

CAREER MENTORING FOR POSTDOCS

INFOSESSION 2026 - 15-01-'26



- 1 Postdoc Career Hub
- 2 Career Mentoring for Postdocs
- 3 Timeline '25-'26
- 4 Application Selection Criteria
- 5 Mandatory Workshop for mentees
- 6 Matching
- 7 Career Mentoring Phase
- 8 Testimonials
- 9 Q&A

OVERVIEW

POSTDOC CAREER HUB



POSTDOC CAREER HUB - WHY

A postdoc is not a career [...]
it is a time of transition [...]
it is **a stepping stone**
to the next stage in your career,
be that in academia
or in other sectors



Liz Elvidge et al., 2017:4
What every Postdoc needs to know



GOVERNMENT

ACADEMIA

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

CIVIL SOCIETY

INDUSTRY

POST DOC PHASE

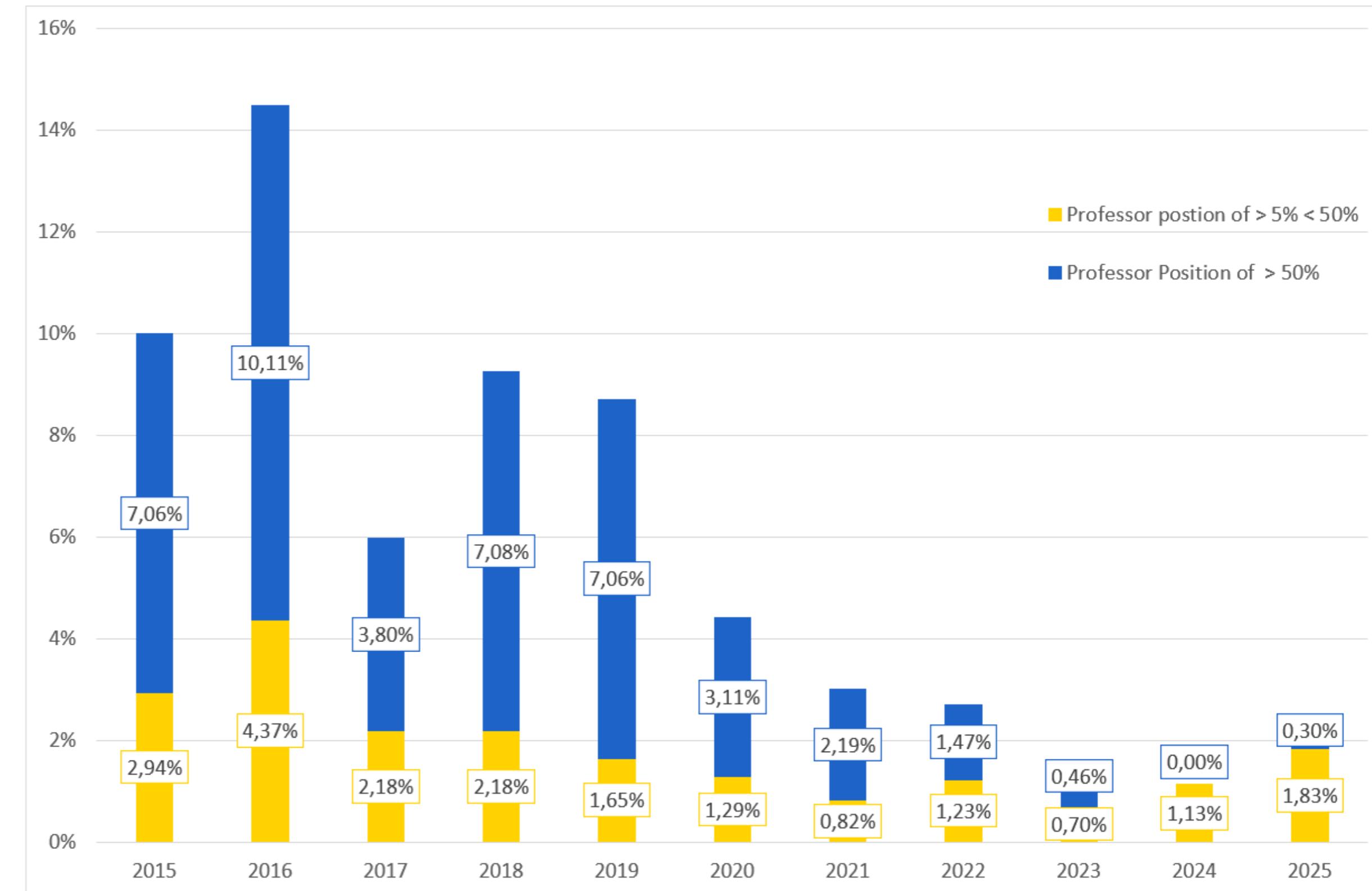
POSTDOC CAREER HUB - WHY

Ghent University Postdocs

who obtained a Ghent University professorial position

of respectively 5 to 50% and more than 50%

per calendar year of first postdoctoral appointment (%)



POSTDOC CAREER HUB - VISION

Ghent University implements a career policy that does not just target the expansion of knowledge and research skills, but that focuses on **a wider development of skills**, stimulating and recognizing the various tasks, authorities and responsibilities (i.e. academic and all other research-related performances in a wider sense). Coaching, **mentoring**, training and tailor-made education help postdocs to fine-tune their competencies and boosts their appeal on **the internal and external labour market**.

POSTDOC CAREER HUB - VISION

»» **Goal?** Helping you shape and navigate your (future) career

»» Finding a fulfilling job starts with

- »» knowing who you are,
- »» what the labour market offers,
- »» and how to take your next step.

»» Explore our postdoc website: ugent.be/postdoc

- »» Career Support: training, e-tools & guides – i.a. mentoring
- »» Funding & mobility opportunities
- »» Calendar of activities by UGent, the Postdoc Community and partners - from social meetups to career support sessions
- »» ...and more resources to boost your career journey



CAREER MENTORING POSTDOCS



CAREER MENTORING - WHY

I struggle more often with questions like
“how will my career proceed?”,
“how can I boost my opportunities?”,
“do I feel ok in the academic competitive mentality?”

I can talk about these questions with my peer postdocs, but it would be nice if I could ask them to a professor in a confidential setting.



Mentee former edition

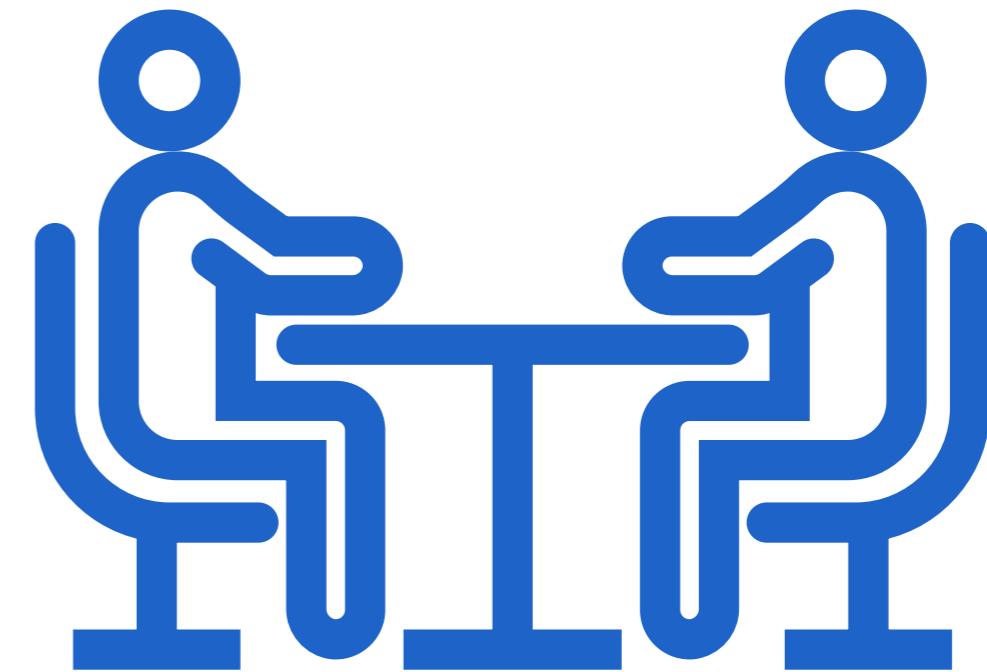
MENTORING - DEFINITION

» Many definitions of mentoring, but they all share one key idea: **it's about empowering you to take charge of your own learning and development.**

Mentoring is an **interpersonal** activity

to **support and encourage** people
to **manage their own learning**, in order that they

maximise their potential,
develop their skills,
improve their performance and
become the person they want to be.



Oxford School of Coaching and Mentoring

MENTORING - DEFINITION

- »» **Development approach:** encourage people to think more carefully about their personal ambitions and professional goals; the mentee is eager to learn and future-oriented
- »» **Person-centered:** one-to-one supportive relationship
- »» **Confidential:** strength of mentoring lies in the relationship of mutual trust and respect that is built during the informal and confidential one-to-one contacts
- »» **Mentee-driven:** the process and the main topics of discussion are determined by the mentee

“MENTORING IS A BRAIN TO
PICK, AN EAR TO LISTEN,
AND A PUSH IN THE RIGHT
DIRECTION.”

John Crosby

MENTORING – DEFINITION MENTOR

A good mentor is someone who is **genuinely interested** in a colleague / person with fewer miles on the clock who is a **listening ear** for that person and who gives **selfless advice from her / his experience** on how to deal with certain challenges with the **sole purpose of helping that person to develop further**.

Stef Craps, Mentoring For ZAP

The flow of learning is two-way, and emphasis lies on individual exchange of experiences, not on shaping the mentee in a certain direction

CAREER MENTORING @ GHENT UNIVERSITY

- »» **Goal:** provide postdocs with a trusted sounding board and support beyond their own faculty. The support is twofold:
 - »» **Career related support:** guiding the mentee in identifying and developing career opportunities; knowledge sharing, in which learning aspects and the transfer of knowledge are central.
 - »» **Psychosocial support:** personal support, such as giving encouragement and helping to build self-confidence, which increases the protégé's self-esteem.



CAREER MENTORING @ GHENT UNIVERSITY

- »» **Coordination:** Postdoc Career Hub (Doctoral School, previously HR)
- »» **Format:** 8-month annual programme (April–November 2026)
- »» **One program – two tracks**
 - »» Gain insight and advice in building an **academic career**. Mentor: Professor Ghent University (9th edition)
 - »» Explore **careers beyond academia**. Mentor: External experts, often PhD alumni → role models of ‘career changing’ (7th edition)



CAREER MENTORING @ GHENT UNIVERSITY

Public sector / civil society

European Broadcast Union
FEBEG
Solidaris
WHO

Private sector

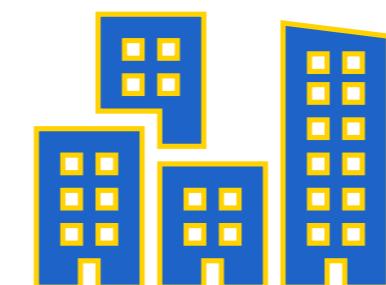
Arm
BASF
BioLizard
Biovia
Confo Therapeutics
Gradient
Innogenetics / Fujirebio
Johnson & Johnson
KBC
Labcorp
Luceda Photonics
Medtronic
Normec OWS
Origanus
RIC Group
Sofics

Research / higher education institutions

Imec
VIB
Arteveldehogeschool
Vlerick Business School
VIVES

Self-employed / entrepreneurs / Spin-offs

BIO INX
4Tissue
Clever Coyote



MENTORING – HOW TO AIM FOR SUCCESS

Suggestions for mentors and mentees

- » Take time for genuine conversations
- » Maintain a professional balance — friendly but focused
- » Stay open to feedback and new perspectives
- » Build trust and a safe space; keep conversation confidential
- » Be patient — mentoring is a process / journey, not a quick fix
- » Engage fully, honour your commitments and commit to the process
- » Contact the mentoring team if doubts or issues arise



MENTORING – HOW TO AIM FOR SUCCESS

Suggestions for mentees

- » Adopt a [growth mindset](#) — stay curious and flexible
- » Dare to ask questions, be open, and stay honest
- » Proactively explore career opportunities across sectors
- » Reflect on your strengths and areas for development
- » Take ownership, you lead the process



The mentee takes an active and **proactive** role,
leads the mentoring process,
and decides **independently** (as equal partner)
what to take from this exchange

MENTORING – HOW TO AIM FOR SUCCES

Suggestions for mentors

- » Listen actively and ask thoughtful questions
- » Share experiences, not ready-made solutions
- » Encourage reflection rather than directing
- » Share relevant information — not an overload of advice.
- » Use and open your network when relevant
- » Inspire, motivate, empathize and remain approachable and open



The mentor acts as trusted advisor, guide, sounding board
— sharing experiences and lessons learned.

The mentor is not a problem-solver, job hunter, or content expert.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME? (MENTEE)

 Gain **clarity** on your career direction and **insights** into job types and sectors

 Develop skills, **confidence** and self-awareness

 Expand your **network** beyond your own faculty

 Receive **honest feedback** from an experienced professional

 Learn to take **ownership** of your next steps

 A **safe environment**



WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME? (MENTOR)



Share your knowledge and experiences and **give back** to the next generation



Broadening your perspective (work cultures, generations,...) and **network**



Increase self-awareness and reflection on your **own career journey**



Strengthen coaching and leadership skills



Personal contribution to a caring working environment



Personal fulfilment (make a difference, new challenge, altruism, inspiring talks, ...)



...

You must eat anyway,
why not have lunch with your mentee?

TIMELINE ‘25-’26





LAUNCH

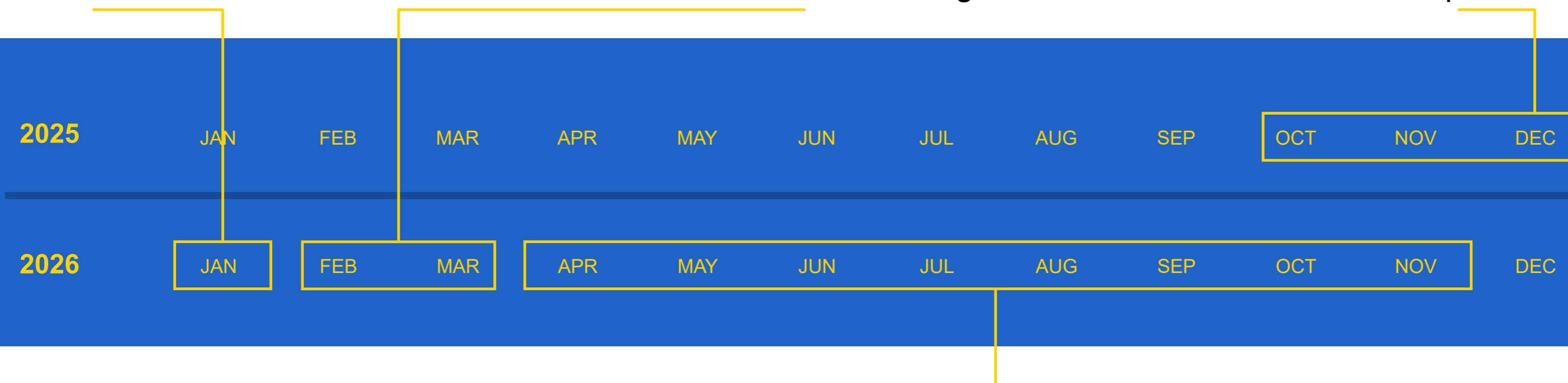
- »» **15/01**: Infosession
- »» **25/01**: Closing registrations
- »» **26/01-02/02**: Selection

INTRODUCTION

- »» **13-23/02**: Compulsory workshop mentees
- »» **24/02-13/03**: Matching

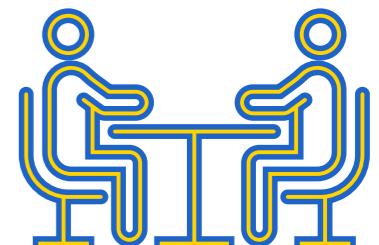
PREPARATION

- »» **03/11**: Call labour market
- »» **02/12**: Call professors
- »» **12/12**: Call postdocs



CAREER MENTORING TRAJECTORY

- »» **8 months**: **01/04/'26 – 30/11/'26**
- »» Minimum 3 mandatory one-on-one meetings mentor-mentee; ideally 4 to 6
- »» **07/09**: Mentee interview: *Your Career in Motion: Lessons from the Past Months*
- »» **05/10**: Start evaluation



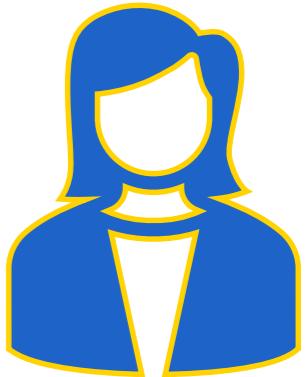
APPLICATION SELECTION CRITERIA



APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

» Submit your ID through a questionnaire (deadline: 25/01/2026)

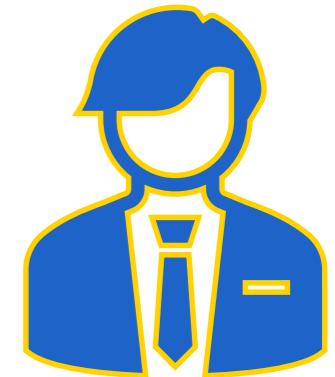
- » [Enrol as a Non-academic Mentor](#)
- » [Enrol as an Academic Mentor](#)
- » [Enrol as a Mentee](#)



» 02/02/2026: Notification of **selection** - 13/03/2026: Notification of **matching**

» For Mentees:

- » Reminder: substantive motivation and fully completed form are selection criteria
- » Indicate your workshop date preference
- » Specify your mentor preference: experience in 1. academic careers - 2. non-academic careers - 3 both academic and non-academic - 4. entrepreneurship / spin-offs



CRITERIA FOR MENTORS: MERITS



Academic mentors

- Professorship @ Ghent University
- Minimum of 10% permanent position
- No seniority criterium
- Academic or intersectoral focus



Non-academic mentors

- Proven track record and expertise
- Connection with the academic world
- Phd as an asset, but not necessary
- Non-academic or intersectoral focus

- Fully completed mentor-ID-form
- Engagement to meet at least three times
- Engagement to meet in person
- **A suitable match**

CRITERIA FOR POSTDOCS: ENGAGEMENT



Selection criteria in order of application

Priority will be given to applicants with a convincing motivation and who are (nearer) the end of their employment

CRITERIA FOR POSTDOCS: ENGAGEMENT

Engagement to meet the expectations of the program

- » Participation in the mandatory workshop
- » Engagement to take the lead
- » Engagement to actively engage with your mentor, prepare for meetings, follow up, and be an open-minded critical thinker
- » Engagement to meet in person with your mentor at least 3 times (preferably 4 to 6) over the course of eight months.
- » Willingness to step outside your comfort zone.



This is an opportunity to ask
“everything you always wanted to know but were afraid to ask”
(to your supervisor, direct colleagues)

MANDATORY WORKSHOP



MANDATORY WORKSHOP - MENTEES

»» Goals:

»» **Career reflection and self-reflection**

- »» Explore your needs, motivation, interests, values, competencies, skills, ...
- »» What is a fulfilling job to you?

»» **Preparing for the career mentoring trajectory**

- »» Topics to discuss, actions to take, questions to ask, ...

»» Dates:

- »» **Friday 13/02/'26** – 9 AM till 2PM - Campus Boekentoren, Blandijn, Room 2.24.
- »» **Tuesday 17/02/'26** – 9 AM till 2PM - Campus Mercator A, Room A1.04
- »» **Thursday 19/02/'26** – 9 AM till 2PM - Campus Boekentoren, Blandijn, Room 2.24.
- »» **Friday 20/02/'26** – 9 AM till 2PM - Campus Boekentoren, Blandijn, Room 0.8.

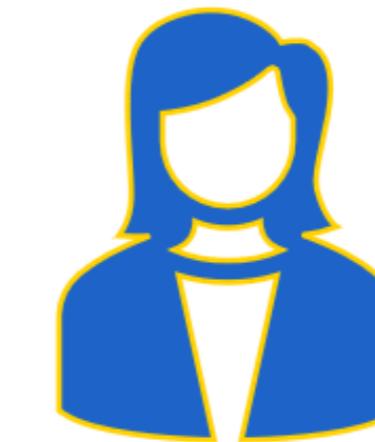
MANDATORY WORKSHOP - MENTORS

» And mentors? No workshop but career **mentoring guidelines** via email after enrollment

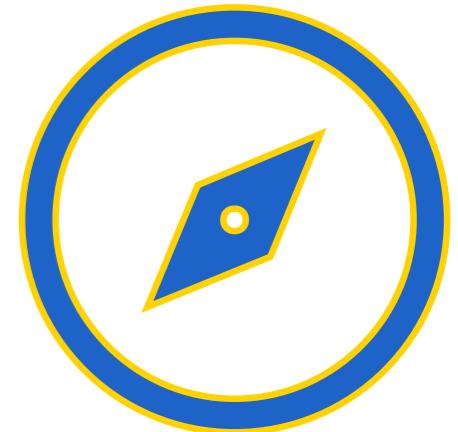
Career Mentoring for Postdocs – Guidelines for Mentors

1. Introduction

I struggle more often with questions like
“**how will my career proceed?**”,
“**how can I boost my opportunities?**”,
“**do I feel ok in the academic competitive mentality?**”
I can talk about these questions with my peer postdocs,
but it would be nice if I could ask them
to a professor in a confidential setting.



Mentee former edition





MATCHING - PROCESS

- »» Matching is no exact science
- »» Based on:
 - »» **Mentee ID & motivation form**
 - »» **Mentee workshop participation & observations**
 - »» **Mentor ID form**
- »» Aim: align **mentees' expectations, needs & personality** with **mentors' expertise, style & personality**
 - »» The more insights we collect, the closer we get to a good match
 - »» Still: we keep the **questionnaire short** → reason for the reassessed version



MENTEE FORM → WORKSHOP → MENTOR FORM → MATCHING

MATCHING – SOME CRITERIA

What we look at	Why it matters
Type of mentor* + Sector or research field preferences	Fit with mentee's career questions
Topics mentees want to address vs. mentor expertise Scientific background	Common ground for meaningful dialogue Shared context & relevant expertise
Workshop observations & mentee engagement Mentee & Mentor ID's	Insight into personality & mentoring needs
Relevant faculty other than mentee's + No conflict of interest	Avoid hierarchical links Ensure trust & openness

* academic, (non-)academic, mixed, entrepreneurial

MATCHING – INDICATIVE TIMELINE

- »» 24/02: Start matching process (i.e. after the workshop)
 - »» Additional mentors will be sought if needed
- »» 04/03: **Mentor proposal sent to mentees**
 - »» 09/03: Deadline for motivated objections
- »» 04/03-10/03: Looking for new matches if necessary
- »» 11/03: **Mentee proposal sent to mentors**
- »» 13/03: Mail to interested mentors without a match



Motivated objections for mentees: Rematching will **only** be considered in cases where there are well-substantiated objections based on the matching criteria.

We will do our best but cannot guarantee a match for all applicants.

CAREER MENTORING PHASE



MENTORING - ONE-TO-ONE-MEETINGS

- »» **Before April 1:** Mentee schedules first meeting with mentor (by April 17).
- »» **Meet regularly**
 - »» At least **3 meetings**; ideally every **6–8 weeks**
 - »» **In person**, with additional contact via email, Teams, phone, ...
 - »» In an **informal setting** (e.g. café, restaurant, shared activity)
- »» **Try other learning formats**
 - »» Explore options like **company visits** or **half-day job shadowing**
- »» **Take It step by step**
 - »» No need to cover everything in the first meeting
 - »» Allow time for the relationship to develop
 - »» Prepare!
 - »» End mentoring with a proper closing conversation, don't just disappear.

**IT'S NOT ABOUT
"HAVING" TIME.
IT'S ABOUT
MAKING TIME.**

MENTORING – BASIC FORMAT - INSPIRATION

» 3 stages

Stage	Objective	Achieved by	Outcome
1 - Where are we now?	Exploring past and present	Storytelling	Awareness
2 - Where do we want to be?	Define possible professional aspirations and discuss on what you may need to get there	Developing the preferred scenario	Vision / goal
3 - How will we get there?	Action planning, enabling mentee to make own decisions and take appropriate action	Objective setting	Strategy for achieving vision / goal

MENTORING - TOPICS TO TALK ABOUT

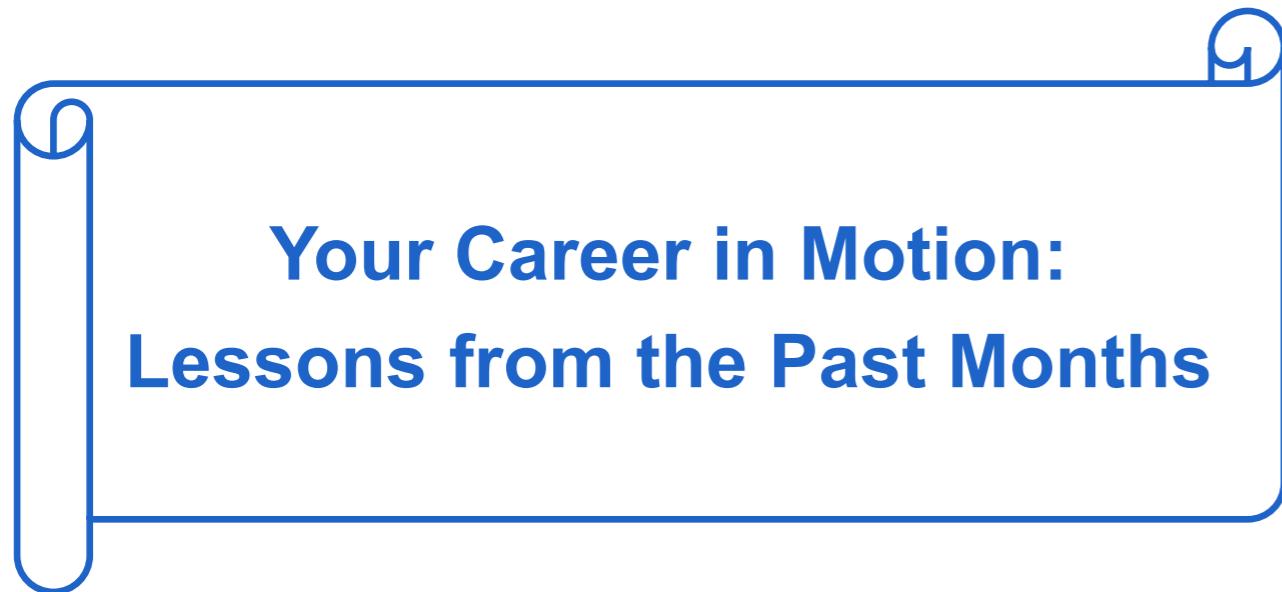
- » **Self-Development** – Personal growth, self-awareness, and well-being
e.g. *talents, competencies, confidence, resilience, work-life balance*
- » **Career Orientation** – Exploring options, making decisions, and planning ahead
e.g. *career transitions, expectations, balancing roles, organizational culture, competitiveness*
- » **Diversity & Inclusion** – Navigating diverse environments and experiences
e.g. *international mobility, cultural diversity, experiences of underrepresented groups*
- » **Sectors & Work Contexts** – Insights into academic and non-academic career
e.g. *higher education, public sector, civil society, R&D, consultancy, entrepreneurship, industry*
- » **Transferable Skills** – Competencies valuable across all paths
e.g. *leadership, collaboration, conflict management, strategic thinking, networking, impact*
- » **Research Skills & Strategy** – Building a sustainable research profile
e.g. research design, leading teams, publication strategy, grant writing

MENTORING - ICE BREAKERS FIRST MEETING

- » How can we make sure this is a confidential and safe space for open conversation? (MR / ME)
- » What does a typical workday look like for you? (MR / ME)
- » How has your career progressed / evolved over the years? (MR / ME)
- » What do you consider your key strengths and competencies? (MR / ME)
- » What challenges have you faced or are you still facing? (MR / ME)
- » What aspects of your work do you enjoy the most? (MR / ME)
- » How does your job fit into your broader life and priorities? (MR / ME)
- » What accomplishments / achievements are you most proud of? (MR / ME)
- » **What do you expect from me as your mentor / your mentee?** (MR / ME)
- » What are your long-term career goals? (MR)
- » What are your expectations of a career in the (non-) academic sector? (MR)
- » Looking back, what do you wish you had known at my stage? What would you do differently? (ME)
- » What goals or ambitions do you still hope to achieve in your work? (ME)

MENTORING - INTERVISION

» Intervision for mentees



» Date: 07/09/'26

The meetings with fellow mentees were almost more interesting than the conversations with my mentor, as we talked with people who are in the same stage of life, facing similar questions and challenges, yet **each having found their own solutions**. I felt that we **could learn a great deal from one another**.



TESTIMONIALS



and every
in the
gram
ny



I would recommend every
postdoc to enrol in the
mentoring program

DEF Company

John Doe



I would recommend every
postdoc to enrol in the
mentoring program

GHI Company

Jahn Doe

TESTIMONIALS FROM PREVIOUS MENTEES

I am not only a researcher, but also a mother of 2 children and the **combination of work and family** is not always an easy exercise. I adore my job, but it would be nice to hear how other people deal with the difficult (side) parts of this job.

During the mentoring year I have finally made a crucial choice concerning my career. I have implemented the advice of my mentor regarding **personal visibility, CV and future career planning**.



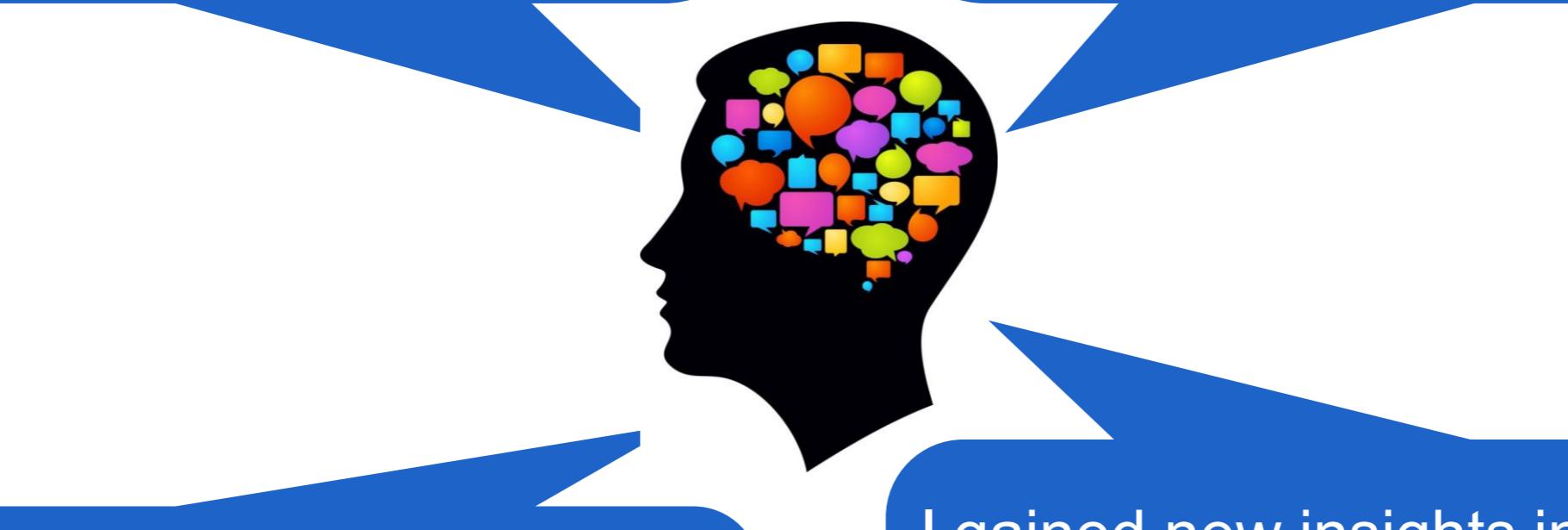
I have found a **job outside academia**. The mentor helped to convince me that I should aim high enough and not settle for a job without enough long-term prospects.

More confidence in the path I'm choosing to take, which enables me to **make better decisions** to get to where I want to go.

TESTIMONIALS FROM PREVIOUS MENTEES

The mentoring program was part of **a process to jump to the industry**. And it helped as I signed a contract with a company recently.

I understood better the different ways I can **combine work and life**. I also got more **confidence** in applying for jobs and performing at interviews.



My mentor has been **a strong support system** for me in the last year. She was the mentor I really needed in my life.

I gained new insights into my **own strengths and weaknesses**. Based on the advice of my mentor, I followed some courses in other fields.

TESTIMONIALS FROM PREVIOUS MENTORS

Thanks to mentoring, I learned a lot about the work culture at another faculty, I got more **insights in the needs of young researchers**. Based on these insights, I try to improve our research group.

I believe it is important to give young people **an objective 'outsiders' opinion**, to help them reflect on their career path and **to give them advice and encouragement** to achieve their goals.



I didn't receive a lot of guidance as young researcher, and I want to **change this next generation**.

Getting to know someone whom I never would have met otherwise, from a very different background, but with whom I have had **very inspiring conversations**.

TESTIMONIALS FROM PREVIOUS MENTORS

Great to be able to **transmit experience and exchange ideas and concepts** with promising, aspiring academics. Always a pleasure to converse with the mentees, and **it is motivating to motivate someone else.**

I am now doing this for the third year in a row and continue to find it a valuable project. I **find it meaningful and particularly pleasant to coach young people and to pass on experiences and help where I can.**



It also **makes you realize what you have achieved yourself.**

To **guide others in the written, but often unwritten rules of academic life** as a professor. And to listen to and give some advice on their career decisions and situations

Hatim El Sghiar

Coordinator career support for postdoctoral researchers

TEAM DOCTORAL SCHOOL – POSTDOC CAREER HUB

E postdoccareer@ugent.be

M +32 486 75 65 28

W <https://www.ugent.be/postdoc/en>

