

A mentor's experience of the International Women in Science Mentoring Program

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Life in Kyrgyzstan Conference 2024

*Session: Building Capacity and
Acquiring Skills for Scholars*



The Women in Science Mentoring Program

The University of Cuenca in Ecuador, together with the international project SDGnexus Network developed the *Women in Science Mentoring Program (PROMEMCI)*.

The objective of the program is to:

- Build a network of academics interested in mentoring women to facilitate advancement in their academic careers.
- Provide an opportunity for young female scientists to immerse themselves in an academic environment.

I participated in this initiative as a mentor and will present here my personal experience.

Women in Science Mentoring Program (PROMEMCI) 2023



Mentor (Sarah)

Position: Research associate at Justus Liebig University, Giessen

Training: Biologist

Experience: diverse (University and development sectors)

Current research area: Livestock production systems in Central Asia

Age: 50 years

Mentee (Dalma)

Career stage: MSc student (just finishing), University of Cuenca

Research area: Plant biology, experimental ecosystem restoration.

Perspective: Wanting to stay in research, looking for PhD

Age: early 20s

Inputs

- Four mentoring sessions online of approximately one hour each: September- December/4 hours.
- Meeting in Giessen for social events and individual discussion



The first meeting: brainstorming

Together, we decided that Dalma would put together a list of topics to cover over the four meetings. The initial list looked like this:

1. Recommendations for choosing academic journals and other platforms for publishing.
2. Collaborative writing, how to collaborate effectively on scientific articles.
3. Tips for writing a good introduction and discussion.
4. Software and bibliography recommendations for data analysis and statistical graphing.
5. Strategies for dealing with possible rejection and how to respond constructively to reviewers or supervisor revisions.
6. Any other ideas you think I should learn or know about scientific writing.

Other topics emerging over the mentoring period

- Reviewing Dalma's first scientific publication, adapted from her MSc thesis.
- Discussion and advice for Dalma's forthcoming research experience in the UK.
- Discussion of societal applications of Dalma's ecological research.
- Recommending organizations & projects for applied work experience outside academia.
- Discussion and advice for PhD applications.
- Advice regarding issues with supervisor.
- Identification of potentially relevant academics to meet at Giessen & support for written introductions.

What should a mentor do?

- 1. Assist the mentee in becoming an accomplished academic** ✓
2. Help the mentee understand the University's academic policies and regulations.
- 3. Connect the mentee with other scholars in their field of interest.** ✓
4. Ask other academics to give their opinion on matters related to the academic development of the mentee.
- 5. Assist in identifying goals and timelines for personal and academic development.** ✓
6. Assist in solving problems or resolving difficult situations.
7. Seek alternative approaches.

Thoughts and reflections

- It is difficult to provide advice on scientific writing without an **actual text** to work on as an example.
- So, although the mentor '**should not be the thesis tutor for the mentee**', as one of Dalma's main needs was support for paper development - I supported regarding structure and clarity.
- Her research area was different from mine, so **networking was not straightforward**, but it was still possible to advise on appropriate people to approach and to give advice on writing letters of interest.
- **The visit to Giessen was the most useful part of the program, and also the most fun !**

