



# Menza



## **MENTORING FOR YOUNG RESEARCHERS AT GHENT UNIVERSITY**

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# Mentoring project



- Ghent University:
  - 1/10/2009 – 30/9/2010: female post-docs only
  - 11/03/2011 – 31/03/2012: men and women
  - 01/10/2012 – 01/10/2014: two years

# Who is mentor/mentee



## a Menza-mentor is

- a man or a woman
- professor (ZAP) at Ghent University
- linked to another faculty than the mentee

## a Menza-mentee is

A researcher with a Phd & academic ambitions



# Course of the Menza project



## Duration

- 2 years
- 3 to 6 meetings
- Information session/ training/ workshops
- evaluation

## First meeting

- prepared during training
- personal plan
- getting acquainted
- assign the next sessions

## Support & coordination

- content is private
- problems
- evaluation

## Possible questions



- Will mentoring take up a lot of time?
- Why should I become a mentor?
- Who will be my mentee?
- What about the confidentiality of the conversations?
- What do I have to do if I don't meet my mentees expectations?
- What do I have to do if I don't hear from my mentee for a while?
- What do I have to do if my mentee is not very talkative?

# Training mentees



- Getting acquainted
- Past, present and future careerpath
- Personal development plan
- List of themes
- Preparation of the first meeting

# Matching of mentees and mentoren



- After first training sessions
- Mentees receive an email
- Reasons to rematch:
  - \* negative experience with the faculty of mentor
  - \* familymember of colleague
  - \* other science group
- Mentors are informed
- Acquaintance & contract

# The conversations



- The mentee takes the initiative
- Content is chosen by the mentee
- Make enough time
- Prepare the conversations (topics, questions...)
- *I find it important that the agreed topic is observed. This way we can avoid conversations going round in circles or deviating too much from their purpose.*



# Possible topics



- Work/life balance
- Visibility within the university, networking
- The unwritten rules, work climate
- The pressure to excel, the publish or perish mentality
- Rules and procedures for promotion
- Strengths and weaknesses of a CV
- Time-management
- How to handle conflicts with colleagues or promotor
- Teamwork & managing a team
- Career possibilities outside the faculty or university

## Workshops



- Experiences of former mentees
- Workshop work/life balance
- Workshop networking
- Interim evaluation
- Information session: career paths outside the academia
- New promotion program for ZAP

*“I almost found the meetings with mentees more interesting than the conversations with the mentor because you get the opportunity to talk to people who are in the same stage of life and are faced with the same questions and problems, and everyone has found a different solution for themselves. I felt like we could learn a lot from each other.”*

# Reactions of mentees



- *“I experienced the project as very valuable, although I could only make partial use of it due to maternity leave. I feel like I can still turn to my mentor if I would want to do so. My mentor explained a number of things to me which I will always remember and which boosted my confidence in myself and my career.”*
- *“I finally made an important choice regarding my career during the mentoring project. I have already implemented my mentor’s tips concerning visibility, CV and strategy for the future.”*
- *“I feel like I have a better understanding now of how to deal with a number of things concretely at UGent as regard to project applications and making contacts, and this has increased my chances of becoming a professor.”*
- *“It has certainly set me thinking about what career I want and how much I want it. There certainly was a learning effect or at least some growing awareness with regard to the process and career path.”*

# Reactions of mentors



- *“I have learnt a great deal about the organisational culture at other faculties, and I have gained better insight into the needs of young staff members. On the basis of these insights I am trying to improve our internal organisation.”*
- *“I merely had lunch with my mentee on a regular basis. Yet it did result in possible collaboration. During lunch we had constructive discussions about the combination of work and family, and about how to best attract research.”*
- *“Now I understand the need for personal guidance even better and I have applied this in my department.”*
- *“I think it has become clear to my mentee that she needs to cut a few knots herself. She probably knew that herself, but our conversations have pointed it out more clearly. It also seemed useful to me to have an external discussion partner. I have learnt a lot from the project; so for me the result was excellent.”*

## Pitfalls



- Insufficient response from mentees/mentors
- Drop out due to lack of time, lack of motivation
- Mismatch
- Trips abroad, pregnancy leaves
- Wrong expectations: concrete solution for a certain problem
- Efficiency can not be measured

# Contact



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