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Secondment researcher mentoring document for Horizon Europe Edtech Talents

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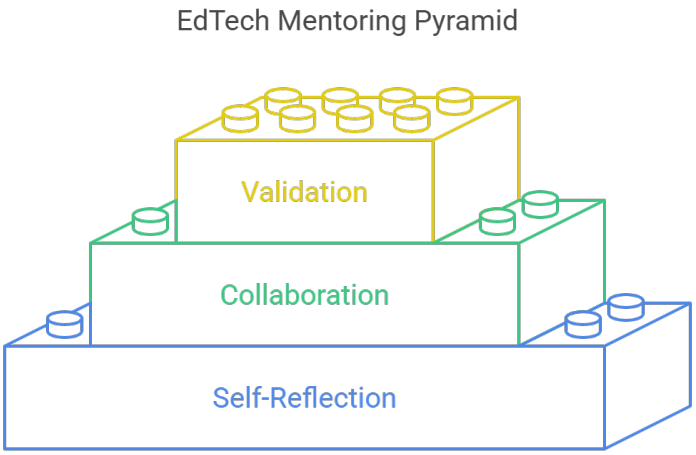
1. The EdTech Mentoring Approach

The **EdTech Mentoring Approach** is a comprehensive programme that guides researchers and host companies through three key phases: **Self-Reflection**, **Collaboration**, and **Validation**. Each phase builds upon the previous one to ensure structured growth, meaningful collaboration, and impactful outcomes.

The **EdTech Mentoring Approach** supports researchers in secondments by combining structured self-reflection, collaborative innovation using Design Thinking, and validated competence development through LEVEL5. Researchers and hosts co-create prototypes or services, aligning personal growth with tangible outcomes. This framework ensures impactful, measurable results for both individuals and organizations.



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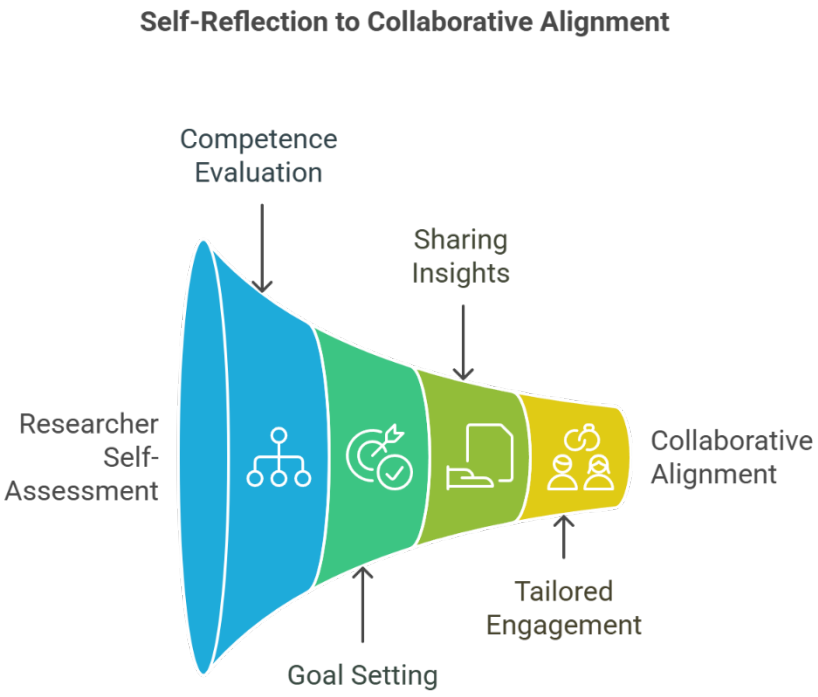
1. Self-Reflection: Establishing a Solid Foundation

The self-reflection phase is the cornerstone of the EdTech Mentoring Approach, providing researchers with the opportunity to assess their current skills, experiences, and potential areas for growth. This phase is centered around the **SPIDER Questionnaire**, a tool designed to evaluate the competence of "Spotting Ideas and Opportunities" as outlined in the **EntreComp Framework** and validated through the **LEVEL5 methodology**.

The questionnaire encourages researchers to think deeply about their ability to identify opportunities, create value, and consider sustainability and ethical dimensions. By reflecting on specific sub-competences such as identifying needs, valuing ideas, and creating innovative solutions, researchers gain clarity about their starting point and areas for development. The self-assessment results are then shared with the hosting company to foster transparency and mutual understanding. This exchange allows hosts to identify collaboration opportunities and tailor their engagement to align with the researcher's strengths and developmental needs.

For researchers, this phase is not only a tool for introspection but also a chance to set actionable goals for the secondment. For hosts, it provides a structured insight into the researcher's potential, creating a shared vision for the collaboration. According to Bacigalupo et al. (2016), fostering self-awareness in entrepreneurial competencies is critical for identifying pathways to innovation and growth, making this phase foundational for the programme's success.



2. Collaboration Phase: Co-Creating Value

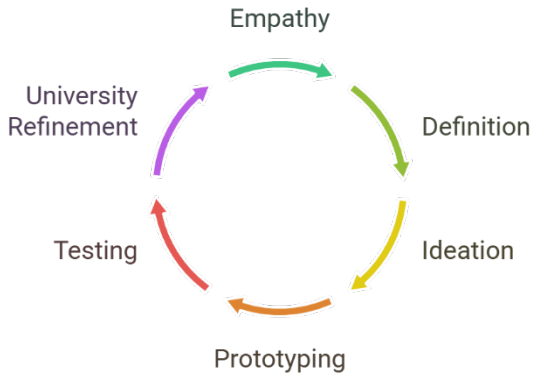
The collaboration phase represents the core of the secondment experience, where researchers and hosting companies work together to develop innovative ideas, concepts, or services. This phase relies heavily on the principles of **Design Thinking**, a proven methodology for problem-solving and innovation. The design thinking process, popularized by Brown (2009), involves five iterative stages: **Empathy, Definition, Ideation, Prototyping, and Testing**. Each stage fosters collaboration, creativity, and practical application.

During the secondment, researchers immerse themselves in the host company's context through face-to-face interactions, site visits, and online meetings. These sessions provide opportunities for researchers to understand the company's challenges, ideate potential solutions, and co-develop prototypes. For example, in the **Empathy stage**, researchers may engage with company stakeholders to map user needs, while the **Prototyping stage** might involve creating tangible representations of their ideas for testing and feedback.

One unique aspect of the EdTech Mentoring Approach is the iterative nature of this phase. Researchers undertake three secondment periods, each lasting about a month. Between these periods, they return to their universities to refine their ideas and incorporate feedback gathered during the collaboration. This cyclical process ensures that the ideas and prototypes developed are not only innovative but also thoroughly tested and refined, increasing their potential for real-world application.

This phase also fosters reciprocal learning. Researchers gain practical insights into the realities of EdTech innovation, while host companies benefit from fresh perspectives and the potential to co-create new products or services. By the end of this phase, researchers have typically co-developed prototypes or concepts that align with both their personal development goals and the host company's needs.

Iterative Collaboration Cycle



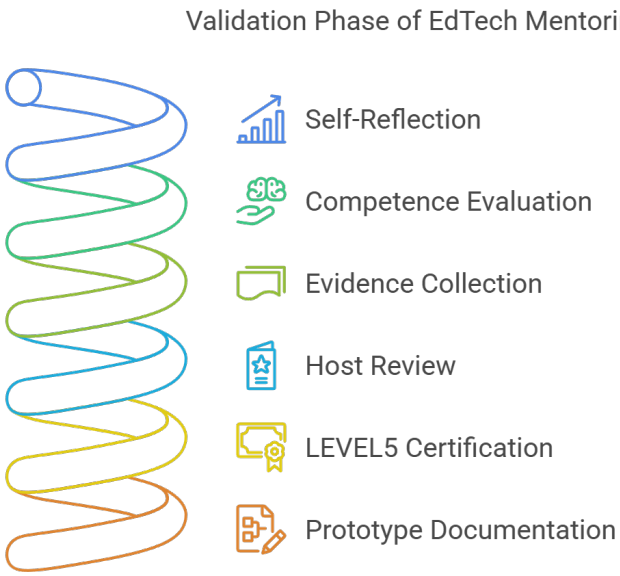
3. Validation: Recognizing and Documenting Growth

The validation phase serves as the final step in the EdTech Mentoring Approach, where researchers reflect on their personal and professional growth throughout the secondment. Using the **LEVEL5 Assessment framework**, researchers revisit their initial self-reflection results and evaluate their competence development. This process focuses on the same core areas identified in the SPIDER Questionnaire, allowing researchers to document their progress in knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

The validation process involves comparing the researcher's competence levels at the beginning and end of the programme. This reflection is not merely a self-assessment; it requires researchers to provide evidence and reasoning to support their evaluations. For example, they may document how they applied new knowledge to solve challenges or how their collaboration with the host company enhanced their ability to create value. The **LEVEL5 methodology**, widely used in competence-oriented learning (Van Lakerveld, et al., 2019), ensures that this reflection is both structured and meaningful.

Hosts play a crucial role in this phase as external reviewers. Their feedback validates the researcher's self-assessment, offering an objective perspective on the researcher's contributions and growth. This external validation strengthens the credibility of the assessment and highlights the collaborative nature of the programme.

The final output of this phase includes a **LEVEL5 Certificate**, which formally recognizes the researcher's development in "Spotting Ideas and Opportunities." Additionally, the documentation of prototypes or services developed during the secondment provides tangible evidence of the collaboration's impact. By connecting individual growth with practical outcomes, this phase bridges the gap between learning and application, ensuring that the programme delivers value at multiple levels.



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