MENTORING PROGRAMME FOR PRE-DOCTORAL AND POST-DOCTORAL RESEARCH STAFF

(2023 pilot programme)

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1. Introduction

Mentoring is a process that encourages the sharing of experiences, knowledge and skills between a mentor and an individual who needs to develop said abilities. The mentor will foster the vocational development of professionals who are about to complete their study programme or are just embarking on their early employment or business experiences.

This pilot mentoring and supervision programme is aimed at **pre-doctoral and post-doctoral research staff** and it sits within the framework of the activities envisaged in the [Plan of Action of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers - HRS4R](#) (lines A8 and A9).

A mentoring programme is set up with the following goals:
- To provide information about career options and encourage professional development.
- To foster professional relationships.
- To promote best scientific practices.

2. Principles and criteria for mentoring

2.1 Aims for mentors

- To supervise, guide and monitor the work of young researchers, while allowing them enough freedom to grow intellectually. It is important to strike a balance between giving advice and recommendations to young researchers, and encouraging their independence.
- To teach and convey the general ethical principles and values by which research activity should be underpinned and the best scientific practices.
- To encourage critical thinking among young people, enhancing their learning through research activities and examples, helping young researchers to come up with their own answers.
- To act as role models for young researchers.
- To provide advice on career opportunities.
- To offer guidance on how to promote a balance between research activity and personal life (work-life balance).
- To have the ability to perceive conflict situations and act as mediators, adhering to the supervision protocol for pre-doctoral and post-doctoral researchers.
- To guarantee confidentiality and trust with regard to the issues addressed.

2.2 Aims for young researchers

- To continually adopt an open attitude to learn from researchers with an extensive track record and experience.
- To be responsible and to adhere to any agreements established in relation to the work to be conducted.

- To rely on the experience and recommendations of the mentors while also being able to contribute with and develop one's own ideas.
- To develop an awareness of the social responsibility involved with being a researcher.

2.3   Support for pre-doctoral researchers

- Pre-doctoral researchers must be provided with a written copy of the principles underpinning the relationship with their mentor.
- Mentees must accept responsibility for driving the process.
- Doctoral students should be provided with support in order to lay out an educational pathway that suits their needs.
- Students should be given guidance in defining a quality research plan, ensuring they have the resources needed to benefit from sound methodological tools and a conceptual framework.
- Mentors should set an example on best scientific practices, providing information about the institution's code of best practices, the values of scientific integrity and the need for research projects to be approved by the relevant Ethics Committee.
- Pre-doctoral researchers must receive support enabling them to take part in training activities, seminars, workshops, and internal and external courses that will strengthen their scientific, professional and personal development skills. Their activity should be carefully monitored.
- Mentors should provide guidance to students (about quality, relevance, opportunity, etc.) and support them in taking part in scientific meetings and conferences, and with drafting scientific publications (writing and reviewing). In addition, they should provide them with an induction to the dissemination of research among stakeholders, in particular among patients, families and patient organisations.

2.4   Support for post-doctoral researchers

- The commitments taken on by both the mentor and the post-doctoral researcher must be set out in writing.
- Information should be given on the resources the researcher can benefit from: the cross-disciplinary resources of the Institution (scientific and technical, or management related) and those of the specific laboratory or research group the researcher is joining.
- It is necessary to inform about the applicable Code of Best Scientific Practices.
- It is also necessary to inform about the corresponding Ethics Committee and the procedure for the approval of research projects.
- The mentor should continue to offer tutoring on experimental designs, data analysis, problem-solving strategies, and interpretation of findings and of scientific literature.
- It is necessary to establish a work plan and inform young researchers about the projection and assessment of their scientific career (providing information about current assessment guides and documents).
- Mentors must involve post-doctoral research staff in scientific collaborations, research projects, drafting of publications and participation in conferences.

- Researchers should be provided with support so they can access all the internal and external research and innovation activities that may enhance their personal and professional skills.
- They should be encouraged to become mentors for undergraduate students in order to develop new skills.
- The activity should be steered towards the area in which the post-doctoral researchers are pursuing their researcher- or technician-oriented scientific career.

3. Design and planning of the programme

The whole programme will last 9 months. Below is a table to sum up the various stages with details about what each one of them involves.

		April	May	June	July	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan. 24	February	March	April	May
Stage I	**Selection of mentors and mentees**													
	Call and registration for the programme													
	Assessment of applications received	WG												
	Pairing and contact with interested parties													
Stage II	**Mentoring**													
	Project launch event						Sept.17/10							
	Training seminars						Sept.17/10							
	Interviews with the mentors and mentees (at least 3)													
Stage III	**Close and assessment of the programme**													
	Project closing event													
	Analysis of satisfaction surveys													
Stage IV	**Re-definition and planning of new edition with WG**													

Stage 1: Selection of mentors and mentored staff (mentees)

In April, the call for registration to the programme will open.

Application forms for registration may be submitted by researchers who want to take part as mentors and by staff who wish to be mentored up to **26 September 2023**. Thereafter, the applications will be reviewed and the candidates that will join the programme shall be selected.
Once the participants have been chosen, the pairs will be proposed taking into consideration shared interests. They will be contacted to inform them about the start of the process in May.

Stage 2: Mentoring

In order to begin this stage, a launch event will be organised to allow the mentors and mentees to meet, and training sessions will be provided to familiarise participants with the resources available. This stage will also serve as an opportunity to address any queries.

Next, interviews will be conducted. This stage will last for a maximum of 5 months according to the specific needs and the development of the mentee. A minimum of three meetings with the mentor over a period of 3 to 5 months will be guaranteed, to take place between October and April 2024. These meetings will be held approximately every 2 months. The mentors will base these sessions on the materials provided and any other relevant resources they see fit. Also, the mentees shall prepare a brief account of the meetings held.

Stage 3: Close and assessment

The assessment of the process shall take place in December and will entail analysing the satisfaction surveys. This will be followed by a programme closing event in which feedback will be provided on the basis of the aforesaid analysis.

Stage 4: Re-definition of the mentoring programme

On the basis of the outcomes of the analysis, an enhanced version of the programme will be defined with a host of updated tools and a new schedule so the process can be carried out again.

Aside from the satisfaction surveys, a focus group may be organised with certain participants in order to provide additional information for analysis.

4. Programme participation procedure and admission requirements

- **Number of annual places**: a total of 10 places will be offered on the programme for mentors and 10 for mentored staff. Each mentor will be assigned no more than one 1 mentee taking into consideration compatibility criteria based on the specifications of the programme.

- **Requirements for mentors:** to ensure that mentoring for these highly specialised professionals is beneficial and effective, it is vital to benefit from mentors with a well-established professional background. Accordingly:
  - Mentors should be R3 and R4 research staff, university lecturers or retired research staff.
  - The ideal distribution of mentors will be at least one for each research programme.

- **Requirements for mentored staff:**
  - To be pre-doctoral and post-doctoral staff members.

- **Registration using the form once the call is open**: to take part in the programme, it is necessary to meet the requirements stated and to register using the individual forms specifically intended for those seeking to be mentors or for those researchers who are hoping to secure a mentor.

- If the number of applications exceeds the number of places available, there will be 5 places assigned to pre-doctoral researchers and 5 to post-doctoral researchers. **Priority for admission to the programme** shall be based on the following aspects:
  - Professionals who are closer to entering a new professional stage.
  - Assurance of gender equity.
  - Representativeness of various research fields.
  - Assurance of cultural and geographical diversity.

  In all cases, a covering letter will also be required which will be reviewed by the Working Group on Careers in charge of assigning pairs.

5. Assignment of mentors and mentees

Upon enrolling, volunteers who wish to become mentors and mentees interested in taking part will register by using a specific application form that incorporates questions such as their field of activity or specialist area, their professional career expectations, their experience and their motivations for taking part in the programme. No prior professional link between mentors and mentees is required. Based on the data collected, mentors and mentees will be paired according to compatibility of interests and field of activity, and generally speaking, the aim will be to form teams that theoretically will be more beneficial for both parties.

This information will be reviewed by the Working Group on Careers which will be responsible for assigning pairs and informing interested parties.

Once the process is underway, if any individual wishes to apply for a change due to encountering a difficulty they can do so by writing to frecerca.rrhh@sjd.es and the Careers Committee will analyse their request, assuring the utmost confidentiality.

6. Resources

6.1 For stage 1:

- Informative guide about the programme.
- Registration forms (*I would like to benefit from a mentor* or *I would like to be a mentor*).
    - o I would like **to be** a mentor: https://forms.office.com/e/LJAkHHyP9y
    - o I would like **to benefit from** a mentor https://forms.office.com/e/pMZk1s000a
- Agreement between mentor and mentee: confidentiality. This must be signed before beginning mentoring.

6.2 For stage 2:

- Training sessions
- Support documents for recording interviews

6.3 For stage 3:

- Final questionnaire and satisfaction survey for mentors
- Final questionnaire and satisfaction survey for mentees