



Universidad de Jaén

## **Mentoring program**

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## **1. Introduction and objectives**

This mentoring program is associated with the procedures for obtaining the accreditation of quality in human resources for research EURAXESS HRS4R (The Human Resources Strategy for Researchers), which credits the University of Jaen (UJA) as a responsible and transparent institution that is oriented towards continuous improvement in its research personnel policy.

The implementation of this policy raises the need to establish programs that promote the development of the professional career of research staff in their initial stages of training and professional development, particularly in younger and less developed areas of knowledge at UJA. The researchers who are in these early stages of their professional careers can benefit from support of group-work functioning, teaching–learning relationships from the senior research staff, and, in general, working collaborations that allow for taking advantage of potential synergies among researchers. It is also expected that this will enhance the transfer and job placement of personnel graduated from UJA.

The general objective of the mentoring program is to facilitate professional and personal development of the research staff at UJA, promoting the internationalization and impact of its research activity, and improving the chances of entering the labour market and success in entrepreneurship of doctoral staff graduated from UJA. This overall goal implies three specific objectives:

- 1) increase international, interdisciplinary, and intersectoral opportunities of our junior researcher staff through development of new skills and capabilities, which may enrich its previous experience and promote its future;
- 2) increase strengths and abilities to improve our research position in the European and international contexts, establishing intersectoral and international networks that value the potential of mentees outside UJA;

3) facilitate relationships that support the reflection of researchers on their own competencies and skills, as well as their professional opportunities, within and outside UJA.

To achieve these objectives, the program will support the research staff during the early stages of their professional career, facilitating the creation of intersectoral, intergenerational, and international professional networks that allow for mentees to explore professional alternatives within and outside UJA, with the support of experienced professionals linked to the fields of science, engineering, social sciences, and humanities that work in the university, private sector, or public administration. In this way, the program will put mentees in contact with highly trained professionals who will help them determine their competencies, skills, and career options.

This will be achieved by collaboration of mentors, who will guide and advise mentees regarding the future steps of their professional career, attending their queries and specific needs, and providing them with a broad, global, and comprehensive vision of the reality of the university system, scientific research, private enterprise, and public administration.

The expected consequence of the program is that the talent trained in UJA would serve, in turn, to attract more talent, not only for our university but also for other institutions, industries, and companies nearby. In this manner, connections between the socioeconomic environment and UJA that facilitate the transfer of knowledge, exploitation of results, and establishment of future research collaborations will be strengthened.

All this, in the longer term, will result in a greater socioeconomic development of our province. In sum, this mentoring program is proposed for the development of research, development, and innovation, creating an appropriate framework for action while considering the interests of junior researchers.

## **2. Mentored staff**

Mentees will be made up of research staff in the early stages of their research career at UJA. This staff is mainly hired either on a predoctoral contract (referred to as R1 in this document) or on a postdoctoral contract (called R2). The program will also be extended to the teaching/research staff (TRS) in the early stages of their professional career.

For the first two years of its implementation, the program is specifically designed as a pilot program restricted to R1s and R2s. However, in the second phase, the program will extend to the TRS in the first stages of their professional career who come up with needs in the field of research (for example, to improve the possibilities to obtain the accreditation of “acknowledged research terms” (*sexenios*) and research projects in competitive calls.

## **3. Mentoring teams**

Mentors will be made up of senior professionals with high expertise and experience in their fields, coming from UJA as well as from the private sector and public administration. Mentors’ work is considered as complementary to that of the thesis supervisor, and should not collide with each other. The goal of mentors is to strengthen and help in supervision tasks, on which they will always be subordinated vis-à-vis the thesis supervisors. Thus, mentors will not be involved in specific development or dissemination issues related to doctoral thesis, but rather in providing advice on the research career from a global perspective.

The mentoring program is planned at two levels. On the one hand, it establishes a general mentoring team made up of people with institutional or management responsibilities at UJA, which will advise mentees as a whole. External professionals (to UJA) with extensive experience in business and/or public administration will also join this team.

On the other hand, a group of specific mentors will be established, made of senior TRS UJA members who have extensive expertise and professional experience in their field of knowledge. Both mentoring teams will collaborate on the mentoring process; the general team will be providing a more global and integrated vision of the transfer, public–private sector relationships, internationalization, etc.; the specific team will be focusing on more specific issues of each scientific/technical area.

### **3.1 General mentoring team**

The following personnel will comprise this team:

- The members of UJA's government team with competencies in research, knowledge, transfer, and internationalization.
- The direction staff of the doctoral school.
- The direction staff of the International Projects Office.
- The direction staff of the Office of Transfer of Research Results.
- A director from any of the following research clusters: Canters for Advanced Studies or University or Interuniversity Research Institutes.
- Professionals with management responsibility from the private sector.
- A person with management responsibility from public administration.

### **3.2 Specific mentoring**

The specific mentors from UJA must have extensive and accredited research experience. At UJA, we have emeritus professors, who have extensive and proven experience in research tasks and whose knowledge can and should be used in the training of the less experienced research staff.

Teaching staff with a current acknowledged research term (*sexenio vivo*) and owning at least three of these terms can also partake of specific mentoring. These must also have experience in doctoral theses supervision as well as in management of R&D projects in national or European programs.

The incorporation of this staff to the mentoring program will be carried out at their own request or on the basis of specific calls devoted to this purpose. The selection of mentors who finally join the program will be made by the Research Commission of UJA, based on public criteria of merit and capacity. Mentors' participation in the mentoring program at any level will be recognized in accordance with the criteria established annually in the Teaching Organization Plan. This recognition will respond to effective mentoring actions and will depend on the number of people mentored.

#### **4. Mentoring assignment**

The Vice-Rectorate with competencies in research will receive the mentoring applications and will assign them to the specific mentor staff according to the corresponding area of knowledge and, where possible, considering the applicant's preferences. In case it is necessary to establish an order of preference to requests within each category of contracts (R1 and R2), preference will be given to applicants whose contracts are closest to completion.

#### **5. Procedures and relationships between mentors and mentees**

This mentoring program establishes the following procedure and relationship framework:

- At the beginning of the program, a public presentation will be held in which the objectives and the relationship framework between mentors and mentees will be specified.

- Mentors and mentored research staff are expected to meet face-to-face or virtually at least three times per academic course, the recommended frequency being around six meetings per course.
  
- The mentor will be able to act as a reviewer of scientific texts, either advising on the writing of manuscripts, or serving as a scientific reviewer.
  
- The mentor will also be able to act as a reviewer of research proposals, advising on their preparation and improvement.
  
- The mentor may lecture in conferences or seminars on research methodologies, management of research projects, writing of scientific papers, scientific career development, etc.
  
- The mentor cannot co-author publications or co-direct R&D projects with the mentored staff unless there is a written request and authorization from the Vice-Rectorate with competences in research.
  
- At the beginning of the program, mentors will analyse the profile of the mentored staff with attention to the professional trajectory and CV of the latter, so that the strengths and weaknesses of mentees are identified, as well as the necessary steps and training are carried out to improve the development of mentees' professional career.
  
- The duration of the program will be one academic year, and it would be possible to renew it once mentors and mentees submit their corresponding reports at the end of the course.



## **6. Aspects related to the training and advice to mentees**

This section describes some aspects that should be considered especially in relation to advising the mentored staff. When considered appropriate, and if permitted by budget availability, specific training courses addressed to the mentored research staff may be organized with the following purposes:

- Improve the management abilities for the different aspects of research: management of research projects at all stages, from the search of calls and funding opportunities, drafting and application to project reports (e.g., knowledge of different national and international calls and programs such as the European Framework Program, European Research Council, calls, public–private funding sources, project design and drafting, evaluation and selection criteria, etc.)
- Strategies to increase the effectiveness and capacity in communication and dissemination of research results, increase the impact of results, identify the most appropriate journals for publication of the results, increase the visibility and dissemination of the work carried out, etc.
- Ethical aspects involved in research, and strategies to increase the replicability of results in science.
- Understanding and increasing the potential market value of research (e.g., strategies to develop consortiums, public–private collaborations, marketing strategies, mechanisms for the transfer of knowledge, etc.)
- Understanding the framework and benefits of Open Science and dissemination strategies thereof.

Ability to motivate and influence others, delegate work, manage resources, coordinate tasks, control and problem solutions, supervise in research, etc.

- Improving results presentation: preparation of scientific papers or public presentations.
- Management of laboratory and design of experiments.
- Knowledge and use of the Central Services of Support to the Investigation of UJA.
- Communication, dissemination, and application of research results (publication strategies, data management plan, communication, dissemination, data exploitation, etc.)
- Aspects related to the transfer of research results, patent application process, and creation of technology-based companies and spin-offs.
- Aspects related to business management and human resources.
- Aspects related to the search for opportunities for the development of a professional or research career.

### ***7. Monitoring procedures***

Both the mentor staff and the research staff to be mentored must present a brief report of the activities carried out during the program at the end of the corresponding academic year. Such report will specify the activities carried out, with indication of the support received from the mentors (for example, project applications to different calls, publications attained, artistic activities, stays in other centers, etc.).

Conflicts between mentors and mentees that may arise in the context of this plan will be resolved by the Ombudsman Academic. The management of the mentoring program will be carried out by the Vice-Rectorate with competences in research, with the advice of the Research Commission.