



Top Ten Tips for mentoring academic careers in inter- and transdisciplinary research **from SHAPE-ID partners, [Professor Catherine Lyall and Dr Isabel Fletcher](#)**

1

Early career ID/TD researchers need to be even more strategic to secure career advancement in comparison with their mono-disciplinary peers. Be realistic about the current challenges of establishing an ID/TD career and help them to plan a portfolio of publications, research proposals, etc. In some countries, there is a gradual move towards broader assessment criteria, evidenced in more narrative forms of CV/resume that might be especially beneficial for ID/TD scholars.

2

Recognise that the situation may have changed since you were at the beginning of your career, particularly if you have been in permanent employment for a while.

3

If you offer to mentor someone, be professional in your interactions: be honest about your availability, try to stick to agreed meeting times and any deadlines for feedback. Also be open about the extent of your own commitment to an ID/TD approach; try to avoid pushing mentees towards any school or field that you, yourself, might embrace.

4

Labels seem to matter in academia so encourage your mentee to think about their “academic identity”; how they present themselves and their research and whether this may change over time or vary depending on their audience. As a mentor, it is not your role to create a “mini-me” but to encourage the growth and development of the mentee’s own identity.

5

It is easy to feel isolated, unless based with like-minded individuals, so help your mentee to develop networking and community building within and beyond their institution.

6

Encourage the building of core competencies to sustain inter- and transdisciplinary research careers. These include “metaskills” training (such as leadership, communication, negotiation, etc.) and general “academic life skills”. Remember that tacit knowledge about how institutions operate is difficult to acquire and valuable.

7

Encourage early career colleagues to contribute to your community - knowledge of the benefits of inter-and transdisciplinary research and their contribution to academic careers will grow when its practitioners participate in peer review, the development of new funding schemes and mentoring.

8

Mentoring can take many forms, depending on the individuals and their roles, and so your mentee may have a group of mentors – both formal and informal – who provide them with different kinds of advice and support. Remember that not all issues require action, sometimes talking through a difficult situation is sufficient.

9

Talk to your institutional leaders and call them to account if the institutional rhetoric about valuing inter- and transdisciplinary is hindered by academic and administrative structures.

10

If possible, when mentoring those on fixed-term contracts, be prepared to continue the relationship beyond the end of your formal responsibilities. It is much harder to establish a career without this kind of ongoing support.

Further Resources

- ▶ SHAPE-ID toolkit: [Develop a career in inter-and transdisciplinary research](#)
- ▶ Dr Kirsi Cheas, who helped us to produce this document, is developing the Global Mentorship Initiative with the goals of 1) extending access to sustainable and context-sensitive mentoring and peer-support for ID-TD early-career researchers and students in different parts of the globe and especially in the Global South and 2) increasing awareness about the specific challenges and forms of discrimination experienced by ID-TD early-careers in different regional and other contexts. More information about this initiative can be found here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1K73UbpGq_P-Po9yR-o_Y8hKdrcOu2jKS/view?usp=sharing

About the Authors

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