

MENTORING PROGRAM OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR NEUROETHOLOGY

HANDBOOK FOR MENTEES AND MENTORS

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INTRODUCTION

The Mentoring Program of the International Society for Neuroethology (ISN) is organised by the Early Career Representatives and the ISN Secretary, with the full support of the Executive Committee. It provides a forum for more experienced members of the ISN to share knowledge and advice with less experienced members.

The aim of this handbook is to outline a framework for the participation of mentors and mentees in the program. Each mentor and mentee pair will achieve their mentoring goals differently – in the way that suits them best. The ISN Mentoring Program is intended to facilitate, not restrict, the interaction of mentors and mentees.

Thank you for your interest in the ISN Mentoring Program. We hope it will be an enjoyable and enriching experience for both mentees and mentors.

WHAT IS MENTORING?

Mentoring is a positive relationship, in which a more experienced person (the mentor) guides a less experienced person (the mentee) by sharing knowledge. These relationships can develop spontaneously or be initiated via a formal program. Mentoring relationships might last a lifetime, but it is more common to have different mentors at different stages of a professional career.

Mentors provide support, knowledge, encouragement, guidance, and constructive feedback to mentees by developing a genuine interest in the growth of their abilities and talents.

Mentees actively seek support and guidance from experienced mentors. Mentees always have ultimate responsibility for their career and professional development.

The relationships are based upon encouragement, constructive feedback, openness, mutual trust, respect and a willingness to learn and share.

BENEFITS OF MENTORING

Mentoring provides both the mentor and the mentee with important attributes for a successful career. Some of the benefits of being in a mentoring relationship are:

MENTORS

- > Are acknowledged for their skills, knowledge and commitment;
- > Enhance their management, leadership and communication skills;
- > Get the opportunity to discover talent and shape the future of their profession;
- > Develop an increased awareness of current issues in the profession;
- > Expand their professional network;

MENTEES

- > Develop self-assessment and communication skills;
- > Receive support and guidance to achieve career goals;
- > Increase their motivation, confidence and self-esteem;
- > Deepen their understanding of an academic career;
- > Build a professional network;

PROGRAM PURPOSE

The program should provide a forum for ISN members of all levels to develop an on-going mentoring relationship with a more experienced/senior member by meeting (in person or virtually) at a frequency determined by both the mentor and mentee and discussing matters concerning their professional life and career path.

PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY

All mentees must be members of the ISN, when they enter the program. Mentors will typically be more experienced/senior members of the ISN, but a mentor might be recruited from outside the ISN, if a mentee is looking for guidance on a topic that potential ISN mentors do not feel they have the expertise to advise. Any member of the ISN can simultaneously be a mentor and a mentee. If you wish to be a part of the program in both a mentor and mentee capacity, please make sure to select this option in the drop-down menu on the sign-up page.

MENTORS

Mentors may be members of all experience levels that are willing to pass on their knowledge and advice to less experienced members. Mentors should have a desire to contribute positively to the future of others and the time to commit to several interactions for the duration of the mentoring relationship.

MENTEES

Mentees may be ISN members of all experience levels who think they could benefit from having a mentor within the society. Mentees should have an urge to grow, will seek constructive feedback, accept new challenges and take responsibility for their own personal and professional development.

PROGRAM COORDINATORS

The Early Career Representatives of the ICN initiate and guide the delivery of the program to ensure that both mentors and mentees benefit. Participants may be contacted during the program to assess the relationship.

MATCHING MENTORS AND MENTEES

Initially, mentors and mentees are matched by the program coordinators based on information given by the participants. To the best of our ability, we will attempt to link mentors and mentees with a suitable partner. Once a critical number of mentors have signed up, mentees are given the option to choose their mentor by themselves from a list of available candidates.

Existing informal mentor/mentee relationships between two members of the ISN are encouraged to be formalised through the ISN Mentoring Program. Official recognition of a mentorship can be beneficial to both the mentor and mentee for professional reasons.

If either the mentor or mentee is uncomfortable with the pairing at any stage, the program coordinators can be approached for assistance. If you prefer to discontinue a mentoring relationship for whatever reason, you should follow the [closure](#) section of this handbook.

PARTICIPANT RESPONSIBILITIES

- > Abide by the guidelines laid out in this document;
- > Act ethically and with respect towards all participants;
- > Maintain confidentiality and professional boundaries;
- > Negotiate an agreement for ongoing communication;
- > Attend prearranged meetings and keep in touch;
- > Contribute to the discussion and resolution of issues raised in meetings

MENTOR'S ROLE STATEMENT:

- > Convey an understanding of career options and outcomes;
- > Assist the mentee in identifying individual needs and goals;
- > Support the mentee's career development;

The mentor will achieve this by:

- > Listening to the mentee's questions and problems;
- > Sharing professional experiences;
- > Challenging assumptions;
- > Encouraging the exploration of new ideas and innovative thinking;
- > Providing appropriate and timely advice;
- > Being open minded and non-judgemental;

An experienced mentor has:

- > A level of expertise and knowledge higher than that of the mentee;
- > A professional network;
- > Credibility;
- > Accessibility;
- > A desire to help shape the future of the profession;
- > A genuine interest in the mentee's growth and development;
- > Empathy, respect and consideration for the mentee;
- > Excellent communication skills (particularly listening, questioning and giving constructive feedback);
- > The ability to empower others;

MENTEE'S ROLE STATEMENT:

- > Take responsibility for own personal and professional development;
- > Initiate conversations and organize meetings with the mentor;
- > Explore own strengths, development needs and career goals;
- > Share hopes, needs and expectations;
- > Seek constructive feedback;
- > Have an open frame of mind;
- > Accept new challenges;

CONFIDENTIALITY

Topics discussed by mentors and mentees may reflect personal opinions or be of a sensitive or controversial nature. The mentor and mentee will maintain confidentiality of all discussions and communications unless both parties agree otherwise, or reporting is mandatory by law.

SUGGESTED FRAMEWORK

The following stages are a framework suggested for the mentoring program. Participants may choose to follow these suggestions or may create their own framework.

STAGE 1: NEGOTIATING EXPECTATIONS & GOALS

The first interactions are critical in establishing the foundations of the relationship but can be daunting for both the mentor and the mentee. The key to a successful mentorship is to ensure that both participants share the same objectives and expectations of the program. Participants should discuss openly what they want to achieve and how they think they could reach their goals.

The level of time commitment and preferred style of contact also needs to be negotiated. Some mentor-mentee-pairs may wish to meet online or, if possible, in person in regular time intervals, others may rely solely on emails or prefer phone calls. A conference that both participants attend is a perfect occasion to schedule a personal meeting.

When you schedule a meeting, give the other party a list of three or four dates and times to choose from and ask for an alternative suggestion, if none of those options works. In principle, the mentee is responsible for contacting the mentor. However, mentees might fear that they are too demanding. It is therefore best to plan for the next contact together at the end of each meeting. If either party cancels a meeting or doesn't reply to an email, don't be disheartened. Continue to reschedule the meeting or resend the email. Mentors are often exceptionally busy people and emails can get lost.

STAGE 2: ESTABLISHING THE RELATIONSHIP: GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Learning each other's interests and opinions helps build trust. It is recommended that mentors share some of their own career history and life experiences and encourage mentees to talk about their background, interests, career aspirations, strengths and challenges. Mentees should reflect on what is important to them and what drives them both personally and professionally and share their thoughts with their mentors.

You should not feel that discussions must be limited to career development. If specific issues and interesting discussion points naturally arise, they can also be explored as needed.

STAGE 3: CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Following on from the discussions in [stage 2](#), mentees should determine professional skills or areas of knowledge that they want to improve in or learn more about. An appropriate

career direction should be based on the mentee's likes/dislikes, strengths and needs, values and interests.

Mentors and mentees should brainstorm ideas and opportunities for ways of assisting the mentee in their career aspirations. Various avenues of developing a career should be explored. Mentees should feel comfortable asking mentors for advice on workplace issues, career development, job searching and achieving/maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

When giving advice, mentors need to be careful of unknowingly dominating conversations, exerting undue influence or quickly discounting alternative ideas and offering 'the' solution. Their role is to support the mentees in taking responsibility for their own career development. Playing the 'devil's advocate' is often a good way to help mentees challenge opinions and assumptions. Mentees should be allowed to explore ideas in a greater depth themselves, before mentors present another argument or viewpoint.

STAGE 4: SUSTAINING THE RELATIONSHIP: IMPROVE AND KEEP IN TOUCH

As the mentoring relationship develops you should reflect on successful aspects and identify areas for improvement. Self-assessment is crucial. Consider the following questions:

- > Is the mentee/mentor comfortable with the mentorship?
- > Does the mentee/mentor have a positive approach to each meeting?
- > How does the mentee/mentor respond to new ideas and suggestions?
- > Has the mentee developed realistic career aspirations?
- > Has progress been made towards the mentee's goals?
- > Have circumstances changed and do they require that career plans need to be adjusted?
- > Is there a different approach that might work better to achieve the goals?

Most importantly, stay positive, keep in touch and grow with the challenges you are facing.

CLOSURE

At some point you may decide to end a mentoring relationship. Maybe your personalities don't fit, your career path, interests, schedules or time constraints have changed, or the mentee has reached the objectives and outgrown the current relationship. The reasons can vary. Both parties may initiate the closure at any time with or without requesting assistance from the program coordinators. The relationship shall be closed with professionalism and respect, allowing both parties to reflect on their experience and learn from it. If you decide to discuss the closure,

- > start with positive aspects of your relationship and acknowledge what has been achieved;
- > communicate the reason(s) for ending the relationship; and
- > try to receive honest feedback without taking offence.

Please notify the program coordinators that the mentoring relationship has been discontinued and indicate whether you want to participate in another mentor/mentee relationship in the future. A mentor should encourage its mentee to find a new mentor for the next career stage and might suggest suitable candidates.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

The program coordinators may ask participants to complete a survey to evaluate the program. Suggestions and feedback from all mentors and mentees are welcome at any time.

*** This document was inspired by and drew content and organization from the Planning Institute of Australia's "Mentoring Program Handbook for Mentees and Mentors" and the Manchester Metropolitan University's "Mentoring Guidelines" ***