficial, the more open you are and the more you let your mentor participate in your ideas, plans and difficulties. You will have the opportunity to receive personalized feedback and advice. This requires a trusting cooperation by sharing your views and aspirations openly. As a mentee you also give your mentor constructive feedback and recognition for the support offered.

2.4.2 The benefits for mentees

Insight into specific job profiles and companies

You will get first-hand information not only about the specific job profile of your mentor, but also about other opportunities in industry. Therefore, you will get support from your mentor in important decision-making processes for your career.

New suggestions and ideas

You can benefit from the knowledge and experience of your mentor. Through honest feedback, your mentor might help you to analyze your potential and to define your next career goals more precisely.

Change of perspective

By sharing knowledge and experience, your mentor will give you new insights into certain professions but also norms and values in industry.

Networking

By sharing his or her professional network your mentor might open many doors for you. Additionally, you could also extend your network through other mentees and mentors in your group.

3. The mentoring process

3.1 Tandem topics

There are varieties of topics that can be worked on within the framework of a tandem partnership. Which content plays a special role depends on the people involved. The following list gives an overview of selected topics:

- Assistance in career planning
- Requirements for management and leadership tasks
- Structures, processes and rules in the industry
- Support in time management
- Tools to increase visibility in the scientific community
- Strategic networking
- Feedback on strengths and weaknesses
- Requirements for communication with employees, colleagues and supervisors
- Work-Life-Balance

3.2 Frequency of contacts

The frequency of the sessions depends on the needs of the participants and the opportunities of the mentor and the mentee. Basically:

- If possible, meet once a month
- Initially, sessions should be more frequent and regular
- Mentoring lives from personal learning processes. There should be enough time between two meetings to allow new experiences
- It should be possible to insert short interim meetings for important current events

3.3 The first meeting

At the first meeting, important framework conditions will be agreed on and documented in a **mentoring agreement** (<https://www.uni-giessen.de/pals-downloads>). The following questions should be clarified:

- Exchange contact information
- What should be achieved together?
- What can be done in case of discrepancies?

General conditions: how do we want to work together?

- How often and how long?
- Where?
- Are calls / contacts between the appointments possible?
- When is the best contact time?
- Where does confidentiality apply?

Expectations: What do we wish for the cooperation?

- What do I want from the mentor?
- What should the mentor not do?
- What do I want from the mentee?
- What should the mentee not do?
- What is the best way to work together?
- What is the exact job for mentoring?

Definition of success

- How do we determine the success of our cooperation in tandem?
- Where does the mentee wish to stand at the end of the passage?

3.4 Preparation and follow-up of sessions

At the first meeting, important framework conditions will be agreed on and documented in the mentoring agreement. In further meetings, the following questions may be helpful for the evaluation of the discussions:

- What did I offer the mentee of knowledge, information and tips in the last interview?
- What will I offer the mentee next time?
- Did I give or receive feedback?
- What needs has the mentee expressed during the last interview?
- What are the objectives for the next time?

3.5 Tips for a successful mentoring relationship

Dealing with unrealistic aims

- Give additional information that will allow the mentee to better assess the situation
- Overambitious goals of your mentees could be broken down into smaller steps. Take time to discuss these steps in detail. Your mentee should describe and define the planned steps exactly.

Emphasizing personal responsibility

- Tell the mentee what you cannot afford as a mentor.
- Make clear at the beginning, how much time you can invest as a mentor and what lays in the responsibility of your mentee.

Managing Time

- Try to hold undisturbed meetings so that the time spent together is used effectively and intensively.
- Tell each other, when you are reachable and which communication ways and means are suitable for you.

3.6 Stumbling blocks in a tandem

Disturbances can become visible through:

- A tandem partner forgets appointments.
- A tandem partner no longer finds time for appointments.
- A tandem partner comes more often unprepared to the joint meetings.
- A tandem partner no longer shows initiative.
- Your tandem partner shows growing reservations about everything that comes from you, gladly initiated with "yes, but ...".

- Your tandem partner reacts emotionally inappropriate to you.
- Your tandem partner brings small gifts more often, makes you compliments.
- The atmosphere between you has changed.

How to deal with disturbances:

It is helpful if you remember the previous course of the joint work. In a follow-up meeting, you can formulate the desire for an interim review. The aim is to find out how your mentee experiences the conversations with you, how well she / he feels about it. Encourage him / her to also include critical statement. Listen carefully and do not immediately justify or explain yourself. Listen to the wishes that the mentee/mentor has for you and check for yourself if you can and want to fulfill these wishes. Maybe you can work together to make changes in the way you collaborate.

It's possible that the dwindling motivation has nothing to do with you as a mentor, but is due to external causes. Check if you can do anything for the mentee. If you cannot solve the points by yourself, get support from the coordination team.

3.7 Mentoring conversation

For the structuring of the discussions, the following framework might be helpful.

3.7.1 Before the conversation

Before the conversation, the mentor sets the starting point of the conversation based on the aims of the mentee and sets a time period.

3.7.2 The beginning

At the beginning, both clarify the aim(s) again. If a meeting already took place, both look back on the last mentoring discussion:

- How were the results of this interview implemented and what was achieved?

3.7.3 Work on the topic

The mentor encourages the mentee to describe a situation for which his / her advice is needed. The mentee explains how he / she tried to handle the situation and where the problem occurred.

Analysis

The tandem analyzes the steps together:

- What worked, what did not work?
- Which alternatives have been identified?
- What else could have happened?

Together, you try to address as many aspects as possible to explore the room for maneuver.

Solving strategies

The mentor asks open questions, gives the mentee the opportunity to reflect on his / her behavior and to recognize alternatives. The tandem develops solution strategies together, discusses alternatives and examines their feasibility. If no solution is found, the topic can be picked up again next time.

Decision

The mentee decides if a discussed strategy suits him / her and if he / she wants to try something new. The mentor teaches how he / she sees the matter, gives practical advice and listens carefully to the feedback from the mentee.

At the end

At the end of the conversation, the mentor summarizes the results of the conversation. The mentor can thus give the mentee valuable information on those aspects that are essential in his / her view. The results of the conversation should be recorded briefly.

3.7.4 In conclusion

At the conclusion of the meeting, both sides will evaluate the meeting and agree on the next appointment. The extend of this internal evaluation should depend on the length of the call.

Possible questions:

- What options have we found today?
- What is the feeling with which you arrived?
- How do we feel at the end of today's mentoring conversation? etc.

3.8 The termination of the tandem relationship

How should the farewell look like?

You could end your tandem with a reflection conversation or at a farewell dinner, a walk, ...

Reflection and Feedback:

When the tandem relationship ends, you should reflect on your cooperation in a joint final discussion. Contents could be:

- What aims have you set? Were they reached? Which aims are still unfulfilled? What else is possible?
- What were essential and valuable experiences or learning steps in the mentoring for you both?
- What did you appreciate in each other?
- In hindsight, what would you have done differently?
- What will you miss when the mentoring is over?

How do you want to meet in the future?

You may also have developed future perspectives and you want to continue to meet outside the mentoring program in a different context.

4. Additional information

Useful questions for different stations in the mentoring process:

Kick-off meeting

- What are your goals?
- What do you want to achieve in the mentoring program?
- What needs to happen for you to be content at the end of the mentoring program?
- Which topic is your first priority?
- How can I support you?
- What do you expect from me?

Interim reflections

- With which experiences within the mentoring program are you satisfied / dissatisfied so far?
- Which of your goals have you achieved already?
- What else needs to happen for you to achieve your goal?
- Who / What could help you to achieve that goal?
- Have your goals changed?
- Is there something that should be increased or decreased in our mentoring relationship?

Conclusion

- To what extent has our mentoring relationship fulfilled your expectations (on a scale of 1 - 10)?
- What was the most important experience / highlight for you?
- What are the key insights and experiences you receive from the mentoring program?
- What would you do differently today?
- How are you going to continue in the months ahead?

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