

## IEL Collective Mentoring and Professional Development Scheme

### Mentoring Strategies, Aims and Topics

While there is no single best way to organise a mentoring relationship, below are some areas that your mentoring relationship *might* cover. Some or all of these points may be helpful to you as you consider how to structure your relationship and decide which areas will be your priority over the course of the year.

This document should be read in conjunction with the **Guidance for Mentees and Mentors** and **Mentoring Agreement Conversation Checklist**.

#### Before the First Meeting: Mentee

- In order to get the most out of the programme, before meeting, we suggest the mentee should reflect on their short- and long-term career goals and what they are looking to get out of the mentoring relationship. As part of this we suggest identifying at least one tangible aspect of their academic practice that they would like advice on.
- Tangible aspects of academic practice may include, but are not limited to, teaching practice; developing a research agenda; exploring new research methods; organising academic events and conferences; applying for research grants; supervising their own research students' dissertations; or growing an academic network.
- Mentees may also feel they need support in identifying appropriate short-term goals to support longer-term goals.
- Other aspects that may be helpful include:
  - identifying existing strengths;
  - identifying skills for further development;
  - identifying particular challenges they face and possible strategies for dealing with them on which they would like advice;
  - or identifying particular areas of interest.

#### Before the First Meeting: Mentor

- In advance of the mentoring relationship, mentors may wish to reflect on some or all of the following:
  - What they feel their particular strengths are and what they can offer as a mentor;
  - Their past experiences of being mentored and what has been useful to them;
  - Aspects of their professional background that have been formative or significant, or aspects of their career that have been especially challenging, and how they dealt with those challenges.

#### Throughout the Year

- One useful strategy for mentors and mentees may be to end the meeting with some tangible aims that the mentee will focus on, or questions that the mentee will reflect on, before the next meeting.
- In that case, it may be useful to begin subsequent meetings with a follow-up: how did those aims or reflections work out? Have they caused the mentee to reevaluate any of the goals or priorities that the mentor and mentee have previously discussed?
- It may also be useful at a mid-point during the year for the mentor and mentee to discuss, or reflect on, the progress of the mentoring relationship up to that point.

### **Defining Long-Term Career Goals**

- Where does the mentee see themselves long-term? What do they hope to get out of an academic career? Which aspects of that career are especially appealing to them and how is that reflected in their long-term goals?
- The mentor and mentee may also wish to discuss the relationship of their career goals to political or social commitments or values or community connections.
- While conversations about long-term goals are important, they may also be difficult, especially for early career academics in situations of precarity, for those who have caring responsibilities, for academics from marginalised backgrounds, or for those in situations where their workload is difficult to reconcile with living a balanced life. We encourage mentors and mentees to bring these aspects of academia into their conversations should they wish to.

### **Identifying Short-Term Career Goals**

- How will the mentee progress from where they are now to where they want to be? What short-term and achievable aims should they have in mind to help them get there?
- This is an area where the mentor and knowledge of their academic trajectory can be especially useful, especially for mentees whose research networks are limited or who have limited experience applying for jobs or promotions or building their CVs.
- Examples of short-term goals might include: publishing in X venue, developing X research skills or collaborations, developing a support network, applying for small grants programmes, adding a teaching strength, and so on.

### **Developing New Skills**

- What tangible skills does the mentee need to progress their career goals? How can they attain them?
- It may be useful for the mentor to share their own experiences of developing new skills or to identify professional associations, research groups or professional development schemes or courses that could be beneficial to the mentee.
- Examples of tangible skills include: new methodologies; teaching qualifications; interpersonal skills; administrative or project management skills.

### **Growing Networks**

- Developing your networks is critical to progressing an academic career and can also be very important for finding support and fulfilment in an academic context.
- It may be helpful for mentees to reflect on their networks and how they would like to develop them, or for mentors to share strategies that have helped them in the past.
- Again, we recognise that networking can be especially difficult for people in situations of precarity or marginalisation, especially for academics from the global South who are often prevented from obtaining visas for conferences or professional events. We encourage mentors and mentees to bring this into their conversations should they wish to.

## **Refining a Research Agenda**

- Many early career academics participating in the mentoring program will be at the critical stage of finalising or completing a PhD and identifying, refining or transitioning to a postdoctoral or broader research project.
- In this process, academics may face additional challenges in developing a scholarly project that is feasible and builds on their research to date but that also makes a novel contribution to research. Unlike with the early stages of the PhD, early career academics may also receive far less guidance on this process.
- While there is no one best way to develop and refine a research agenda, mentors might wish to reflect on various aspects, including: what worked well for them as they developed their own research agenda, what challenges they faced, how to balance working on multiple projects, strategies for drafting applications or obtaining feedback from senior academics, or how to incorporate working collaboratively into a research agenda.

We welcome your feedback on aspects of mentoring relationships that you have previously conducted that you have found helpful, or strategies that you have found work well in practice, as we work to develop our resources for future iterations of the program.