



**PLANT  
2030** ACADEMY



The **PLANT 2030**  
Competence Network  
of Applied Plant Science  
in Germany

# **Mentoring Guide**

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# Welcome to the PLANT 2030 ACADEMY

## **Dear Mentees and Mentors,**

we are pleased to welcome you to the mentoring program of the PLANT 2030 ACADEMY.

The PLANT 2030 ACADEMY fosters the professional and personal development of doctoral students and early stage postdocs involved in plant science initiatives, funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). A key element of the PLANT 2030 ACADEMY is mentoring as an effective instrument for individual support and the exchange of experiences.

This guide introduces the activities of the PLANT 2030 ACADEMY and focuses on the development of a successful mentoring cooperation. Accompanying this guide, the mentees receive worksheets that help setting their individual goals, finding a matching mentor and implementing the mentoring relationship.

We look forward to fruitful cooperations and wish you an inspiring time in the PLANT 2030 ACADEMY.

## **Your organizing team of the PLANT 2030 managing office**

Dr. Matthias Arlt, Dr. Hanna Berger and Dr. Alexander Graf

AN INITIATIVE OF THE



Federal Ministry  
of Education  
and Research

**Sustainable plant production and promotion of young scientists – these are two keystones within the plant science funding initiatives of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).**

The **PLANT 2030 ACADEMY** fosters the professional and personal development of doctoral students and early stage postdocs involved in the funding initiatives. The aim is to facilitate their qualification phase and establishment as outstanding researchers within the applied plant science community.

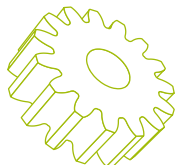
The activities within the **PLANT 2030 ACADEMY** are adapted specifically to the needs of plant scientists and complement existing offers at universities and research institutions. Promoting young academics contributes to the overall success of the research initiatives and strengthens the applied plant science network.



»Tell me and I forget,  
teach me and I may remember,  
involve me and I learn.«

Benjamin Franklin

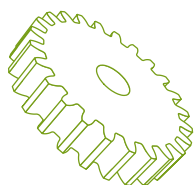
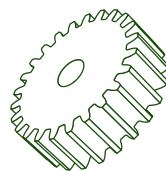
**The PLANT 2030 ACADEMY offers activities focusing on plant science related knowledge and skills, as well as network and career development.**



In **summer schools**, knowledge is provided in a condensed way and practiced in a hands-on manner.

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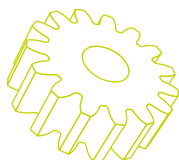
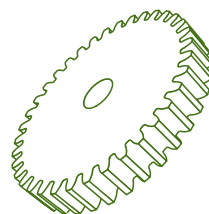
During **workshops**, early career scientists come together for specialized trainings as well as excursions to relevant companies and institutes.



**Online courses** give the opportunity for self-paced learning.

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Through **mentoring**, early career scientists receive stimuli for their personal and professional development in exchange with the more experienced and independent mentor.



**Peer-coaching** offers a forum where the doctoral students and early stage postdocs get to know each other and exchange their ideas confidentially on self-chosen topics.

## Introduction to mentoring

»Mentors have a way of seeing more of our faults that we would like. It's the only way we grow.« George Lucas



## What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a proven and effective instrument for the targeted promotion of high potentials to support both their professional and personal development. It comprises the informal transfer of experience and knowledge and the individual support of an early career scientist (mentee) by a more experienced person (mentor).

Mentoring is a process that focuses on the protected relationship between mentor and mentee - a process in which exchange, learning and experimentation take place. Potential skills and new competences can be developed.

Mentoring is based on the autonomy and responsibility of the mentee. The mentee shapes the individual learning and development process which is accompanied by the mentor for a certain time.

# Mentoring features are:

- 🍃 Mentoring takes place outside of dependent relationships and does not entail any authority to give instructions.
- 🍃 The duration of the mentoring cooperation is limited in time. Within this period a regular contact takes place.
- 🍃 Mentoring is independent of age, although the mentors are usually older than their mentees.
- 🍃 Mentoring is a reciprocal process of giving and taking. The mentor can also benefit regarding his or her personal and professional development.
- 🍃 Mentoring is transparent. The program structure and the existence of support relationships are visible.
- 🍃 Prerequisites for mentoring are voluntariness, mutual goodwill, respect and trust.
- 🍃 Mentoring is not professional advice and cannot replace it.

# Mentoring includes:

**Coaching** The mentor actively supports the mentee in developing important skills and attitudes for the future. The mentor helps the mentee to recognize his or her own competences and abilities and to use strengths in a goal-oriented way.

**Participation** The mentor shares own experiences with the mentee and might take him or her, for example, to conferences or meetings.

**Encouragement** The mentor encourages the mentee to make own experiences. The mentor can serve as an exercise partner, discuss possible consequences and the experience gained.

**Advice** The mentor advises the mentee on precise questions and helps the mentee solving problems and making difficult decisions.

**Knowledge Transfer** The mentor provides knowledge about formal or informal structures and rules within the field of science.

**Feedback** Mentor and mentee give each other beneficial feedback. Both partners learn during the mentoring relationship.

**Network** The mentor gives the mentee tips on how to use and maintain contacts, introduces the mentee into networks and provides relevant contacts.

# A mentor's key characteristics

The mentor's task is to share experience, insights and feedback that will guide the mentee in the achievement of his or her learning objectives. A mentor can take on different roles. The mentor is however not a supervisor and the mentoring relationship is free of dependencies.

## Roles and tasks of the mentor:

**Advisor** The mentee will bring up questions and topics regarding his or her current professional situation. You can make your assessment, give advises, and contribute your own experiences and your knowledge about informal structures and rules of play.

**Door opener** You may introduce the mentee to contacts that you consider helpful and exchange ideas about how the mentee can make and maintain a valuable network.

**Reflect your own role** Point out, which subjects you can and cannot help the mentee with. Some topics should be better discussed with a professional coach.

**Supporter** You may recognize the competences of the mentee after a while. Think about situations in which they can be valuable and refined. Encourage the mentee to take new behaviors and discuss the experiences made.

**Career consultant** Talk about the goals of the mentee and possible steps to achieve them. You can discuss which difficulties may arise and how they can be overcome.



# Chances for the mentor:

**Suggestions** By working with the mentee, you will be confronted with new ideas, views and behaviors that broaden your horizons. Open discussions can lead to new insights.

**Feedback** During conversations you will review your own career, actions you have taken and the rationale of decisions. The openness and confidentiality of the mentoring partnership will allow you to receive a frank feedback on your outreach and your work.

**Competences strengthening** By actively listening and counseling, you can further develop your personal leadership and social competences. You build trust by keeping the conversations with your mentee confidential, showing interest and support, and by being honest with your mentee.

**Enhanced reputation** You strengthen your reputation as a reliable leadership personality and as a supporter of young academics.

**Contact** Through the mentee you get in contact with high potentials and insights into their world of thought and experience. Through networking with other mentors, you can get in contact with other experts and obtain impulses for your own professional development.

## Key mentor skills

Listening actively

Building trust

Developing opportunities

Inspiring

Encouraging

# A mentee's key characteristics

The developmental process of the mentee is the core of a mentoring relationship. The mentee is responsible for the content and learning progress. It is essential that mentees devote time to clarifying personal and professional goals and actively communicate needs and obstacles.

## Tasks of the mentee:

**Set goals** It is your task to be aware of your goals and wishes. At the beginning of the mentoring partnership, you agree with the mentor on specific topics and measures that will help you achieving the goals.

**Keep in touch** It is your job to keep the contact and to inform the mentor about your development.

**Be open** Mentoring is more efficient the more open you are, including your difficulties. This gives you the chance to learn from mistakes or challenging situations.

**Be active** Prepare the mentoring meetings, define clearly which aspect you are interested in, and what contribution you expect from your mentor. After the meeting, review the discussion. Make notes on the information gained and tasks to do.

**Put thoughts into practice** Beyond planning, asking questions and discussing, translate the ideas into action. Do not expect ready-made solutions, but instead develop ideas and skills with your mentor's help.

**Reflect the process and your role** The workshops during the PLANT 2030 ACADEMY will give you the opportunity to exchange with other mentees.

# Chances for the mentee:

**Professional development** In the mentoring process, various competences such as the ability of teamwork, to take criticism and solve conflicts are trained. You gain insight into the mentor's everyday practice such as leadership techniques and project management.

**Personal development** Mentoring brings forth your competences and gives you the opportunity to expand them. Through conversations with the mentor, you can improve your self-assessment and gain the ability to analyse and solve problems. This can strengthen your self-confidence.

**Orientation** In the mentoring process, development possibilities are clarified. You learn to estimate chances, perspectives and the necessary energy expenditure realistically. Through the mentor you will get to know other perspectives and experiences.

**Career planning** In the mentoring process, you gain greater clarity about your professional and personal goals and have the opportunity to develop individual strategies for career advancement and career planning.

**New contacts** Your mentor can provide relevant professional contacts and access to networks that can help you in your professional development.

## Key mentee skills

Listening actively

Building trust

Learning quickly

Determining goals

Managing the cooperation



## Creating a successful mentoring relationship

»You can't push anyone up the ladder unless he is willing to climb himself.«

Andrew Carnegie

**A great mentoring experience does not just happen – mentee and mentor need to make it happen.**

A mentoring cooperation progresses through different stages. Although every relationship is unique, **five developmental stages** can be identified with each stage forming an inherent part of the next.

The mentees of the PLANT 2030 ACADEMY receive worksheets that help setting goals, finding a matching mentor and preparing the mentoring relationship.

# 1 Analysis

of the mentee's individual situation and goals

- 1.1 Personal situation analysis **Month 1**
- 1.2 General goal setting
- 1.3 Mentoring goal setting
- 1.4 Checklist: Are your goals SMART?

**The analysis** of the individual situation and goals establishes a solid foundation for a fruitful mentoring cooperation. The more specific the mentee defines what he or she wants to accomplish via mentoring, the more effectively the mentor will be able to support.

# 2 Match

Criteria and search strategies

- 2.1 Criteria to find a matching mentor **Month 2**
- 2.2 Mentor search strategies
- 2.3 The matching process

During the **matching phase**, the mentee clarifies the individual criteria and suggests a potential mentor. The mentor receives an official request by the PLANT 2030 managing office including the mentee's motivation and decides whether he or she would like to meet for a first noncommittal get-together.

# 3 Preparation

of general topics, the initial session and a mentoring agreement

- 3.1 Topic suggestions for your mentoring relationship **Month 3**
- 3.2 The initial mentoring session
- 3.3 Checklist – The initial session
- 3.4 Mentoring agreement

**In preparation** of the mentoring relationship, mentee and mentor meet for a first time. They get to know each other and their ideas and decide whether to start a mentoring cooperation. It is good practice to sign a mentoring agreement that defines the general course of the mentoring cooperation such as frequency and location as well as goals and content.

## 4 Cooperation

Planning and reviewing of mentoring sessions, goal-oriented collaboration

- 4.1 Preparation of the mentoring meeting
- 4.2 Review of mentoring meeting
- 4.3 Reviewing your development and adjusting your goals
- 4.4 Continuing the progress

**Month  
4-16**

During the **mentoring cooperation** mentee and mentor meet to work towards achieving the mentee's goals. The mentee prepares the sessions, defines the objectives and gives feedback on the development. The mentor shares experiences and insights to support the mentee.

## 5 Formal end

Feedback, completion and outlook

- 5.1 Why and how to give thoughtful feedback
- 5.2 Completion of the mentoring cooperation and outlook

**Month  
17**

At the **formal end** of the mentoring cooperation, mentee and mentor exchange feedback on the relationship and discuss whether and how to keep in touch.





»I can only show you  
the door. You're the one  
that has to walk through it.«

Morpheus



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