Adopt an Academic

Arab-German Mentoring Program for Refugee Academics

– General Guidelines –

§ 1   Definition and main objectives of the mentoring program

Adopt an Academic is an Arab-German peer-to-peer mentoring program for refugee academics. The term "adopt" expresses a commitment to academic exchange and solidarity among scholars in times of political crises. Based on the scientific excellence and transnational academic networks of its founding institutions, the Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) and Freie Universität Berlin, the mentoring program seeks to:

- re-integrate scholars, who had to flee their home country due to ongoing military conflicts, into the scientific community;
- enable scholars, who had to leave their home country due to severe restrictions in their academic freedom, to continue independent research and academic teaching;
- create and establish an academic network of solidarity that strengthens the value of cross-cultural research cooperation.

As an Arab-German mentoring program, *Adopt an Academic* collaborates with scholars and academic institutions both from Arab countries and from Germany.

§ 2   Structure and guidelines of the mentoring program

(1) *Adopt an Academic* is a voluntary peer-to-peer mentoring program that is open for scholars of all disciplines. Applications for the program are possible at any time.

(2) Since *Adopt an Academic* aims for a permanent re-integration of its mentees into scholarly life, only scholars with at least three years of academic work experience are eligible for functioning as mentors.

(3) Mentors may conduct both one-on-one-mentoring and group-mentoring sessions. However, mentors supervising several mentees simultaneously are expected to offer one-on-one mentoring sessions at least sporadically. Group-mentoring sessions may not be offered to more than three mentees.

(4) Mentoring should endure for at least twelve months. Shorter mentoring processes are possible, but should not last for less than nine months. Mentoring relationships continuing beyond the regular twelve-month mentoring timeframe are welcomed. However, *Adopt an Academic* can only provide administrative support to its mentoring couples for a maximum of 18 months.

(5) Prior to the actual mentoring process, mentors and mentees are expected to sign a mentoring agreement. This agreement records the contents and form as well as the duration and frequency of the mentoring process. Details of the mentoring agreement may be modified subsequently. Furthermore, *Adopt an Academic* carefully matches the individual mentoring

capacities of its mentors with the particular mentoring needs of its mentees in order to provide optimal starting conditions for each mentoring process.

(6) Mentors are free to make public their voluntary involvement into the mentoring program (e.g., via their personal websites). For the sake of their mentee's privacy and personal safety, however, mentors may not publicise the names and current academic affiliation of their mentees unless they were explicitly permitted to do so.

(7) Mentors and mentees alike are expected to strictly follow the principle of confidentiality within the whole mentoring process and to respect the customary guidelines for good scientific practice as provided by the German Research Foundation (DFG).[1] Violations of this principle as well as of these guidelines may lead to the immediate termination of the mentoring process.

(8) Mentors and mentees may mutually and independently agree on the specific contents and form of each mentoring session. Nevertheless, *Adopt an Academic* regards regular counselling and academic exchange as an absolute minimum condition for any mentoring process. The program administration also presupposes that mentors assist their mentees in identifying suitable funding opportunities for long-term research projects (see § 3 for more information on requested mentoring services).

(9) Mentoring can take place on-site (e.g., within the premises of the mentor's home institution) or on a distance basis (email, phone, video chat, etc.). In general, *Adopt an Academic* seeks to arrange local mentoring relationships that allow for regular interpersonal academic exchange between both mentoring parties.

(10) The mentoring process ends:

- with the expiration of the agreed mentoring period
- when there has been no regular contact between both mentoring parties for a longer period of time
- when the mentoring agreement has been considerably violated by one or both mentoring parties
- in case of a severe violation of the principle of confidentiality and/or the guidelines of good scientific practice
- at the request of one or both mentoring parties

§ 3   The mentors: eligibility criteria and services

(1) *Adopt an Academic* collaborates with mentors who

- hold a PhD (or equivalent) in any academic subject
- have at least three years of work experience in the higher education or academic research sector
- are both willing and able to provide refugee academics a safe space for regular academic exchange and counselling
- are affiliated with an Arab or German higher education institution

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[1] See http://www.dfg.de/en/research_funding/principles_dfg_funding/good_scientific_practice/ for a detailed description of these guidelines.

(2) Besides functioning as on-going dialogue partners, mentors are requested to introduce their mentees into the academic landscape of their host countries. Although they are relatively free as to the particular methods and procedures of obtaining this task, *Adopt an Academic* regards the following mentoring services as mandatory:

- regular academic and consultative exchange (preferably monthly)
- assistance in academic network building (e.g., by facilitating contact to other scholars)
- administrative support (e.g., by providing access to libraries, data bases, archives, etc.)
- counselling on academic career opportunities and suitable funding options for long-term research or teaching projects

Joint research or teaching activities between mentors and mentees are not considered as compulsory components of the mentoring program. At the same time, *Adopt an Academic* explicitly appreciates collaborations of any kind that effectively contribute to a sustainable fostering of cross-cultural academic cooperation.

(3) *Adopt an Academic* offers its mentors special training in regard to professional mentoring methods as well as administrative and technical support both prior to and throughout the mentoring process. Also, mentors and mentees will get the chance to exchange ideas and experiences with other program participants at annual network meetings.

§ 4   The mentees: eligibility criteria and services

(1) *Adopt an Academic* is a mentoring program for scholars of all disciplines who had to flee their home country because of ongoing military conflicts or because of political restrictions that led to a severe threat of their academic freedom and existence. Admission to the program is not dependent on the potential mentee's country of origin. However, applicants must provide sufficient evidence for their particular status as a recognised refugee (preferably issued by the candidate's host country or the UNHCR) or as a scholar under threat (e.g., by means of a document issued by a credible third party aid organisation). In general, registering for the mentoring program marks only the first step of a thorough evaluation and selection process. Therefore, *Adopt an Academic* is not able to guarantee admission to its program for each individual applicant.

(2) Applicants are preferably early career researchers at the postdoc level. In limited cases, *Adopt an Academic* may also support advanced PhD candidates and senior researchers.

(3) *Adopt an Academic* is mainly conceived for refugee academics who *recently* fled their home country. Thus, the program administration preferably accepts applications from candidates who do not reside outside of their home country for more than three years.

(4) Applicants are not requested to submit a detailed research proposal. At the same time, though, they are asked to document their potential for successful re-integration into the academy and the academic job market (e.g., through academic certificates, publications, teaching experience, etc.). Applicants may list the names of up to three references that might help verify the candidate's eligibility to the mentoring program. In general, *Adopt an Academic* only consults external references if such a procedure does not negatively affect

the personal safety of the candidate concerned. Also, *Adopt an Academic* ensures that both the application and the mentoring process will be conducted anonymously and that program administrators may be contacted on a strictly confidential basis.

(5) *Adopt an Academic* offers connections to experienced academic mentors, but no particular job positions or other forms of direct financial support. The program administration also highlights that the success of the mentoring program rests largely on the mentee's personal commitment.