

Seminar series

What's next? Mentoring seminars for international careers

Introduction

How difficult is it for a newly graduated – or for a final-year student – to start his/her career, especially in the global development cooperation domain?

How useful would it be for them to have somebody to look up to, as a guide, as an advisor, as a senior with more years on his/her shoulders, to be guided in achieving objectives and becoming more conscious on the paths to pursue?

This is what mentoring is about.

It is a personal/professional development methodology focused on the interaction between a senior (the *mentor*) and one or more juniors (the *mentees*), whereby the mentor supports the mentee in achieving specific (SMART) objectives through his/her role modeling and experience.

This is the substantial difference between a coach – who asks questions and support the coachee through tailored instruments towards a specific goal – and a mentor, who has a similar role but adding his/her personal/professional experience as example.

Mentoring at the Department of Political and Social Sciences (DSPS) of the University of Catania

This pilot seminar series was designed in collaboration with the Master Programme in Global Politics and Euro-Mediterranean Relations (Glopem). It is open to advanced students or recent graduates from the DSPS Master Programmes (Lauree Magistrali), as well as selected PhD students interested in international careers. The objective is to provide participants with a shared platform to exchange views on their future, particularly their vocation and their ideal job, and on defining a plan of action to achieve their goals. The seminars will touch upon the current job market, how to prepare for an interview and how to write a compelling cover letter and CV.

The seminars are guided by a focal point, the *mentor*, an experienced development cooperation professional, steering the discussions and conducting the plenaries. Through the mentor's experience, students will be advised on the possible paths to pursue, supported on the choices to make, identify strengths and weaknesses to channel energies and focus on what matters the most, career- and life-wise.

Structure

The pilot seminar series will take place on **26 and 27 September 2024**.

The two seminar days are organized as follows:

- 26 September
 - o 9:00-13:00: plenary seminar.
 - What is mentoring and how it helps to achieve the best version of yourself.
 - Which career to choose?
 - What if I change my mind?

- 13:00-14:00: lunch break.
- 14:00-18:30: one-to-one mentoring sessions. These are divided into 45' slots, to cover 6 students.
- 27 September
 - 9:00-13:00: plenary seminar
 - How to write a cover letter and a good CV: some live examples.
 - How to prepare for an interview: examples and simulations.
 - 13:00-14:00: lunch break.
 - 14:00-18:30: one-to-one mentoring sessions. These are divided into 45' slots, to cover 6 students.

The participants will have the possibility to share their experiences, concerns, doubts and wishes in an informal, judgment-free environment, and to bring their CV/cover letter/interview experience for practice, for the benefit of all the students and to ensure the seminars are as practical as possible.

The mentor

The mentor for this pilot project is [Alessandra Casano](#), former Knowledge Management Analyst at the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) for 13 years, Mentor and Certified Mentoring Project Manager and Scheme Designer for with the Italian Mentoring School.

She is currently becoming an internationally certified coach and works in a multidisciplinary environment, with assignments stemming from teaching to writing development cooperation projects.

With her 16 years' experience in international cooperation, Alessandra has accompanied young professionals in their path to career success, supporting them in getting confidence and overcoming their obstacles. As mentor, she is presently collaborating with WIIS Italy – Women in International Security, a network of women in international relations, in the fourth edition of the Mentoring Project.

Alessandra has a background in Political Science and International Relations from the University of Studies Roma Tre, with a Master's in Project Management for Development Cooperation and another one in Diplomatic Studies.