

# Guidelines to mentoring assistant professors at ETH Zurich

## 1. About these guidelines

These guidelines provide an encompassing orientation for mentoring assistant professors with and without tenure track at ETH Zurich. It is intended to facilitate the entry into mentoring and to contribute to a successful relationship between the assistant professor in the role of mentee and an experienced professor in the role of mentor.

## 2. Goals and prerequisites of mentoring

Mentoring provides active support to assistant professors over the course of their professorship, in order to expand their competences for shaping their academic career in a goal-oriented way. This is done, for example, by passing on knowledge and experience, by conveying the ETH culture and values, by establishing contacts, and by supporting networking. The mentor advises the new assistant professor and supports him or her in integrating into the new university environment.

Transparent communication of mutual expectations forms the basis for successful mentoring. Mutual trust also plays a major role and has a significant influence on good mentoring. It is crucial that the exchange between the mentor and the mentee is conducted as an open dialogue with an appreciative attitude. There should be a common understanding that the contents discussed during the mentoring relationship will be treated confidentially. If the mentor provides information to third parties in the context of evaluations, the information will be limited to general impressions, but not to specific content discussed during the mentoring.

## 3. Selection of the mentor

At least one associate or full professor in the department will serve as the primary mentor to each assistant professor. Any additional mentors may also be professors from another department. The appointment of mentors is made by mutual agreement between all parties involved and must be communicated to the Office for Faculty staff no later than three months after taking up the professorship. To ensure that the new assistant professors already have a direct contact

person at the time of appointment, the head of the department or his/her deputy assumes the role of mentor in the initial phase. Later on, the mentee will decide on a mentor based on personal experience and in consultation with the head of the department. A change of mentor can be initiated by mutual agreement between the mentor and assistant professor and in consultation with the department. The Office for Faculty staff must be informed promptly of any changes in this regard.

## **4. Tasks of mentor and mentee**

### **4.1. Tasks of the mentor**

The mentor assumes a bridging function between the department and the new assistant professor and acts as the first point of contact for questions about integration in the department and at ETH Zurich as well as about the development of the scientific career. He or she informs himself/herself about the mentoring task in detail, consciously performs the mentoring task, and thereby shows the mentee that the mentoring and the targeted support are taken seriously.

The mentor's tasks and responsibilities include:

- conducting an initial exchange within the first three months of the assistant professor's arrival to clarify the goals of mentoring, mutual expectations, and the roles of mentor and mentee.
- adjustment of the mentoring according to the needs and goals of the mentee
- support in clarifying the requirements for the next career step
- proactive support for the mentee in the tenure process or in qualifying for the next career step
- providing feedback on the agreed topics, suggestions, and further advice to support the mentee
- providing access to one's own network and networking support for the mentee
- clarifying questions about ETH culture and values
- addressing and clarifying any conflicts regarding the mentoring relationship with the mentee; if necessary, finding a solution together with the head of the department.

In the case of questions and problems for which the mentor cannot provide information and support, the mentor should refer to the responsible offices.

### **4.2. Tasks of the mentee**

The mentee is responsible for selecting the topics and issues to be discussed in mentoring and for implementing the proposed solutions.

The tasks and responsibilities of the mentee include:

- active and demand-oriented initiation of discussions and meetings with the mentor; introduction of topics and questions into the mentoring meetings

- clear communication of expectations regarding the goals and content of mentoring as well as the format of mentoring meetings
- development and implementation of solutions to the topics and issues discussed
- reflection and discussion on the integration into the department and ETH Zurich, the goals and contents of the mentoring, and the further development steps in the academic career
- critical reflection and consideration of feedback from the mentor
- addressing and clarifying any conflicts regarding the mentoring relationship with the mentor; if necessary, finding a solution together with the head of the department.

## 5. Complementary offers

All assistant professors with tenure track are encouraged to contact the member of the ETH Tenure Committee appointed for their department to discuss the evaluation criteria and specific features of the tenure procedure at ETH Zurich. The Office for Faculty team is available for strategic academic questions. Personal questions and topics relating to leadership development are covered by the Consulting for Professors team.

## Appendix: Suggested topics for mentoring

Below is a list with some suggestions for possible mentoring topics. It is expressly not intended as a checklist to be worked through completely, but rather to serve as a stimulus and orientation and to offer topics that can be taken up in the context of the meetings and conversations in addition to conveying the ETH culture:

- Career development
  - *necessary qualifications for the next career step and criteria for a successful tenure procedure; expectations of the department*
  - *special constellations in the research field that should be taken into account when selecting reviewers or proposing possible reviewers; strategically skillful behavior in order to avoid an unfavorable influence of such constellations on the evaluation and the tenure procedure.*
  - *balance between research and teaching and, if necessary, technology transfer and outreach*
  - *right time to become active on the job market; preparation for applications and interviews at other universities, especially for assistant professors without tenure track*
- Research
  - *scientific integrity and exemplifying good scientific practice in everyday research*
  - *publication strategies; relevant publication organs*
  - *acquisition of third-party funding; relevant funding programs (ETH-internal and -external)*

- *research data management*
- *selection of important conferences for themselves and for doctoral students and post-docs*
- *notes on who gets invited for keynotes and nominated for awards, and how*
- *possible memberships in important professional societies*
- *collaboration and networking opportunities within and outside the department or ETH Zurich*
- Teaching
  - *expectations of the department, including the scope of teaching and the level at which teaching is to take place, as well as peculiarities of teaching at ETH Zurich*
  - *advantages and disadvantages of taking over courses from the predecessor vs. re-designing courses*
  - *level of the students*
  - *dealing with teaching evaluations*
  - *possible involvement of assistants and students in teaching*
- Management tasks
  - *ideal group size and structure*
  - *step-by-step development of the research group; reliable processes for recruiting doctoral students or postdocs; prerequisites and admission criteria for doctoral studies at ETH Zurich; procedure for hiring administrative and technical staff*
  - *communication with staff; group meetings; dealing with conflicts*
  - *dealing with performance and time pressure*
  - *overview of the scientific functions at ETH and their relevance in the initial phase of the professorship*
  - *strategic participation in academic self-administration tasks*
- Further contacts e. g.
  - *for questions concerning teaching (e. g. UTL)*
  - *for questions regarding research, third-party funding applications, or exploitation of results (Office of Research, ETH Grants Office, ETH transfer)*
  - *in challenging constellations with employees*
  - *for questions on laboratory setup, animal welfare, laboratory safety, etc.*
  - *on issues of finance and compliance (e. g. procurement), legal bases, rules, etc.*