

Typical Topics for the First Mentor–Mentee Meeting

The initial meeting should focus on getting to know each other, establishing expectations, and identifying areas where mentoring may be most beneficial.

Suggested discussion topics include:

Getting to Know Each Other

- Academic and professional background
- Current research project and role within the Cluster
- Previous training and experiences
- Long-term career interests and aspirations
- Strengths, skills, and areas for development

Expectations and Goals

- What does the mentee hope to gain from mentoring?
- What topics would the mentee like to discuss during future meetings?
- Preferred communication style and meeting format
- Frequency of meetings
- Confidentiality and boundaries of the mentoring relationship

Current Situation

- Integration into the host laboratory and institution
- Transition to a new city, institution, or research field
- Current challenges and opportunities
- Available support networks and collaborations

Initial Development Planning

- Scientific goals for the coming year
- Professional development priorities
- Training needs and skill gaps
- **Opportunities available through the Cluster**

Typical Topics for Ongoing Mentoring Discussions

Subsequent meetings should focus on the mentee's broader scientific and professional development rather than day-to-day project supervision.

Research and Scientific Development

- Progress toward major research goals
- Development of scientific independence
- Strategic planning of projects
- Interdisciplinary collaborations
- Building a scientific profile and reputation
- Publication strategy and authorship considerations

Career Development

- Career goals and career exploration
- Academic versus non-academic career paths
- Fellowship and grant opportunities
- Preparing for transitions to the next career stage
- Job application strategies
- Interview preparation
- Building a professional network

Professional Skills

- Scientific writing
- Grant writing
- Presentation and communication skills
- Leadership and management skills
- Teaching and mentoring experience
- Time and project management

Professional Environment

- Working relationships within the research group
- Collaborations and networking opportunities
- Navigating institutional structures
- Building visibility within the scientific community

Challenges and Setbacks

- Managing unsuccessful experiments and project delays
- Dealing with rejection and failure
- Maintaining motivation and resilience
- Navigating difficult professional situations
- Problem-solving strategies

Well-being and Work-Life Integration

- Managing workload and expectations
- Balancing professional and personal commitments
- International mobility and relocation challenges
- Long-term sustainability of career plans

Cluster-Specific Opportunities

- **Participation in Cluster events**
- **Cross-laboratory collaborations**
- **Lab visits and exchange opportunities**
- **Training activities and workshops**
- **Outreach and science communication activities**

Suggested Reflection Questions for Mentees

Prior to each mentoring meeting, mentees may wish to consider:

- What has gone well since our last meeting?
- What challenges have I encountered?
- What are my current priorities?
- What decisions am I facing?
- Which skills would I like to develop further?
- How am I progressing toward my career goals?
- What support or advice would be most helpful at this stage?