

Guidelines for Mentoring in the BMS (Phase II)

What do we mean by “mentoring”?

Mentoring is a tool for professional and personal development as well as for career advancement. It is based on the pairing of a mentor and a mentee. These pairings are formed across hierarchies and generations. A person with more professional life experience (the mentor) supports the development and career of a younger, less experienced person (the mentee). Mentees learn from their mentors, benefit from their knowledge, and gain insight into his or her network and contacts. Mentors pass on their personal experience based on their own career and professional style. Mentors provide mentees with guidance that helps them to develop on their own. The meetings are confidential and it is encouraged to discuss personal issues.

BMS Mentoring

The idea is that the Phase II mentor guides the mentee during the entire duration of Phase II. The mentoring in the BMS is meant to detect possible difficulties early during the Ph.D. program, so that additional support and guidance can be offered and countermeasures can be taken if necessary.

Mentoring for Phase II students in the BMS

Each Phase II student has a scientific supervisor, who provides support in all aspects relating to the progress of the dissertation, choosing the right conferences and publishing articles. The separate mentor is there to give a second opinion and to help in the case of problems with the supervisor. Both the supervisor and the mentor can assist students in making career plans and in establishing their own professional network.

The mentoring process

Choosing a mentor

Phase II students can choose a mentor on their own and inform the Mentoring Committee; the Mentoring Committee is also happy to help a student to find a suitable mentor.

Potential mentors should ask themselves the following questions:

In which fields do I feel competent to be a mentor? (That is, inclined to talk in depth about the subject and able to suggest further people the student could consult.) How much time and energy do I have to invest in the mentoring relationship?

Contact and first meeting

The mentee will contact the potential mentor to make an appointment for a first meeting. At this meeting, the mentee and mentor will get to know each other (better) and can determine whether they both would like to form the pairing. At this meeting, the frame for the mentoring relationship should be defined. The wishes, hopes and expectations on both sides should be discussed, as well as professional and personal interests, possibilities for cooperation, and goals. Only then will the partners decide, if they want to make the initial contact into a steady, long-term mentoring relationship. The mentee then informs Tanja Fagel, Diversity Manager of the BMS, of the outcome of the initial meeting.

Selected possible questions for the range of mentoring topics:

- Personal: What is the current situation? What is irksome, difficult, unsolved? Do obstacles or blockages exist that prohibit productive work on the dissertation? What are your wishes, goals; do you have a vision? What interests, strengths, and talents do you have? How do you judge your competence in fields such as decision-making, professional methods, interpersonal and social skills?

- Dissertation: How far along are you? What is the plan for future work? Should stays abroad be considered? How can you improve presentations and teamwork? Do you feel that you are making progress with your thesis? What do you do to publish articles?
- Career: Which professional fields are you interested in? What do you need to know to get into one of these fields either in academia or in industry? What qualifications do you already have and where do you need to add required skills? Which courses, seminars, trainings, presentations, fairs, international congresses, and events would be helpful in achieving the mentee's goals?
- Career preparations: What information about companies, institutions, and organizations can the mentor provide? What can the mentor tell the mentee about the rules and regulations in academia?

These are only a few suggestions from the plethora of possible topics in the mentoring meetings. What will be discussed depends on the interest of the people involved, and should be chosen according to their interests and needs.

At the end of each meeting it is useful to write down the outcome for future reference, to arrange a date and topic for the next meeting, and to agree on any necessary preparations. Meetings should be held at least once per semester.