



Mentoring Programme for
International Students
2008-2009

Mentoring Guide

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1. Mentoring – Sharing Knowledge and Experiences

1.1. Supporting Students through Mentoring

Mentoring refers to the transfer of knowledge, skills and experiences from more experienced individuals, mentors, to less experienced colleagues or students. Mentors share their expertise with students in order to help them find and use their professional strengths, advance their careers, enhance their education, and build their networks.

The aim of the Mentoring Programme for International Students is to encourage and assist the personal development of international master's degree students and support them when they enter the labour market in Finland. In addition to this, the programme aims to help students build a local network of professionals in their field. Mentors aim to give the students a realistic idea of the personal knowledge, skills and abilities required in various tasks in their specific field. Through open and confidential conversations with the mentor, the students will also develop an understanding of the prevailing, and sometimes underlying, values, norms, habits and methods in their field.

Mentors and students form pairs in which they discuss topics related to the mentor's experience and knowledge as well as the students' studies and personal development. Mentors are also encouraged to share their professional networks with the students.

Mentoring is a part of the Alumni Activities at the University of Turku. It is based on volunteering and mentors do not receive payment for their activity.

1.2. Mentoring International Students

Dozens of international students study at the nine international Master's Programmes at the University of Turku. The duration of the programmes is two years. The basic prerequisites for accepted students are a university degree equivalent to a Finnish Bachelor's degree in the relevant field of study and a good knowledge of English.

Many of the international students who complete their degree at the University of Turku wish to stay in Finland after graduation. The mentoring programme aims to support international students in their entry to the Finnish labour market through the transfer of knowledge and sharing of networks with experienced alumni. Mentors share their knowledge and experience of the Finnish labour market and workplace culture. They can also coach the student's job searching skills.

An essential part of the Mentoring Programme for International Students is familiarising the students with the Finnish work culture and how to find work. In addition to discussions with their mentors, the students participate in a tailored Working in Finland course in which they will learn the basics of the Finnish labour force and, for example, how to write a job application and a CV to a Finnish employer.

1.3. Why does the university support mentoring?

In addition to supporting the students' personal development and entry into the labour market, the mentoring programme aims to create interaction between the University and its alumni, who act as mentors. Our Alumni are familiar with our University, the education we offer, as well as the work opportunities in their own field. Thus they form a valuable and irreplaceable link between our University and the labour market.

Through the mentoring programme, Our University gains useful information on the current requirements and expectations in the labour market. We use this information and the feedback we receive in the development of course contents and study methods and particularly in the study and career guidance offered to students. As a part of the mentoring programme, the university also shares information on its latest teaching and research activities.

2. Structure of the Programme

The Mentoring Programme for International Students runs over the academic year 2008-2009. The programme consists of a course for students, a seminar for mentors and two additional seminars for the mentoring pairs. In between the seminars, the mentoring pairs meet independently. The language of the programme is English.

- Working in Finland course for students (September)
 - o Students learn the basics of where and how to look for work in Finland.
- Training seminar for mentors and meeting students (October)
 - o Information about the labour market situation of highly educated immigrants and the basics of mentoring and ideas for the meetings. At the end of the training mentors will meet the students. Note the seminar is given in Finnish.
- Mentoring meetings (October-May)
 - o The mentoring pairs meet independently during the academic year. A total of 5-8 meetings is recommended for each pair. More information about mentoring meetings can be found in chapter 3. of this guide.
- Winter seminar (January-February)
 - o Discussions on how mentoring has progressed, networking with other mentoring couples
- Closing seminar (May)
 - o Summing up the mentoring programme. The Closing seminar ends the formal and coordinated mentoring programme.

3. Guidelines for Mentors and Students

The relationship and interaction between a mentor and a student is personal and confidential. Therefore it is important that both the mentor and student commit to the programme. In order for the mentoring process to be successful and meaningful to both the mentor and the student, the mentoring pairs should plan their activities and set goals for their activities. It is also important to reserve time to achieve these goals.

3.1. Mentors – Sharing Expertise

Mentors are experienced and competent persons who wish to share their knowledge and support students in their personal and professional development. Mentors act as coaches and sources of inspiration for students and encourage them at a point in life when they are finishing their studies and entering the labour market. Mentors also encourage students to continue learning and build their abilities.

It is important that mentors are available for the students and can take time to concentrate on the discussions with their students. Good mentors give students opportunities to think on their own, form their own ideas and opinions and make their own choices. If necessary, a mentor can also be critical, but it is important to offer constructive criticism and make suggestions on possible alternative solutions. Mentors do not take the role of a parent, a psychologist or a boss.

Mentors are

- willing to share their experiences, contacts, knowledge and abilities. Mentors must also have time to share with the student.
- interested in learning and supporting the learning of the student. The most important task for mentors is to assist and encourage students in their personal and professional development.
- equipped with good social and communication skills. A good mentor asks relevant questions and gives the student something to think about. It is also important to let the students think for themselves and give them constructive feedback on their ideas and opinions.
- able to offer an objective point of view and allow the students to analyse their own development and opportunities themselves.
- *not expected to offer or find a job for the student!*

When participating in the mentoring programme the mentors can form new networks with other mentors as well as the students. Mentoring is also an efficient way of maintaining a connection with the university. Through discussions with the students,

mentors will gain an understanding of the abilities of the students graduating in their field and at the same time mentors can update their own knowledge.

Mentors generally feel that participation in the mentoring programme is also beneficial for them. Mentors enjoy the opportunity to discuss their field and experiences with a future colleague as it offers them an opportunity to reflect on their own ideas and conceptions. The participating students, as well as other mentors, are interesting partners for conversations on student life, studying and working life. Discussions with students also give mentors new information and fresh ideas. Several past and present mentors feel that their own motivation has grown during their participation in the mentoring programme.

Mentoring is a part of the university's quality assurance programme and we hope that mentors will give us feedback on the education we offer at the university.

3.2. Students – Active in Learning and Developing

Students participating in the Mentoring Programme for International Students are close to graduating from the International Masters Programmes offered at the University of Turku. All participating students are interested in personal development and gaining skills and contacts to assist them in finding work in Finland after graduation. The students participating in the Mentoring Programme must be aware that successful mentoring requires activeness from both the student and the mentor.

The most important mentoring learning outcomes come from learning from the mentor's experiences. Successful mentoring requires the students to be active and interested in the mentors and their work and experience. It is essential that the participating students discuss their own interests with the mentor as thoroughly as possible so that the mentors can share their experiences and knowledge of the themes that interest the students most. Most mentors wish that the students actively ask them about different aspects about their work, education and experiences.

Students should prepare for mentoring in advance by thinking about their own personal goals and interests regarding their education and career plans and questions regarding these. Mentors are also interested in finding out about what is happening at the University at the moment. Students should be prepared to acquaint their mentors with what is currently taught and given emphasis at the University in their field.

Participating students are

- motivated and active in professional and personal development. In order for the mentoring process to be successful, the students must be genuinely interested learning from their mentors and their experience.
- goal oriented. Students should prepare for the programme by deciding what they want to learn and achieve during the programme. They should also think

about the role they wish their mentor would take (coach, advisor etc.). In the beginning of the mentoring process it is important to find out what the mentor him/herself wishes to achieve from mentoring. It is a good idea to start the mentoring process by writing down the mutual goals for mentoring with the mentor.

- open and communicative. It is essential for successful mentoring that students can openly discuss their own interests and goals with their mentor. The relationship with the mentor is confidential.
- able and willing to make the most of their own knowledge, skills and networks.
- able to evaluate their own activities and learning. Students are encouraged to keep a journal about their mentoring process. This supports learning and helps to evaluate one's personal development during the Mentoring Programme.

Mentors are volunteers who offer their valuable time to the mentoring programme and it is therefore very important that the students commit to the programme and the goals and meeting times set with the mentors.

4. Mentoring Process

4.1. Mentoring Relationship

The mentoring couples work in pairs. Due to the nature of mentoring, the process usually has three phases:

1. Starting phase: Mentors and students get to know each other, set their goals for mentoring and agree on their own methods and rules such as meeting schedules and places.
2. Active phase: Mentors and students work to achieve their mutual goals. They discuss the themes they have agreed on and aim to create and maintain interactive and confidential discussions. This phase is the most important and rewarding part of mentoring.
3. End Phase: At the end of the Mentoring Programme the pairs sum up their mentoring outcomes and compare them to the goals set in the starting phase. The formal and coordinated mentoring ends with the Closing Seminar organised by the University.

These phases are different for each pair and it is important that the pairs work in their own schedule and with their own rules (see below).

4.2. Mentoring Rules

In the starting phase, one of the most important activities for the mentoring pairs is to make up their own mentoring rules. It is essential that both the student and the mentor know their responsibilities, duties and roles in the mentoring process.

These shared rules allow both the mentor and the student to know what the other party expects from them and how to act in different situations. The rules should cover at least the following points:

- confidentiality of the discussions
- shared goals for mentoring
- meeting schedule (how often the pair meets)
- how the pair keeps in touch during mentoring (email, phone etc.)

4.3. Mentoring Meetings

The International Mentoring Programme continues through the academic year 2008-09. It begins with training for students in September and training for mentors in October. The mentoring pairs will meet after the training for mentors. The programme ends with the Final Seminar in April/May.

During the Mentoring Programme the pairs should meet about once a month, about 5-8 times altogether. The pairs make their own schedules and arrangements for the meetings. In order to make the most out of mentoring, the pairs should meet at least 5 times.

It is a good idea to schedule the meetings early as both the mentor and student can be busy. The pairs can, for example, schedule their meetings for the entire autumn term already when they first meet. It is important that both the mentor and the student commit to the scheduled meetings. Repeated cancelling of meetings can damage the mentoring relationship and weaken the mutual trust and commitment in the process.

We recommend you book enough time for the meetings. The duration of the meetings varies between the pairs but usually the meetings last about 2 hours.

The mentoring discussions are more rewarding if they follow certain themes that the pair has decided on beforehand. Deciding on a theme for the meeting in advance also allows both the mentor and the student to prepare for the meeting. We recommend that pairs discuss the various themes they would like to cover during the programme already in the first meetings.

Although the mentoring pairs work individually, it is possible to invite other people to the meetings or arrange for the student to meet the mentor's colleague or other contact separately. Mentors can also invite students to professional fairs or meetings, if they so wish. We also encourage mentoring pairs to meet with each other or to which mentors with another couple for a meeting or two.

Suggestions for themes covered during the programme:

- labour market and workplace practices and rules (how to apply for work, how to conduct oneself in an interview or a meeting, how to dress, how to address people etc.)
- experiences of different positions and tasks the mentor has held in his/her career
- assignments and tasks the student will be qualified for after graduating
- visits to different workplaces, associations and events in the field
- networking – sharing networks and supporting the student in building her/his own networks
- commenting the student's CV and applications
- simulating a job interview

4.4. Problems

As the mentoring process is based on the interaction between the mentor and student, it is important that both parties feel that mentoring is running smoothly and without problems.

Most mentoring pairs do not experience significant problems during the mentoring process. However, problems do sometimes arise. These problems are usually related to difficulties in committing to meetings due to busy work or study schedules, changes in situations in life or changes in studying plans.

Should the mentor or the student feel the mentoring relationship is not working for some reason, it is best to first discuss the matter with the mentoring pair in order to find out what is causing the problem. If the problems persist, or the mentor or the student finds it difficult to discuss the matter with their mentoring pair, it is important that the mentor and the student contact the organisers of the mentoring programme, contact details can be found in the beginning of this guide.

Successful Mentoring!