



# UC3M Faculty Mentoring Pilot Programme

uc3m | Universidad Carlos III de Madrid



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## 1.- INTRODUCTION

Most PhD candidates will pursue their careers outside academia. As a study by the Monterrey Institute of Technology points out, *"Long before the health crisis caused by the COVID 19 pandemic, scientists and academics around the world were already considering leaving their fields, but the pandemic has made the situation more difficult. Defection from academia is neither new nor a result of the pandemic. For the past few years, scientists have been leaving academia at an unprecedented rate. Job uncertainty due to the current situation, the growing number of graduates, the shortage of staff positions in universities, the "publish or perish" culture, burnout and a mental health crisis in academia, are just some of the factors that have led to more and more scientists leaving science"*<sup>1</sup>.

There is a broad consensus that, for PhD students, jobs outside academia are no longer "alternative" careers, but probably the general norm.

Generally speaking, most PhD students will not have an academic career during their professional career. The same is true for postdocs, with, for example, as many as nine out of ten postdocs in the UK eventually leaving academia.

However, most doctoral training programmes do not recognise this or address the issue during training, and many doctoral and postdoctoral researchers remain unaware of other career options beyond academia and how to orient their careers towards them. This, among other things, can lead to misunderstandings among young researchers about what non-academic employers expect from researchers. Not only that, this lack of exchange of views and information impoverishes both the academic and non-academic world and hinders the much desired intersectoral mobility of highly qualified professionals and researchers, knowledge transfer and the employability of researchers.

Recently, the *Marie Curie Alumni Association and Eurodoc* issued a joint statement on sustainable careers in which they called for researchers to be prepared for different professional environments and to be provided with a wide range of networking options and services within and outside academia. This demand is understood as a growing expectation of young European researchers for better training and connections with industry.

In this framework, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (hereafter UC3M) is willing to support young predoctoral researchers in their professional career. Therefore, we want to offer a **Mentoring programme** with professionals from outside the academic world and also professors or researchers with a great professional trajectory.

The implementation of this Mentoring programme is included in the Human Resources Strategy for the UC3M's Faculty allows us to continue advancing in the activities defined in the HR Excellence in research Logo granted by the European Commission.

The importance of this programme also lies in:

- The European Charter for Researchers, which proposes it as one of the fundamental principles.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://observatorio.tec.mx/edu-news/exodo-investigadores-academia>

<sup>2</sup> According to **Art 28** of the C&C the figure of the Mentor is important in the framework of Human Resources policies: *"Employers and/or funders should outline, preferably within their human resources management framework, a development strategy for researchers at all stages of their career, irrespective of their contractual status, including contract researchers. The availability of mentors involved in supporting and advising researchers' personal and professional development, motivating them and contributing to the reduction of uncertainty in their professional future, should be envisaged"*.

- The interest on the part of the faculty, judging by the number of people who have attended the Seminars held on the subject.
- Its influence on UC3M's talent development and retention processes: creating a culture among doctoral students that allows them to share information, skills, attitudes and behaviours.

## 2.- OBJETIVE

The aim of the Mentoring Faculty Pilot Programme is **to bring together early-stage researchers in any field of knowledge, who are interested in their career options beyond the traditional academic career, with highly qualified mentors working in professional settings outside academia.**

This handbook is intended as a guide for both Mentors and Mentees to facilitate the sessions and the development of the Pilot Programme. We therefore invite mentoring pairs to use it as inspiration for their meetings, and not as an instruction book to be strictly followed.

If you have any comments, requests, concerns or recommendations that you would like to share with us, please do not hesitate to contact the Human Resources and Organisation service via email at: [mentoringpdi@uc3m.es](mailto:mentoringpdi@uc3m.es)

## 3.- THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF MENTORING

- Mentoring is a two-way relationship: both parties must engage and listen to each other and can learn in the process.
- Mentoring is about sharing experiences, knowledge and advice: **the mentee is not a mentee, but also a professional, and the mentor is not a headhunter**, although he/she can provide support in the job search.
- Mentoring is a guided path of self-understanding/self-awareness/self-knowledge in which mentees analyse their strengths and weaknesses and achieve personal and professional growth.
- Mentors can guide and accompany mentees in this process, but they are not professional career coaches or psychotherapists.
- Open and continuous dialogue in the pair is the main tool of mentoring.
- The UC3M Mentoring Programme aims to help you open your professional horizons, **but it is not designed to help you find a job.**

## 4.- MENTOR-MENTEE COMMITMENTS

- Confidentiality and respect for each other's feedback and time are the cornerstones of Mentoring.
- The programme starts with a webinar for mentors and a webinar for mentees. They will be scheduled on two different dates and other exceptional alternatives can be offered, so that we all share the same starting point.
- Each pair will meet in person or virtually 6 times over 6 months (between September 2021 and March 2022). It is the responsibility of the mentee to approach the mentor to find the best time for both of you for each meeting.

- We strongly encourage mentees to work on a personal career plan to get the most out of this mentoring programme.
- We ask mentees to fill in a simple form after each meeting so that the organisers can keep track of the meetings.

We will ask mentors and mentees to complete a satisfaction and evaluation survey at the end of the programme. In the meantime, you can contact the organisers at [mentoringpdi@uc3m.es](mailto:mentoringpdi@uc3m.es).

## 5.- PAIRING PROCESS

The aim of the *UC3M Mentoring Pilot Programme for Faculty* is to match early-career researchers with professionals with a strong academic background working in both academic and non-academic environments, in order to open their minds to the full range of career possibilities after the PhD.

Sharing the same scientific background will not be as critical to the matching process as the shared interests and attitude towards professional and personal life of each mentor and mentee (based on the CV and answers provided in the application).

## 6.- SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR MEETINGS

Based on the nature and purpose of the *UC3M Mentoring Pilot Programme for Faculty*, we suggest that you couples address some of these issues during your meetings:

1. Career aspirations.
2. What it means to "go beyond academics".
3. Important non-academic competences.
4. Deepening some competences:
  - I. Gender considerations.
  - II. Networking.
  - III. Conflict management.
  - IV. Time management: work/life balance.
5. Self-awareness: overqualification vs. impostor syndrome.
6. What have we achieved? What comes next?

In order for each session to be mutually beneficial, we suggest that you do a pre-session reflection to try to analyse some concrete and predefined questions during the session and pursue a concrete, measurable and achievable goal.

Both the suggested personal career plan and the mandatory post-meeting forms available on the website are designed to facilitate this process.

You may not be an expert on some of the suggested topics; however, it will be a useful exercise to discuss them. If you would like to learn more about any of the topics, you can contact more experienced colleagues, friends, etc.

## 7.- GENERAL TIPS FOR MENTORING MEETINGS

We suggest that the meetings be held once a month. If once a month is not possible, other approaches that better suit both partners are equally valid.

In order to optimise the time investment in the *UC3M Mentoring Pilot Programme for Faculty*, we recommend you to establish a timetable for the 6 regular meetings from the beginning and try to stick to it. Afterwards, you can reschedule as needed by mutual agreement. In any case, [it will be the responsibility of the mentee to contact the mentor and confirm each meeting.](#)

Take some time to create a space of trust and connection between the two of you: introducing yourselves to each other, agreeing on some basic points that will define your mentoring relationship. Try to answer the following questions as a guide in this step:

- In what ways do you think your experience and expertise can be of benefit to
- to the other?
- Can you put yourself in the place of the other (mentor/mentee)?
- What are the expectations of the other?
- What is the best way to communicate your concerns/suggestions to each other?

Do some preparatory work for each meeting, such as reading about the topic to be discussed or collecting personal experiences about situations, attitudes and behaviours related to the topic to be discussed.

To make the meetings more productive, you can also share in advance information and documents to be discussed at the next mentoring session.

To get the most out of this experience, experts suggest keeping track of each meeting you have: remembering the key points discussed and noting whether you agreed or disagreed can be very useful after a few sessions. This can be done through the use of post-meeting forms.

To share experiences, we propose these suggestions for conversation around:

- Stories from your professional life (your own or those of colleagues and family members).
- Specific situations: how you have dealt with them, what you could have done differently, etc.
- Self-awareness: seeing yourself as others see you.
- Skills development: review the skills you had or needed at the time. How did you develop them? How useful were they?

## 8.- ADDITIONAL TRAINING FOR MENTORS

- ✓ Mentors will be invited to a meeting for an initial on-line training on two possible dates and times to facilitate participation which will be announced on the mentoring website. The aim of this training will be to explain the basics of mentoring and of this particular programme. Participation in this webinar is mandatory.
- ✓ Mentors will be invited to share their experiences throughout the programme with the other mentors through an on-line meeting in the middle of the programme (January 2022). This meeting (or meetings, if mentors are willing to participate in more than one) will serve to exchange successful and unsuccessful practices, and to advise and support each other. Participation is voluntary.

- ✓ Mentors will be invited to share their professional experiences with other mentees (not only with their assigned mentor) through on-line meetings. Thematic meetings will be proposed and organised if there is sufficient interest (e.g. law firms, chemical industry companies). Participation is voluntary.

## 9.- ADDITIONAL TRAINING FOR MENTEES

- ✓ Mentorees will be called for an initial training on two possible dates and times to facilitate their participation which will be announced on the mentoring website. The objective of this training will be to explain the basics of mentoring and of this particular programme. Participation in this webinar is mandatory.
- ✓ Mentorees are invited to share their experiences throughout the programme with the other mentees through online meetings. This meeting (or meetings, if mentees are willing to participate in more than one) will serve to exchange successful and unsuccessful practices and to advise and support each other.
- ✓ The mentees will receive two online sessions on how to deal with the job search outside academia and how to write a CV for a non-academic job.

## 10.- CONSIDER WORKING ON A PERSONAL CAREER PLAN

Participating in a mentoring programme is expected to be a great opportunity, especially for mentees. To make the most of this experience, we suggest that you work on defining a personal career plan at the beginning of the process, and use it to guide your meetings with your mentors.

This plan can be the map that will lead you to the goal you want to achieve: you will have to define where you want to go, what you need to get there and how you are going to get there. We share with you a template that is basically aligned with the first topic so that you can address it at the beginning of the mentoring period (career aspirations). We suggest mentees to fill in this template and update the file during the following meetings as needed. *See Annex I*

This is not compulsory, but we think it is a good way to summarise the results and keep all the useful information you receive from your mentor.

## 11.- WHAT TO DO IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT OF A FAILED PAIRING

All participants in this programme have been carefully selected for their willingness to participate, their sensitivity to the programme's objective and their curriculum. We expect all mentoring relationships to be successful and rewarding. However, mentoring relies heavily on a good connection between two people, and we expect varying degrees of satisfaction in the programme which we will consider normal and which we will analyse to see how to improve. However, if for any reason, a mentor or mentee feels uncomfortable with their partner in a way that exceeds these different levels of connection, we ask that you contact us immediately so that we can decide together how to proceed.

## 12.- MONITORING OF THE PROCESS

We will be close to the pairs throughout the process to inform them of upcoming online meetings, check how the sessions are going, see if they need any logistical support, etc.

We have established 6 models of post-meeting forms to be filled in by the mentees.

You can find them on the website: [mentoringpdi@uc3m.es](mailto:mentoringpdi@uc3m.es)

Please note that these forms are intended to help us check that the meetings are taking place and to identify possible actions for improvement. Details of the meeting itself are not requested as they are highly confidential.

Please remember that if a mentee or mentor has any kind of problem with the matching they can contact us directly.

## 13.- SUGGESTED CONTENT FOR THE SESSIONS

In this section we try to help you with some guidelines on how to approach each session. We have structured it in different sections: previous reflection, objective of the session and some topics to be discussed during the session.

### 1. Career aspirations

#### **Pre-reflection: (for the mentee)**

- Why did you enrol in the degree or PhD programme? Did you get what you expected?
- Why and when did you make those critical decisions that changed or set your career aspirations?

#### **Objective:**

Define possible career aspirations and discuss what you may need to get there and how to get there.

#### **Some topics to discuss during the session:**

- What is your work history?
- What are you currently working on (professionally, personally, in your development)?
- How did you get to where you are now? What kind of obstacles have you had to overcome?
- Was there a time when you made a mistake and felt you had failed? How did you recover?
- Think back five years ago - did you imagine your career as it is today?
- What is your dream job?
- Where do you want your career to go in the next three years?
- How can we weigh up the different career options, how can we help you make decisions?
- Is this topic particularly relevant to you? Who else can you talk to who can give you information?

#### **Interesting reading:**

- **The Paradox of Choice: Why More is Less**, by Barry Schwartz.
- **Letters to a Young Scientist**, by Edward O. Wilson



## 2. Should I think "Beyond UC3M or beyond academia"?

### Preliminary reflections: (for the mentee).

- What are your expectations and fears when considering leaving academia?
- Here you can find interesting information: [Discover: careers beyond academia | EURAXESS](#)
- Check out the [EURAXESS questionnaire "What am I most qualified for?"](#)
- Check out some success stories: [EURAXIND Career Stories - Vitae Website.](#)

### Objective:

- To identify the pros and cons of going beyond academia.

### Some topics to discuss during the session:

- I am considering a career transition - what are the options beyond academia?
- What are other areas of business that might be a good fit for me?
- What were the biggest obstacles you (the mentor) faced at the time of your career and how did you overcome them?
- What do you (the mentor) wish you (the mentor) had known before you left academia (if you left)?
- What is your opinion on the differences between working in academia and working in non-academic sectors?
- How would you feel about working on research or development projects that are largely chosen to meet company objectives?
- How should I prepare for the next stage of my career? (to the mentor)
- Is this topic particularly relevant to you - who else can you talk to who can give you information?

### Interesting reading:

- Researchers Career Stories: Researcher career stories - Vitae Website
- "So What Are You Going to Do with That?": **Finding Careers Outside Academia**, by Susan Basalla and Maggie Debelius.

**More suggested content for the sessions can be found in Annex II.**

## ANNEX I. DRAFT CAREER PLAN

The main purpose of a career development plan is to help you achieve your goals.

Having a clear and defined career path will allow you to define what you need to do next and prevent you from getting stuck in a rut.

To complete a career development plan, it is important that you first determine what you value most and what you are looking for in terms of your career. When deciding on the next step, you should also consider what you want to do with your career path: this goes beyond defining your purpose and passions, it should focus on deciding what kind of work fits the kind of life you want to have.

Finally, a career development plan will give you a thorough understanding of your strengths and weaknesses. You can then decide on a meaningful goal and set a realistic plan to achieve it.

Source: [Personal Career Development Plan template](#)

## ANNEX II. SUGGESTED CONTENT FOR THE SESSIONS

### 3. Diversification: beyond academia and industry

#### **Pre-reflection:**

- List 6 career paths outside academia. Check and compare your answer above with:
  - [What researchers do next](#)
  - [Opportunities for life scientists and engineers.](#)
  - [Opportunities for social scientists and humanities researchers](#)

#### **Objective:**

Become familiar with the most and least common career paths for researchers.

#### **Some topics to discuss during the session:**

- Are you considering self-employment as a career option?
- Are you aware of the different non-academic positions you could have in higher education institutions?
- Do any of these positions have what you lack in your current position?
- Do you know the scope of these alternative careers?

#### **Interesting reading:**

- [How scientists with business experience can find success in the risky world of start-ups.](#)
- [Swapping the pipette for the pen: The transition from science to science writing.](#)
- [Entering the NGO bubble:](#)
- [How to write a procedural report](#)

### 4. "Hard Skills"

#### **Preliminary reflection:**

- What is the difference between "hard skills" and "soft skills" for researchers? Check your answer with: [http://bit.ly/hard\\_vs\\_soft\\_20-21](http://bit.ly/hard_vs_soft_20-21)
- What do you think are the main skills that are developed in academia and needed beyond academia? Check and compare your answer with the [Key hard skills for researchers report.](#)

#### **Objective:**

To identify 5 hard skills that are necessary for the transition from academia to industry.

#### **Some topics to discuss during the session:**

- What could you bring to other sectors?
- What knowledge and experience do you have that might be of interest?

#### **Interesting reading:**

- [Key hard skills for researchers and resources for learning/improving them:](#)

## 5. "Soft Skills"

### Preliminary reflection:

- What, in your opinion, are the main soft skills that are developed in academia and needed beyond academia?

Check and compare your answer above with:

- [The researcher's development framework](#)
- [Check the EURAXIND surveys of researchers and employers of researchers on the most valued skills.](#)
- [Check the skills and competences of researchers](#)
- [Check the EURAXESS tool "What do you want to be?":](#)

### Objective:

- To identify 6 key interpersonal skills: 2 that you are good at, 2 that you could improve and 2 that you definitely need to start working on.

### Some topics to cover during the session:

- What do you consider to be your strengths, do your colleagues agree?
- What would be your blind spots and how can you improve?
- What new skills do you need to move forward?
- How do you plan to further develop your professional skills and knowledge?
- Do you have a template that you use for long-term vision and strategic planning?
- What skills do you think you could work on to help you in your career aspirations?
- Is this topic particularly relevant to you? Who else can you talk to who can give you information?

## 6. To deepen some of these interpersonal skills.

### Preliminary reflections:

- Think outside the box: you may never have considered these skills really important or useful. Try to discuss them.

### Objective:

- Open your mind to a new set of skills you may not have considered before. (Try these, or others).

### Suggested skills:

- Gender considerations for STEM professionals.
- How to network.
- Conflict management.
- Time management.
- Communication skills.

### 6.1 Gender considerations for STEM professionals

#### Preliminary reflections:

- Watch the video ["Understanding Unconscious Bias"](#).

- Watch the video "[Gender Innovations: Harnessing the Creative Power of Gender Analysis to Create New Knowledge](#)".
- Watch the video "[Understanding the gender dimension for MSCA projects](#)".
- Have you ever faced a professional situation where gender has had a clear influence?

**Some topics to be covered during the session:**

- The gender dimension in research; gender balance in decision making, equal opportunities for men and women.
- Maternity and paternity leave, are they a problem for career development?
- Gender-related barriers in STEM professions.
- Do you perceive any gender bias in your professional environment?
- Is gender an issue in any way in your professional life?
- Do you lead or participate in any activities within your organisation aimed at supporting gender equality?
- Is this issue particularly relevant to you? Who else can you talk to who can give you information?

**Interesting reading/videos:**

- [The future of STEM careers depends on diversity - TEDx Talk by Nicole Cabrera Salazar](#)
- [Historical comparison of gender inequality in science careers across countries and disciplines.](#)
- [Women Are Not Welcome: A Study on Gender Inequality and Leadership in STEM](#)

## 6.2 How to create a network

**Preliminary reflections:**

- Are you good at networking?
- Is it different beyond academia?

**Some topics to discuss during the session:**

- What are some of the possibilities for academic and business networking?
- How can I keep in touch with influential people who do not work in the same office or geographical area?
- Are social networks useful?
- How many emails/calls are too many?
- How to behave at networking events
- Where can networking take place?
- Spontaneous introductions or through a common contact
- Who are the people to contact within a new organisation to be successful?
- What is the best way to best suggest/communicate new ideas?

**Interesting reading:**

[How to network at congresses/conferences... without being awkward.](#)

[Scientific events](#)

## 6.3 Conflict management

**Preliminary reflections:**

- Think about possible uncomfortable situations - would you have needed or would you have liked to

have received any special training on how to deal with them?

### **Some topics to discuss during the session**

- Was there ever a job for which you applied and got, but for which you were not 100% qualified?
- Have you ever had a difficult boss or colleague?
- How to deal with new responsibilities or subordinates
- How to reactivate/re-energise overburdened, dissatisfied or frustrated employees (or yourself).

### **Interesting reading/videos:**

[How to deal with difficult people - Jay Johnson Tedx Talk.](#)

[Workplace Conflicts: Classifications, Causes and Management Strategies](#)

[Dealing with difficult people](#)

## **6.4 Time management: work-life balance**

### **Preliminary reflections:**

- Can you contribute to creating your own balance or is it defined by your manager/organisation?
- How to better organise your work time.

### **Some topics to discuss during the session:**

- Work-life balance.
- How to avoid wasting time.
- Prioritisation of tasks: a waste or a time saver?
- How to find the balance between concentrating on current work and seeking promotions or preparing for new jobs.
- How to deal with further training?
- How to get involved in different initiatives without appearing unfocused?

## **7. Communication**

### **Preliminary reflections:**

- Think of a situation where you have experienced misunderstanding or miscommunication that has led to bad consequences.
- How good are you at returning emails/messages?
- What do you think your body language reveals when you speak in public?
- Do you make eye contact with your audience when speaking in public?

### **Some topics to cover during the session:**

- Active listening as a way to improve communication at work.
- Emotional intelligence and managing difficult conversations
- Public speaking and leadership
- Non-verbal communication and audience perception
- How do you think good communication skills relate to the other soft skills mentioned above?

## **8. Self-awareness**

### **Preliminary reflections:**

- Overqualification vs. impostor syndrome.
- How do you see yourself, how do others see you, how will you be seen in a non-academic sector?

**Objective:**

- Establish your personal brand:  
*NOTE: Personal branding refers to the practice of promoting yourself and your career path. A strong personal brand maximises your attractiveness as a candidate for a new job, to seek a promotion or simply to expand your network. Personal brands are visible in our social media profiles, the clothes we wear, our CVs and the way we speak.*

**Some topics to cover during the session:**

- What makes you unique?
- What could you bring to a new job?
- What do you not want your new employer to know about you?
- What is the achievement you are most proud of, and is it also the most important in your career?
- Is it possible to turn weaknesses into strengths? How?
- How do you find the balance between focusing on your current job and looking for the next one?
- Is this experience of participating in the Mentoring Programme encouraged/incentivised by your academic director?
- How can you engage in additional projects, volunteer work or professional development without appearing unfocused to my supervisor?
- Is this topic particularly relevant to you? Who else can you talk to who can give you information?

**Interesting reading/videos:**

- **Branding Pays: The Five-Step System to Reinvent Your Personal Brand** - Karen Kang
- **Reinventing You: Define Your Brand, Imagine Your Future** - Dorie Clarke
- **KNOWN: The handbook for building and unleashing your personal brand in the digital age** - Mark W. Schaefer

## 9. Career progression

**Preliminary reflections:**

- Promotion vs. progression
- Career progression in academia
- Career progression in industry

**Objective:**

- To understand what to expect from a given career path.

**Some topics to be covered during the session:**

- Have you already made a career development plan?
- What do you want more now, career growth or a change of pace?
- How would you ask/apply for a promotion?
- How would you know when you are ready for your next career move?
- What rewards and recognition matter most to you?
- What do you think determines a person's career progression?
- What do you think determines a person's career progression?

**Interesting reading:**

## 10. What have we achieved, what's next?

### **Preliminary reflections:**

- What have you done during this process? Have you participated in the trainings, attended the meetings as scheduled?
- Did you participate in the trainings, attend the meetings as scheduled?
- Did you prepare for the meetings, did you take notes from the meetings, did you go the extra mile?

### **Objective:**

- Think about what you have already done and what your next future will be. Ideally, you should have improved your personal career plan.

### **Some topics to discuss during the session:**

- Have you completed and used the personal career plan proposed by the UC3M Mentoring Programme?
- Do you think it is useful?
- Are you going to follow it?
- What else could you have done or can you continue to do to make the most of this experience?
- Are you willing to achieve your next personal career plan?
- We suggest this page to make a personal career plan: [Scientific Careers: Individual Development Plan](#)