



# Welcome to “GEMS”!

“GEMS-GIGs ECA Mentoring Scheme” is a mentoring project jointly organized by GIG-01 Young Crystallographers, GIG-02 Senior Crystallographers, and GIG-03 Education in Crystallography, which are General Interest Groups in the European Crystallographic Association (ECA).

The scope of the project is to match potential mentors and mentees among the members of the ECA, thus providing a mentoring opportunity for the members of the association and a chance for early career researchers to find the support of an experienced mentor in overcoming the obstacles they face during their career development.

## Frequently asked questions

### 1. Why a mentoring project?

A mentor can provide encouragement, guidance and support to tackle the challenges commonly faced by a scientist, giving feedback and advice about your career path. Thus, having a mentor is beneficial for early-stage researchers, or anyone facing a career problem, and can contribute to promoting equal opportunities in science.

### 2. Who can be a mentor?

A mentor is any experienced researcher willing to share their knowledge and advice with a mentee. There is no age limit for mentors but consider that a mentor needs to have experience on different topics related to a career in science, including tenure.

While a supervisor can certainly act as a mentor sometimes, a mentor is generally someone external to the mentee’s research group, who can provide neutral feedback.

Having a mentor can help deal with stress related to the career, but one needs to remember that a mentor is not a therapist. Anyone feeling the need for professional help regarding stress and anxiety should seek it and not ask their mentor to provide it. Access to mental health resources can vary across Europe but be aware that your institution or company might have a counselling service. If you do not know where to start, you could contact a helpline: <https://www.mentalhealtheurope.org/library/youth-helplines/>

### **3. Who can be a mentee?**

Mentees are usually early-stage researchers looking for career advice, but anyone facing a career challenge can apply to be a mentee. Some examples of mentees could include:

- Early career researchers who have recently completed their PhD and need guidance for the next steps of their career.
- A recently established group leader looking to improve their skill in leadership and management of their research group.
- A person holding a permanent position who feels that they have hit a career ceiling.

### **4. How does it work?**

We will ask both the perspective mentors and mentees to fill out a form, thus providing us with some basic information that will enable us to match a suitable mentor-mentee pair. We will then share the contact information, so that paired mentor and mentee can get in touch with each other and organize the meetings according to their preferences. We are not setting any time limit to the meetings, but we suggest that mentor and mentee discuss at first how often they would meet and for how long to set up an agreement which summarizes the conditions they have set for the frequency and timing of the meetings.

The meetings between mentor and mentee will likely be in an online setting, but in the case mentors and mentees can meet in person we strongly suggest picking a neutral ground. Bear in mind that mentor-with-mentee discussions are strictly confidential.

### **5. Do I have to speak English with my mentor or mentee?**

If you prefer to speak a language different from English, you can state your preference in the form, and we will try to match you with someone with the same request. However, it could be easier and quicker to find a match if you are willing to speak English.

## **6. Will there be any follow-up?**

After six and twelve months since we matched mentor-mentee pairs, we will send both parties a brief survey to help us understand if the project is working and how to improve it. However, if at any point during the project something does not feel right and the mentee or the mentor are experiencing any problems in their relationship, they should feel free to interrupt the meeting and are strongly encouraged to report issues to the organizing committee.

## **7. Can everyone participate?**

Yes, everyone interested in being a mentor or a mentee is welcome to apply, the only condition is that they have to be an ECA member. If you are not a member of the Association, you can become one following the instructions here: <https://ecanews.org/about-eca/membership/individual-members/>

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<https://ecanews.org/gig-01/gems/>