

Guide

Leibniz Mentoring

Programme



1.

What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a personnel and organisational development tool in which a more experienced leader (mentor) works together with a younger, less experienced person (mentee) in a so-called “tandem”. A mentor passes on formal and informal knowledge to support a mentee in the targeted planning and advancement of her academic career, and potentially also her personal growth. Mentoring is characterised by a benevolently biased attitude towards the person being advised.



2.

Objectives and substance of the Leibniz Mentoring Programme

Leibniz Mentoring accompanies highly qualified female scientists/researchers on their path to obtaining leadership positions. For a period of about 16 months, participants are supported by various workshops and measures that aim to strengthen their competencies and career opportunities. These enable the Leibniz mentees to chart their careers in a goal-driven way, to expand their subject-specific networks and to take on tasks of increasing responsibility with confidence.

- **Support in the process: a structured, professionally-supported mentoring partnership**

Both mentees and mentors receive professional assistance over the course of the programme. This structured framework combines all elements of Leibniz Mentoring and encourages continuous reflection on the progress achieved.

In-depth work on each element guarantees that acquired knowledge and skills are not only present in the tandem work, but are also incorporated into daily life.

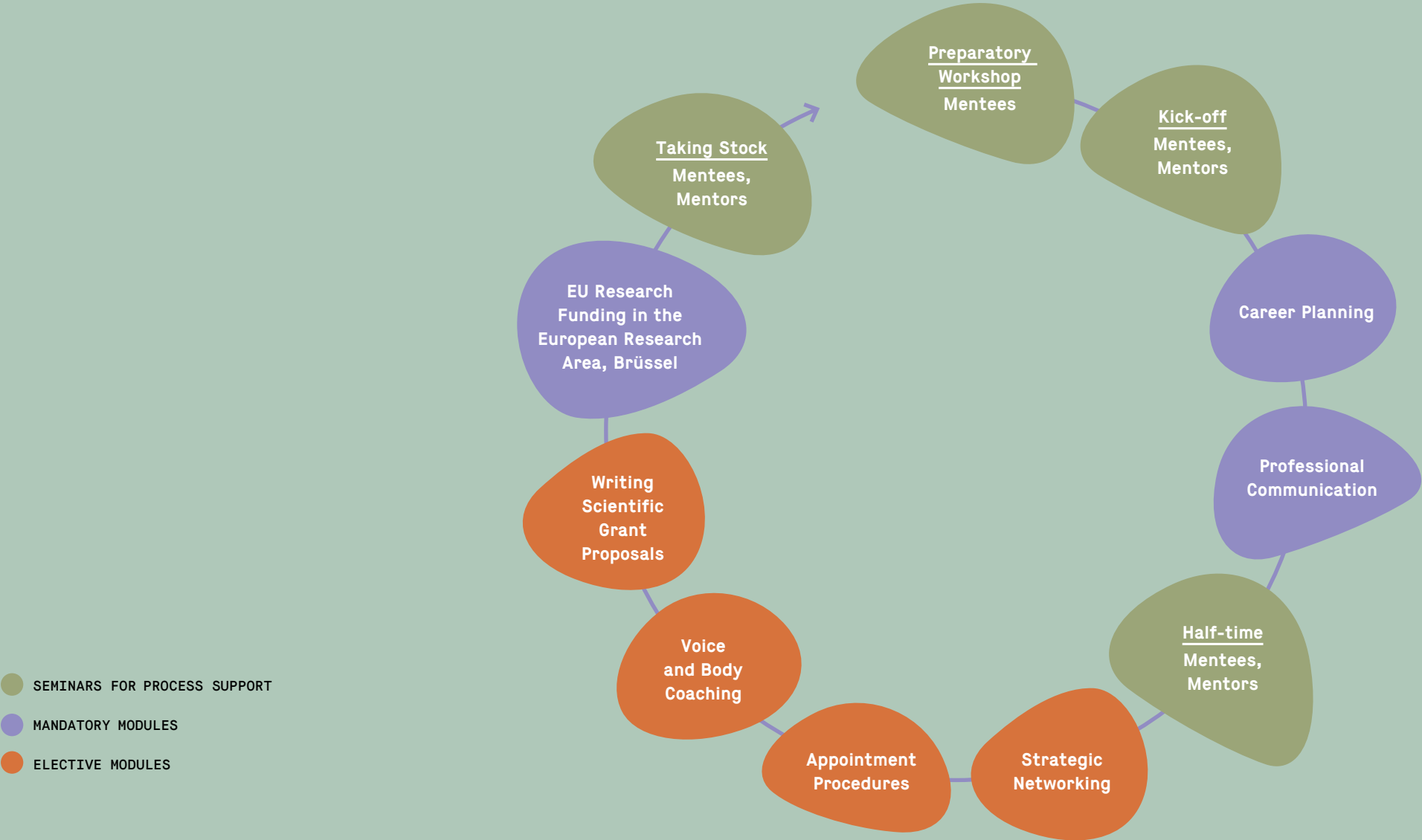
Two aims of this “process support” are to assess the status and goal achievement of mentoring, as well as to clarify roles in the mentoring relationship.

- **Key qualifications for future leaders, in particular in academia**

- **Essential fields of training: career strategies, leadership skills and research financing**
- **Strategic Networking**
Leibniz Mentoring encourages participants to reflect on their own networking and to strategically expand it. Work within mentoring tandems, with the mentee cohort as a whole, and alumnae events assure that mentees are introduced to and enter into new networks.

A preparatory workshop offers mentees significant support for finding a mentor. Within the workshop, mentees assess and sharpen their professional goals, which they can then use to develop an “ideal mentor” profile. Using this profile and supplementary criteria that is jointly developed by the group, each mentee selects her mentor. This workshop takes place before the first joint seminar of mentees and mentors, the Leibniz Mentoring “Kick-Off” event. In addition, the programme coordinator establishes contact with Leibniz Mentoring alumnae and thus facilitates peer-to-peer counselling on finding mentors, if necessary.

Programme content and schedule



3.

The Mentoring Tandem

At the heart of the Leibniz Mentoring Programme lies the personal contact between mentee and mentor. In order to avoid dependencies, a mentee and her mentor must be members of different institutes (cross-mentoring). A good tandem relationship is based on mutual trust, respect, appreciation and transparency. It is also characterised by clear communication of common goals, of expectations and of wishes. Frequency of meetings, modes of communication, topics and goals should therefore be set out in an agreement at the beginning of the cooperation. All conversations that take place in the context of the mentoring partnership are confidential.

Experience has shown that face-to-face meetings are particularly valuable. If possible, mentors should attend process support seminars that are held in Berlin, that is the "Kick-off", "Half-time" and "Taking stock" modules.



4.

The Mentor's Role

Mentors provide mentees with support in their career planning, therefore the tasks and roles of individual mentors may be multi-faceted and vary from tandem to tandem. Mentors can act as role models, advisors, "sparring partners" or spin doctors; they can support, encourage or critically accompany their mentee in finding her own individual solutions, appropriate to her own situation. Giving constructive feedback, communicating opinions and ideas, discussing what leadership requires, sharing knowledge about processes and structures, pointing out informal rules of the game or opening doors to networks - these are just some of the ways in which mentors can fulfil their role in the tandem.



5.

The Mentee's Role

The mentee shapes the tandem relationship. In consultation with her chosen mentor, she formulates and decides which topics are important for her and her career and how she wants to address these in the mentoring partnership. The mentee initiates exchange, prepares meetings and periodically reports to her mentor on the status of her development.

Mentoring programmes, and thus also mentoring relationships, are usually set up for a specific time frame. This limited period encourages the tandem to work together in a goal-oriented manner. Leibniz Mentoring tandems should use the official end of the programme to take stock of goals reached, of mutual satisfaction with what has been achieved, points that still may need work, etc. The trusting relationship that emerges from mentoring often lasts beyond the programme period and enriches the professional lives of both tandem partners.



6.

Looking for the best mentor

Within the Leibniz Mentoring Programme, the mentee chooses her own mentor, as she herself is best able to assess who is suitable for a constructive and fruitful mentoring relationship. Either professional considerations or focus on role model aspects – or both – may guide her in making this choice.

The ideal mentor

- may be chosen from the entire academic world – in Germany or abroad,
- should have leadership experience, access to professionally relevant networks and be familiar with “informal knowledge” within the mentor’s discipline,
- should be willing to give open feedback as well as to learn and to be prepared to engage in self-reflection,
- should be prepared to commit time and energy to the partnership.

7.

“Value added” for mentors

By reflecting on the development of their own professional identity, personal working style and professional experiences, mentors are given the opportunity to further develop their strengths.

Exchange with mentees provides feedback on mentors’ own conversation behaviour and on the way in which they act within their leadership role. Mentors gain insights into current developments in the research of more junior scientists and expand their own interdisciplinary network by connecting with mentees and other mentors taking part in the Leibniz Mentoring Programme.

In addition, the Leibniz Association also invites mentors to further qualification workshops that offer in-depth impulses and methods on communication and leadership both in the mentoring tandem and in institutional leadership, providing continuous professional support for mentors’ tandem work.



**Please contact the Leibniz Association's Main Office
for questions about Leibniz Mentoring.**



CONTACT

mentoring@leibniz-gemeinschaft.de

www.leibniz-gemeinschaft.de/mentoring



Photos:

Fabian Zapatka (p. 1, 2, 6),

Christoph Herbolt-von Loeper (p. 7, 10),

David Ausserhofer (p. 11)

Last update: May 2024