

Her Digital Skills

**SOFT SKILLS LEARNING
THROUGH E-MENTORSHIP**



FAQ EQUALS Her Digital Skills Soft Skills E-Mentoring Programme

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Goals of the Programme

1. What is a mentor and what am I supposed to help my mentee accomplish?

There are many definitions of mentoring. Mentoring can be described as a developmental process entailing a transfer of skills or knowledge from a more experienced person to a less experienced person through learning, dialogue and role modeling.

Your role as a mentor, within the frame of the Her Digital Skills e-mentoring programme, is to help your mentee develop a specific set of valuable soft skills that will serve your mentee in both her professional and personal life. The mentor-mentee relationship and communication are guided by a programme syllabus that covers a range of topics relating to various soft skills. The programme has been designed to enable mentees to learn and reflect on key soft skills — such as communication, problem-solving, time-management and teamwork — that will help the girls and young women on their learning journey and as they seek and navigate formal employment. Your role is to guide and support your mentee on this learning journey and, through your communication and relationship with your mentee, to help foster your mentee's motivation, critical skills and decision-making capacity.

2. How will I benefit from the programme in my capacity as a mentor?

Just as mentees tend to learn a lot through the mentor-mentee relationship, mentors also tend to find the e-mentorship programme a rewarding learning experience: in addition to the satisfaction of contributing to their mentee's personal and professional learning and development, mentors can also have an opportunity to discover a new culture, to contribute to promoting girls' and women's empowerment, and to reflect on some of the topics addressed.

Practical Questions

1. How long does the Soft Skills e-Mentoring programme last & what time commitment is required?

The Soft Skills e-Mentoring programme lasts 8 weeks (usually consecutive). The weekly time commitment required of mentors is approximately 1 hour, maximum, per week. The mentor-mentee exchanges take the form of written correspondence, and mentors and mentees follow a programme that covers 8 different, weekly topics: please see the programme in the Syllabus document. The goal of each topic is to foster specific soft skills. The time commitment of 1 hour per week includes the time required for mentors to read their mentee's weekly letter and respond to their mentee.

2. What if there are weeks/periods during which I don't have enough time for mentoring? Should I not be a mentor?

The mentoring programme lasts only 8 weeks, with each week dedicated to a specific, important topic that contributes to the mentee's learning journey and to a mutually valuable, rewarding exchange between mentors and mentees. Given this brevity, mentors are required to commit to the full 8-week programme and make every effort to dedicate sufficient time to read their mentee's letters and respond in writing to their mentee in a timely manner, in accordance with the e-mentoring programme syllabus.

Of course, unforeseen events may occur that prevent mentors and mentees from writing to each other in a timely manner. If a mentor is unable to send the weekly letter to their mentee in a timely manner, the mentor is requested to inform the e-mentoring programme coordinators as soon as possible. The mentor is also requested to write and

send the weekly letter to their mentee at the earliest opportunity following the initial due submission date, in order to ensure that their mentee does not miss out on the weekly learning and exchange of correspondence. In the event that a mentor is obliged, for whatever reason, to stop participating in the e-mentoring programme before the end of the 8-week programme, the mentor is asked to immediately inform the e-mentoring programme coordination team.

3. Do I need to provide a CV or motivation letter to qualify to be a mentor?

It is not mandatory to provide a CV. As a candidate mentor, you will be requested to fill in a short mentoring application form in which you will be asked to provide a brief bio about your professional background.

4. Will there be an interview to select mentors?

No interview is required. However, it is important to fill in the short application form as accurately as possible, providing relevant information about your professional background and career and any relevant previous experience.

5. Do I need specific technical/professional skills to take part in the programme?

Participation in the e-mentoring programme does not require any specific technical or professional skills, and mentoring should not be confused with professional coaching.

Mentors are encouraged to approach each topic in the 8-week programme in the way each mentor finds most appropriate and relevant, depending on their own professional (and personal) experience, to enrich the interaction for mutual benefit.

Participation in the programme does require professionalism, reliability, open-mindedness, kindness, curiosity and a willingness on the part of mentors to share their professional experience and insights with their mentees. It is also important to be culturally sensitive: mentors should remain mindful of cultural differences between themselves and their mentees by understanding and acknowledging that the mentee's culture and environment may be, in many ways, very different from their own.

6. How many mentors and mentees are there in the Her Digital Skills e-mentorship programme? How many mentees will I have?

During each 8-week cycle, the maximum number of mentors and mentees enrolled is 60 (30 mentors and 30 mentees). However, the number of mentors and mentees may vary from cycle to cycle. In the event that there are more potential mentees than available mentors, our team may propose more than 1 mentee to a mentor. Mentors may be matched with up to 3 mentees, if the mentor agrees. This does not necessarily increase the weekly time commitment required of the mentor: a mentor with two or three mentees may write just one letter to their two or three mentees. If a mentor prefers to be matched with just one mentee, this request will be taken into account during the mentor-mentee matching process.

7. How will I communicate with my mentee and how often will I communicate with my mentee?

Mentors will be guided throughout the entire 8-week mentoring programme by the Her Digital Skills e-mentoring coordination team. Mentors will communicate with their mentees via the dedicated EQUALS Her Digital Skills E-Mentoring Platform. The mentor-mentee exchanges take the form of written weekly exchanges of correspondence via the platform. Mentors will be requested to send their weekly letters to their mentee(s) via the mailbox on the platform.

Once the programme has started, it is very important for mentors to log on to the Her Digital Skills e-Mentorship Platform at least once per week: weekly letters from mentees will be sent to mentors and mentors will receive notification of receipt of a letter from their mentee via their email address outside the platform. However, in the event that an email from the programme coordinator or a letter from a mentee goes to “Spam” email, mentors should log on to the platform on a weekly basis to check for the latest updates.

Mentors are responsible for sending 1 letter per week to their mentee(s). In the event that a mentor cannot write to her/his/their mentee in a timely manner, the mentor should make every reasonable effort to inform the programme coordinator in advance.

If a mentor does not send a weekly letter and fails to correspond with her/his/their mentee during a 2-week period, and without informing the coordinator of a reason for the delay, the programme coordinator will terminate the mentor’s participation in the programme.

8. Can I participate in live, interactive e-mentoring sessions with my mentee, such as Zoom calls, etc., or send videos of myself to my mentee?

No. As specified in the Terms & Conditions of participation in the programme, you are requested to communicate with your mentee only via the Her Digital Skills e-mentoring platform in writing and to refrain from any direct contact with your mentee outside the framework of the Her Digital Skills e-mentoring programme and the Her Digital Skills e-mentoring platform, for the duration of the Her Digital Skills e-mentoring programme.

9. Why are mentors not able to participate in live, interactive e-mentoring sessions with mentees, such as Zoom calls, etc., or share videos of themselves with mentees?

This specific soft skills e-mentoring programme does not allow for live, interactive discussions between mentors and mentees and the sharing of videos for various reasons, including legal and logistical reasons. Furthermore, the programme has been specifically designed to encourage written communication which encourages mentees to take time to reflect on the soft skills topics and communicate in writing about soft skills. This format is designed to enable mentees to practise their written communication skills in English which is a valuable skill for mentees for their studies and employment. This is a pilot programme. While this initial programme format does not allow for live, interactive discussions, our team may incorporate live, interactive e-mentoring sessions in a different programme at a later date.

10. How often am I supposed to connect with my mentee? Am I free to decide this with my mentee?

The mentor-mentee exchanges take the form of a written weekly exchange of emails, with each exchange addressing the specific weekly topic indicated in the e-mentoring syllabus. The Her Digital Skills e-mentoring coordination team will provide a timeline at the beginning of the 8-week programme.

The 8 weeks are usually consecutive. Once the programme starts, mentors are expected to send their weekly email to their mentee in a timely manner: mentors are expected to send their mentee(s) 1 letter per week, with each letter dedicated to the specified weekly topic. In order for mentors and mentees to obtain a certificate of completion, mentors and mentees should complete the 8-week programme.

While there is no specified, minimum length for a weekly letter, mentors are expected to draft and send a weekly letter to their mentee that meaningfully addresses the specified weekly topic.

Mentors who complete the programme will receive an EQUALS Her Digital Skills e-Mentorship Programme Badge.

Mentee's Profile

1. How will I be matched with my mentee(s)?

Mentors and mentees will be matched by the Her Digital Skills e-mentorship coordination team. The matching process takes into account mentors' professions and professional experience, mentors' geographical and language preferences, mentees' professional aspirations and mentees' fluency in English/French and/or Spanish. The Her Digital Skills e-mentorship coordination team will make every effort to make the most suitable matches.

2. Will my mentee come from the same country as me?

Not necessarily. The mentees are participants in Her Digital Skills workshops, which will be hosted in countries from across Europe, Asia, Africa, North and South America. When mentors sign up to take part in the e-mentorship programme, it will be possible to specify a geographical preference. Our coordination team will do its best to match mentors with mentees according to mentors' geographical preference. However, we cannot always guarantee that this criterion will be met. At the beginning of the e-mentoring programme, mentors will receive some information about the mentee with whom they have been matched, including information about where she lives and studies or works. The mentee's sociocultural context may be very different from the mentor's, and it is important for mentors to be mindful of this and to be culturally sensitive. Mentors should try to ensure their communication is free of inadvertent discrimination, stereotypes and biases.

3. How old are the mentees?

The mentees are young women aged 18 to 25 years old.

4. In which language will I communicate with my mentee? Will my mentee be fluent in English?

Unless mentors specify otherwise in the e-mentoring application form, mentors will be matched with mentees who are fluent in English. Nevertheless, mentors should bear in mind that English might not be their mentee's first language.

If English is not the mentee's first language, it is important that mentors be aware of this and adapt their communication, if necessary, by trying to keep their communication extra clear and simple and using easily comprehensible vocabulary.

5. Are the mentees familiar with e-mail?

The mentees are participants in Her Digital Skills workshops, which are designed to introduce girls and young women to technology. The local institutions – schools and NGOs – to which the mentees are affiliated will ensure that the mentees are familiar with email and at ease using email and the e-mentoring platform dashboard and mailbox for the purpose of the e-mentoring programme. Nevertheless, it is important for mentors to bear in mind that mentees may have very limited previous experience using digital devices and tools.

6. Will I have access to information about my mentee before the programme?

Beforehand, mentors will receive an email from the e-mentorship programme coordination team which will provide some information about the mentee with whom they have been matched: the mentee's name, age, where she lives and studies etc. The first letter mentors will receive from their mentee will be an introductory letter in which the mentee will introduce herself in her own words.

Interactions with Your Mentee

1. Where do I start when connecting with my mentee for the first time? Is Her Digital Skills going to introduce me to my mentee?

At the beginning of the programme, mentors will receive an email from the coordination team introducing their mentee. As indicated in the programme syllabus, week 1 of the 8-week programme is dedicated to introductions. The programme syllabus provides some tips and suggested questions to help mentors draft their introductory letter.

2. What if I have difficulty breaking the ice with my mentee/gaining her trust?

Mentors are encouraged to refer to week 1 of the Soft Skills Curriculum for suggestions of ways to break the ice with their mentee. It is not always easy for mentors to gain their mentee's trust. For many of the mentees, it may be their first time exchanging online with a person abroad and mentees may be quite shy and reserved. However, if mentors proceed step by step, follow the e-mentorship programme guidelines and always try to communicate in a positive, supportive manner, mentees do tend to communicate more openly.

3. What if I don't receive a reply from my mentee?

If a mentee does not answer their mentor in a timely manner, the Her Digital Skills e-mentorship coordination team and/or local programme coordinator will reach out to the mentee to gain an understanding of the situation and try to remedy the problem. In such an instance, our team will also contact the mentor to provide an update on the situation and possible delay. Occasionally mentees may have technical/connection difficulties when answering mentors' emails, depending on the country, region and context (for example, if a mentee resides in a remote, rural area where access to email and Internet connection is limited). Occasionally, a mentee may be unable to respond to their mentor in a timely manner owing to personal issues and responsibilities, etc. If this is the case, the e-mentorship coordination team will inform mentors and make every effort to ensure that the mentee can respond to their mentor.

4. What should be the focus and tone of my written communication with my mentees?

Mentors are expected to communicate in a manner which will create a relationship whereby the mentor and mentee are focused on and have optimal opportunity for learning and development. Mentors are expected to do their best to ensure that the content of the mentors' email exchanges is relevant to the topics covered by the e-mentoring syllabus and that the mentee has maximum opportunity to learn the skills and knowledge outlined in the learning outcomes in the e-mentoring programme syllabus. Nevertheless, mentors can incorporate other soft skills topics and content that they deem relevant to the objectives of the programme. Mentors are also expected to do their best to maintain clear, appropriate and culturally sensitive communication, and

boundaries, in their email exchanges with their mentees. Mentors are responsible for communicating professionally and positively with their mentees. The tone of letters can be conversational but should not be too informal. Mentors are expected to ensure that they adopt a respectful and inclusive outlook in their communication, which embraces and explores individual difference and will monitor their written communication for inadvertent discrimination.

5. How do I make sure my mentoring is useful for my mentee? How do I make sure that my mentoring style meets my mentee's expectations (type of support/guidance provided)?

One way to ensure that the mentor-mentee relationship is useful for the mentee is by maintaining the focus of communication on the learning and development of the mentee: mentors are encouraged to respond to the mentee's communication by maintaining the focus on the topics outlined in the e-mentoring syllabus upon which the mentoring relationship is based. Mentors should do their best to ensure that the content of their email exchanges with their mentee is relevant to the topics and that the mentee has maximum opportunity to learn the skills and knowledge outlined in the learning outcomes in the e-mentoring programme syllabus. Mentors should also feel free to ask their mentee about her expectations of the mentor-mentee relationship at the outset of the programme and, as the mentor considers appropriate during the programme, if the mentee considers she is making progress thanks to e-mentorship programme. This can help mentors assess if the exchange is impactful and, if needed, adapt their approach to better meet their mentee's needs.

The Her Digital Skills e-mentorship coordination team will also be available throughout the programme to guide mentors and to answer any questions mentors may have during the programme.

6. What if the communication with my mentee is not smooth and/or I feel disappointed by the quality of communication with my mentee? Can I stop participating? Can I swap mentee?

Occasionally, mentors may feel frustrated and/or disappointed that their exchanges with their mentee are not as open/rich/smooth as they had hoped. This can be due to several factors. It may be due to the fact that the mentee is very shy and reserved, that the language of communication is not the mentee's first language, that she lacks

confidence (indeed, one of the objectives of the e-mentoring programme is to help mentees to develop their self-confidence) and/or that she has difficulties communicating openly via email as it is very new to her. In these instances, we strongly encourage mentors to persevere and to try to take these factors into account.

However, if a mentor considers that their mentee's communication is inappropriate or disrespectful, and does not respect the required code of conduct, the mentor should immediately inform the coordination team of their concerns by email. The coordination team will assess the situation and propose a suitable solution.

Boundaries

1. Is there a Code of Conduct for the Her Digital Skills mentorship programme?

Before participating in the e-mentoring programme, mentors and mentees will be required to sign the Terms & Conditions of participation in the programme, which outline a code of conduct. By signing this document, mentors and mentees acknowledge and agree to adhering to the guiding principles of the programme and the code of conduct. The goal of this document is to establish a supportive, positive and safe environment for both mentors and mentees throughout the duration of the programme.

2. What do I do if my mentee communicates about personal issues with me? Am I allowed to talk about personal matters with my mentee? What if I feel the relationship is getting too personal?

Mentors and mentees may, of course, communicate with each other about personal matters, experience and insights. Mentors are encouraged to share personal experience and insights when they deem it relevant to a specific topic in the soft skills e-mentoring syllabus. Indeed, mentoring is all about sharing experience and insights. Also, mentors should not hesitate to share their feelings, especially if it can help the mentee further develop her emotional intelligence. This will also help to build trust between the mentor and mentee.

However, if mentors feel the communication is getting too personal and/or are uncomfortable with the communication with their mentee, mentors should not hesitate to notify the e-mentorship coordination team about it, and they will help to find a suitable solution.

3. Are the exchanges with my mentee private? Will my or my mentee's communication be monitored or edited?

Before starting the e-mentoring programme, mentors and mentees are requested to acknowledge the terms and conditions of participation in the program, which aim to ensure a mutually beneficial mentoring environment for mentors and mentees.

The e-mentoring programme coordination team will screen mentor-mentee communication, but will not edit any communication, nor disclose any communication between mentors and mentees, unless the content is in breach of the terms and conditions of participation in the programme.

4. Will the professional and personal information I share with my mentee be kept confidential?

As specified in the Terms and Conditions of participation in the programme, both mentors and mentees must respect the confidential nature of their email exchanges and refrain from disclosing information contained in the email exchanges, unless otherwise expressly agreed to by the mentor and/or mentee.

Similarly, the e-mentorship coordination team will respect the confidential nature of the email exchanges and will not disclose any communication between mentors and mentees.

5. Am I allowed to contact my mentee directly and/or meet my mentee in person?

For the duration of the e-mentorship programme, mentors and mentees are requested to communicate with each other only via the Her Digital Skills e-Mentorship platform. In the Terms & Conditions of participation in the programme, mentors and mentees are requested to refrain from any direct contact with each other outside of the Her Digital Skills e-Mentorship platform.

6. Am I allowed to be in touch with my mentee outside of the framework provided by Her Digital Skills (for example, via social media, etc.)?

During the 8-week mentorship period, mentors and mentees are requested to communicate with each other only via the Her Digital Skills e-Mentorship platform. This is also for legal purposes and this is specified in the Terms & Conditions of participation

in the programme which mentors are requested to sign when enrolling in the programme on the EQUALS Her Digital Skills e-Mentorship platform.

Our team therefore requests that mentors do not share their contact information with their mentees for the duration of the programme. However, upon completion of the 8-week programme, mentors may choose to share their contact information with their mentees.

7. Can I continue the relationship with my mentee after the end of the programme?

Mentors and mentees may continue their relationship after the end of the e-mentorship programme, if they so choose. However, once the Her Digital Skills e-mentoring programme is over, if mentors and mentees choose to remain in contact and/or continue their mentor-mentee relationship, Her Digital Skills will no longer be responsible for supervising the mentor-mentee relationship or for ensuring compliance with the Terms & Conditions of participation in the programme and the code of conduct.

Reporting

1. With whom should I liaise in my capacity as a mentor? Is there also a local contact person with whom I could liaise if needed?

If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact the programme coordinator at any time via your mailbox on your dashboard. At the beginning of the programme, once you have enrolled in the programme on the EQUALS Her Digital Skills e-Mentorship platform, you will receive an introductory email in your mailbox on the platform from your assigned coordinator. You may contact your assigned coordinator at any time during the 8-week programme.

In the event of an urgent issue, you may contact the project officer for the Her Digital Skills e-mentorship coordination team: Adriana Marin at adriana.marinperoza@itu.int

Our team is in constant contact with the local e-mentoring programme coordinator who will help to coordinate the programme and liaise with mentees (in their country of residence) if necessary.

2. Am I supposed to report to Her Digital Skills about my exchanges with my mentee and, if so, how?

Mentors do not need to report to our team about their exchanges with their mentees, unless there is a specific concern. If a mentor considers that their mentee's communication is inappropriate or disrespectful, and does not adhere to the required code of conduct, the mentor should immediately inform our coordination team of their concerns by email. The coordination team will assess the situation and propose a suitable solution.

3. Will I have to evaluate my mentees at some point? Will I be able to give my mentee some feedback? If so, how will it work?

Mentors will not be required to conduct a formal evaluation of their mentees' progress.

However, mentors should feel free to give their mentees constructive feedback throughout the 8-week programme. At the end of the 8-week e-mentorship programme, each mentor and mentee will be asked to fill in an evaluation questionnaire, which aims to assess the impact of the programme and gather feedback from mentors and mentees regarding ways the programme might be improved.

4. Will my mentee evaluate my role and support as a mentor?

Mentees will be asked to fill in an evaluation questionnaire at the end of the 8-week e-mentorship programme. The evaluation questionnaire aims to assess the impact of the programme and gather feedback from mentees regarding ways the programme might be improved. Mentees are given the option of completing the evaluation form anonymously. If a mentee provides her name and expressly agrees to share her feedback with her mentor, our team can provide the mentor with the evaluation and feedback from the mentee. Mentors should also feel free to directly ask their mentees for feedback during and after the end of the programme.