

MENTORING PROGRAM AT IMPAN

Mentoring is a form of guidance and collaboration which contributes to the growth and success of others. IMPAN runs the mentoring program since 2017 as a part of its Human Resources strategy. The program strives to create a space in which early career mathematicians can develop their capacities to the fullest.

Mentor at IMPAN can be a scientist employed at IMPAN satisfying at least one of the two conditions:

- has a habilitation, or
- has a PhD degree and is a principal investigator of a research project that engages master students, PhD students or postdocs.

Mentee is any scientific employee at IMPAN who fulfils neither of the above conditions. For instance, a scientific employee with PhD (regardless of habilitation) who leads a grant and employs at IMPAN investigators like master students, PhD students or postdocs is a natural candidate for a mentor for the grant employees.

How it works? Mentoring is implemented by establishing a relationship between mentors and mentees. Every early career mathematician at IMPAN is assigned a mentor.

It is often the case, especially for PhD students, that mentoring is accompanied by scientific collaboration. However it is important for both parties to acknowledge that the scope of the mentoring relationship is wider. Mentoring should focus on the personal and career development of the mentee. Young researchers achieve their goals faster when they receive support and encouragement from an established scientist.

Mentoring is a mutual relationship from which both involved parties may benefit. Everyone has a unique experience and goals. What we share is our wish to explore mathematics.

For mentees. The program provides you with a possibility to be guided by a senior scientist. To take advantage of this, it is important that you actively engage in this process. Here are a few tips on entering the program and establishing a productive contact with your mentor.

- Introduce yourself to your mentor from the early days of your work at the Institute.
- Think about the questions you would ask your mentor. Think of her / him as someone who has travelled a similar path before.
- Analyse your experience and set up your goals. How did your studies / research go in the recent years? What are your strong and weak points? What do you want to achieve next? What are your major difficulties? You could discuss these with your mentor.
- Is your mentor a scientist from a different field? Perfect. Talking about research might help both of you to stress what is the most important.

- There are many common problems one experiences at early stages of an academic career. One of them is uncertainty. Will you be always getting new results? How many postdoctoral positions should you do before getting a job in academia? When and how could this be achieved? Is there a success strategy? You could ask your mentor to share their experience and seek for their advise.
- Don't hesitate to talk to your mentor. Share your fails and victories.
- If you have no mentor yet, or if you have questions about the program, please contact your head of department.

For mentors. In the process of mentoring an established scientist should help a younger colleague to overcome difficulties occurring at early stages of the academic career. Support and encouragement of our early career employees is a task of high priority at IMPAN. Be prepared to invest your time and energy to be a good mentor. Below you will find some suggestions of what you could do.

- Initiate regular meeting with your mentee.
- Listen to your mentee. Ask about their background and research experience, discuss their goals and career plans.
- Learn about their mathematical results and problems they are working on, even if this is not your field of expertise.
- Do not limit your discussions to mathematics.
- Help your colleague to engage in other activities, such as conference or seminar organization. Try to promote their leadership potential and organizational skills.
- Help your mentee to establish professional relationship with other mathematicians.
- Help them with their grant and job applications.