



# Career Mentor Scheme Mentor Guide

## Contents

Introduction .....	2
Career Mentor Scheme overview .....	2
About the Career Mentor Scheme.....	2
Mentoring benefits .....	2
Scheme timeline .....	3
What is career mentoring? .....	3
Mentoring skills.....	4
Key points to remember: .....	5
Your mentoring partnership: .....	5
Getting to know your mentee .....	5
Staying in touch with your mentee.....	6
Mentoring graduate mentees – information for mentors.....	7
Mentoring international students - signposting .....	8
Setting objectives and action planning .....	9
Support and dealing with difficulties in the mentoring relationship .....	10
At the end of the scheme.....	11
Career Mentor Scheme contact details .....	11

## Introduction

Thank you for joining us on the Career Mentor Scheme – it is great to have you as a part of our team of committed volunteers.

The time and energy you put into this scheme will be a fantastic help in improving the employability and career prospects of our mentees. Your input in increasing their commercial awareness, confidence and building their skillset will enable your mentees to progress in their career planning and realise their true potential.

The purpose of this guide is to help you develop as a mentor and to provide you with tips and guidance to help your mentee over the 6 months of this scheme. It covers what we feel career mentoring is, the ways in which we hope it will benefit both mentor and mentee and then takes you step-by-step through the scheme.

For new mentors and/or those who would like to recap on their knowledge, we have put together a “New Mentor Career Mentor Scheme Training” PowerPoint, which can be accessed through our [resources webpages](#). The password for the training is “exetercms”.

You may also find it helpful to listen to our [Career Mentor Conversations](#) podcasts. During summer 2020, some of our mentors kindly helped us to record a series of podcasts, during which they shared their expertise on a variety of topics such as how to engage your mentee, increase their commercial awareness and explore their ethics and values in terms of their career goals. These, along with the wide range of additional resources on our webpages, should prove useful tools for new and experienced mentors alike.

## Career Mentor Scheme overview

### About the Career Mentor Scheme

Our mentors are a mix of alumni and non-alumni, who are based in the UK or overseas and cover a range of sectors and professions. Mentors volunteer to support a mentee by providing invaluable insight and advice into their career and sector via email, telephone or video call at least once per month for the duration of the scheme.

### Mentoring benefits

#### Benefits of a mentoring partnership for mentors:

- It is a good opportunity to give back to the University.
- To gain an insight into current student life.
- To hear about news regarding the University.
- To work with someone with a fresh perspective.
- To use and develop your information, advice and guidance skills.
- To learn about a different culture.
- To reflect upon your own achievements and career path.
- To gain voluntary experience for your CV.
- To develop your communication skills by working with someone you wouldn't usually be in regular contact with.

Mentees are current students or recent graduates who have an interest in a particular sector or role and wish to find out how to forge a successful career within it by learning from an experienced professional. Mentees will need to apply to the scheme and will be matched with their chosen mentor only once they have passed the application process. Mentees must undertake training before being introduced to their mentors and have access to ongoing support from staff.

## Scheme timeline

September - November	Mentor opportunities are advertised to students and recent graduates.
	Mentees are selected and undertake online training.
December	Mentor and mentee are introduced via email.
	Mentoring month 1.
December – April	Mentoring months 2 – 5.
May	Mentoring month 6 - partnerships end and participants contacted for feedback.

## What is career mentoring?

Career mentoring is an increasingly popular tool for supporting personal development. Traditionally, mentoring provides support, guidance and advice. In the workplace it has tended to describe a relationship in which an experienced colleague uses their greater knowledge and understanding of the work or workplace to support the development of a more junior colleague. For the Career Mentor Scheme, it is about alumni and friends of the University supporting current students and recent graduates in their career development.

### Career mentoring is:

- A professional relationship.
- A partnership lasting over a pre-determined and fixed time-scale (6 months) which encourages learning and development.
- Focused on expanding the mentee’s horizons and thought processes and developing their decision making skills.
- Focused on building the mentee’s personal and professional development.
- Honest and supportive.
- One-to-one.
- Confidential (within appropriate boundaries).

### Career mentoring isn’t:

- Direct sponsorship.
- Always task-focused.
- A case of doing the work on behalf of the mentee.
- A case of making decisions on behalf of the mentee.
- Therapy for personal issues.
- A tutor-student relationship with the main focus on producing an academic outcome.
- A friend-friend relationship with the main focus on personal development outside of work. As such, we respectfully ask that you avoid making any social media (Facebook, Twitter etc.) connections with your mentee during your official six-month partnership. Connecting on LinkedIn is perfectly acceptable. Naturally, if you wish to continue your relationship after your mentoring

partnership has come to a close, then you are absolutely at liberty to do so assuming that this is agreeable to both parties.

## **Mentoring skills**

You may find it helpful to bear the following key mentoring skills in mind when working with your mentee:

- Encouraging personal reflection.
- Giving constructive feedback and advice.
- Demonstrating active listening.

## **Reflection**

You could consider these example prompts to encourage reflection:

- What was good or bad about the experience?
- Are there any ethical/ moral/ social issues that you want to explore?
- Is there something you need to do next?
- Is there something that you would do differently next time, given a similar situation?

With a busy lifestyle, it is all too easy to jump from one experience or activity to the next, without taking the time to evaluate it and consider that experience as part of a bigger picture, rather than looking at it as a standalone item. If you can encourage your mentee to look at each step on their career path and assign it value as part of a longer journey, their learning process is likely to be more holistic and rewarding.

## **Constructive feedback**

As we have already seen in this guide, a significant part of the career mentoring process is about building a mentee's confidence. Pairing this with an enhanced skillset and industry insight gives mentees a great advantage in taking their next steps on their career journey. However, in any learning process, mistakes will be made and it is important to highlight these and learn from them in a constructive way. You may wish to consider the following tips for providing constructive feedback:

- Encourage them to reflect first e.g. "How do you feel about the way you dealt with..."
- Be specific.
- Offer advice on how to improve e.g. "You might like to try..."
- Balance negative with positive.
- End on a positive.

## **Active listening**

Tips for practising active listening:

- Clear your mind of distractions.
- Make eye contact.
- Be aware of body language - pay attention to the mentee's facial expressions, gestures etc.
- Ask open ended questions.
- Paraphrase or ask questions to check mutual understanding.
- Be non-judgmental.

These might sound like obvious things but again, when we are busy, it is all too easy to slip in to passive listening mode without even realising we are doing so. Where possible, try to clear your schedule for meetings with your mentee and create a calm and peaceful space to talk so that you can give them your full attention. Of course there will be times where a quick chat on the train on your way home is necessary and really useful if your mentee has a couple of quick questions for you. However, if you plan on doing a bigger piece of work with your mentee or they have more in-depth topics to discuss with you, try to have those conversations at a time when your attention won't be required elsewhere.

## Key points to remember:

- **Contact with your mentee** – After they have completed training in Autumn you will be introduced to your mentee via email in December. Your mentee should then make contact with you within one week.
- **Setting objectives and action planning** – Soon after your initial contact, your mentee should share with you the objectives that they wish to achieve by the end of the scheme and complete the six month action plan to ensure that they meet these objectives. Your mentee should show you their objectives and action plan so that you can amend/agree as necessary.
- **Confidentiality** - Please remember the need to keep information discussed between you and your mentee confidential. Your mentee understands this too and has also been told about the importance of commercial confidentiality.
- **Kindness** – Of course we expect mentees to act professionally and with respect, and the importance of this has been highlighted to them in their training. However, this sort of professional relationship will be very new to a great many mentees, so we ask that you please treat your mentee with kindness when you provide them with feedback and understand that they may not get it right 100% of the time.
- **Keeping in touch** – Please feel free to contact the Career Mentoring Team if you have any questions during the scheme. If you are experiencing difficulties in contacting your mentee, please let us know and we will do our best to help.
- **Feedback and evaluation** – We would very much appreciate your cooperation in completing our feedback form at the end of the scheme. We really value your input as it helps us to keep improving our scheme.

If you have any questions, please contact the scheme staff at [careermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:careermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk)

## Your mentoring partnership:

### Getting to know your mentee

You will be introduced to your mentee via email in December 2021. Your mentee is expected to take the lead in contacting you soon after (if you have not heard from your mentee within one week of receiving the introduction email, please contact the mentoring team). Your mentee has been provided with the table below which aims to provide a number of suggestions for your discussions during your first mentoring session. This will help you to get to know each other and establish your mentoring partnership.

For more ideas, please visit the [resources for mentors](#) section on the Career Mentor Scheme webpage.

Discussion Topics	Notes
<p>About the Scheme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aims (purpose of the scheme).</li> <li>• Structure (setting your objectives and 6-month action plan).</li> <li>• Frequency and method of contact.</li> <li>• Timing and duration of meetings.</li> <li>• Confidentiality (commercial/personal/exceptions).</li> </ul>	
<p>About you (the mentee):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Degree course.</li> <li>• Interests.</li> <li>• Societies.</li> <li>• Career aspirations.</li> <li>• Previous work experience (voluntary work, paid work, role in societies).</li> <li>• Achievements.</li> </ul>	
<p>About your mentor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education.</li> <li>• Career history.</li> <li>• Current employer.</li> <li>• Typical day at work.</li> <li>• Skills used in their work.</li> </ul>	
<p>Potential topics for future discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job hunting techniques and sources of relevant vacancies.</li> <li>• CVs/covering letters/application forms.</li> <li>• Relevant reading (e.g. industry magazines).</li> <li>• Professional bodies.</li> <li>• Networking groups/events.</li> <li>• Personal/professional boundaries.</li> <li>• Skills required for the workplace and how to begin developing these as a student/continue developing them as a graduate.</li> <li>• Sector requirements.</li> <li>• Work experience (how and where to apply for this).</li> <li>• Typical work activities.</li> <li>• Good/bad aspects of your mentor's profession.</li> </ul>	

### Staying in touch with your mentee

Wherever possible you should try to communicate with your mentee at least once a month during the six months of the scheme although further meetings are encouraged.

Contact can be made via any of the following methods: email, telephone, text message, WhatsApp, video

call etc. Agree on the duration of each meeting in advance and try to stick to this where possible. We will provide you and your mentee with each other's mobile phone numbers, so that you can contact each other at short notice if last minute changes need to be made to an agreed meeting.

Where possible please let your mentee know in advance if you will be away for a substantial period of time and unable to answer emails or to take calls. You may find the [University term dates](#) useful in order to have an idea of where your mentee may be based (i.e. at home or at University) during certain points in the year.

You should expect that your conversations with your mentee will remain confidential, for both what you share with your mentee and what they share with you. This applies to any personal details and experiences that you share with each other.

Mentees are encouraged to share any health or disability information with you if they feel that it may affect their participation in the scheme and have [resources](#) available to them to help them do so. We hope that this will help you understand their individual circumstances and needs and enable you to be supportive in meeting these. The decision to disclose any sensitive information is of course a very personal one and requires a lot of trust between mentor and mentee, so this should be treated with the strictest confidence. If you would like to discuss how to support a mentee who has disclosed health and disability information to you, please contact the Career Mentor Scheme Team and we can discuss the next steps with you.

There may be occasions where you wish to seek advice from a colleague who has more experience than you of a certain topic which your mentee has asked you for help with. It is absolutely fine to do this, as long as you have asked your mentee for their express permission to do so and you ensure your mentee remains anonymous during the discussion.

In addition to this, the mentees will be conscious of the importance of commercial confidentiality. It is possible that you will choose to give access to sensitive information and documents from your company and work. The mentees will not share this information with anyone else and should act with discretion at all times. There may be some extreme situations in which confidentiality should be broken. This would generally be in the case of one party having serious concerns that the other is a danger to themselves or to others, or that there is a likelihood of a serious crime being committed.

## **Mentoring graduate mentees – information for mentors**

In addition to current students, graduates are eligible to take part in the normal six month schemes for up to three years after graduation. We feel that graduates can benefit greatly from the support and guidance of a career mentor.

If you are mentoring a graduate, they may be in one of the following situations:

### **Graduates who are looking for a change in career:**

Many of our fantastic graduates go on to wonderful opportunities when they leave Exeter, but this is not to say that their graduate job is going to be within the profession or sector that they want to be in for life. As we all know, practice is not always the same as theory and sometimes our graduates might feel that after a while in their first job, they want to look for something completely different. Speaking to a mentor who works in their new preferred sector and who has possibly been through a similar transition, is of great value to a graduate who is looking for a fresh start and is not quite sure how to achieve it.

### **Graduates who are looking for career progression:**

Depending on the route they have taken after graduation, some graduates might find it difficult to progress from their initial graduate role. This might be due to a lack of opportunities within the company they work for, a lack of personal confidence, or lots of different reasons. Whatever the situation, having a mentor who can guide them through the process of where to look for progression opportunities and how to draw on the skills they have learned since graduating, can be really beneficial in helping a graduate to take that next step.

### **Underemployed graduates:**

Sometimes, our graduates find themselves in roles after graduation in which they are gaining experience of the working world, but not necessarily realizing their full potential. Although these jobs are often great temporary measures, of course we want the best for our graduates and having a career mentor could be instrumental in helping a graduate to secure an opportunity in the area which really interests them and which allows them to fully develop their skillset.

### **Unemployed graduates:**

Unfortunately, occasionally our graduates will struggle to find employment after graduation. The graduate job market is a challenging place and some graduates will really benefit from the guidance of a mentor to help them successfully break in to the world of work. These graduates may be less sure of the direction they want their career to take, so in these circumstances some more general careers support around CVs, application forms and interview techniques may be required.

### **Graduates who are looking for support as they transition from student to working life:**

As our graduates start out on their career journey and get used to the ways of the working world, they may appreciate the help of a mentor to encourage them and help them develop the new skills that they require.

### **Some key considerations for working with graduates rather than students:**

- 1) If a graduate is already working, they are likely to have a less flexible schedule than a student. This may mean that organising meetings will need to work around your mentee's schedule, as well as your own very busy one. It may be that an early evening or weekend mentoring session is required.
- 2) Graduates **may** (or may not!) be a little more experienced in life and in work than students, so may have different contributions to make towards the conversations and activities that you undertake together, depending upon their experiences of the working world. You may find that it is helpful initially to spend some time with your graduate mentee talking about the experiences they have had thus far. You can then use this to shape your mentoring activity in order to best help them progress to where they are hoping to go next. We hope that these conversations will prove to be fruitful and interesting but if you have any concerns at any point, please contact the Career Mentoring Team at [careermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:careermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk)

## **Mentoring international students - signposting**

Here at Exeter we are really proud of our international student community and we are thrilled that so many of our international students choose to take part in the Career Mentor Scheme. A challenge that we know many of our international students face is that of obtaining a working visa in order to begin their graduate career in the UK, after their studies at Exeter have come to an end. This is not something that we

expect our Career Mentors to be able to give advice on or help with, however there are services at the University who can support with this, should your mentee bring it up with you. We would recommend that you signpost your mentee to the [International Student Support Office \(ISSO\)](#) webpages, where they will find information about [working visas](#), as well as [contact methods](#) for the ISSO team.

The ISSO webpages also have information on [language study support](#), if your mentee has expressed that they would benefit from additional English language study.

## Setting objectives and action planning

All mentees have been asked to identify a list of objectives that they wish to achieve by the end of the six-month scheme. We have asked the mentees to complete their own six-month action plan and include the topics and activities they would like to cover with you.

As you would expect, all mentees will have slightly different hopes for what they might achieve with you over the six months. What can be achieved will of course depend very much upon your experiences and areas of expertise and what point the mentee is at in their career planning. However, our hope is that at the end of the scheme, all mentees will be able to answer 'yes' to at least the majority of these statements:

- The scheme has increased your knowledge of a specific sector and/or occupation.
- The scheme has helped inform your career plan.
- The scheme has improved your skills for the workplace.
- The scheme has helped you feel more confident about securing a graduate job/future employment.
- The scheme has felt worth undertaking.
- Taking part in the scheme has felt meaningful.

Mentees have been provided with the following list of common objectives to get them started but we would expect that they will also have objectives of their own:

### Job Hunting

- Increase my knowledge of job hunting resources in this sector (e.g. web pages, printed materials and recruitment events)
- Increase my knowledge of effective application forms in this sector
- Increase my knowledge of effective interview techniques in this sector
- Increase my knowledge of finding internships and work experience in this sector

### Personal Development

- Improve my personal development skills (e.g. confidence building, listening skills)
- Improve my knowledge of further education/professional courses related to this sector

### Sector-related career support

- Widen my contacts and networking opportunities
- Increase my knowledge of sector entry requirements
- Increase my knowledge of good/bad aspects of the profession

- Receive help to improve my CV

Once the mentees have selected their objectives and completed their action plan (like the one below), we have asked them to share this with you so you can agree what can be achieved in the scheme timeframe.

Month	Objective	Actions	By Who?	By When?	Notes
December	Establishing your mentoring relationship.	You will be introduced to your mentor after completing the scheme training. You should then send an email within a maximum of a week, introducing yourself further and requesting to arrange your first meeting.	CMS Team/ Mentee.	Early December	
	Negotiating and agreeing mentee's set objectives and action plan.	You should set your objectives and 6-month action plan. Share with your mentor so they can agree and negotiate if necessary.	Mentee, with the help of their mentor.	Mid- December	
January					
February					
March					
April					
May	Evaluate partnership.	Complete online evaluation form sent by the university			

We have put together an extensive list of online [resources for mentors](#), with tips and links to many mentoring support materials, to help you help your mentee to achieve their scheme objectives.

### Support and dealing with difficulties in the mentoring relationship

All mentees are provided with training before the start of the scheme on what is expected of them and how to make the most of your support.

However, if the case arises that you feel unhappy with the behaviour of your mentee, we advise you take the following steps:

- Access support on the Career Mentor Scheme webpage, see [mentor frequently asked questions](#).
- If appropriate, speak to the mentee about your concerns. Remember they may not be aware that their behaviour is unsuitable, as this is a new experience for them.
- If for any reason you feel you cannot approach the mentee directly, please contact the scheme staff at [careermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:careermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk)

Similarly, if you feel that the mentee is experiencing any serious personal problems, the University has a

number of agencies concerned with personal welfare that we can refer mentees to. There is a website dedicated to providing support to mentees, with [details of these agencies](#). You may refer them to this website but please do get in touch with us if there are any serious problems.

Current students can also contact [Student Wellbeing Services](#) for specialist support.

### **At the end of the scheme**

We would be grateful if you would complete a final evaluation form at the end of the scheme, which helps us to improve the scheme for the future by tracking the impact of the scheme as well as finding out what needs to be improved.

You are encouraged to send updates and feedback along the way to the scheme staff at:  
[careermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:careermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk)

### **Career Mentor Scheme contact details**

- Email: [careermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:careermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk)
- Address: University of Exeter Career Mentor Scheme, Employment Services, University of Exeter Forum, Stocker Road, Exeter EX4 4SZ
- **Sarah Hood**, Student Employment Support Officer (Mentoring) (Part-time Mon – Weds)  
[S.L.Hood2@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:S.L.Hood2@exeter.ac.uk)
- **Paula McDonald**, Student Employment Support Officer (Mentoring) (Part-time Tues - Thurs)  
[P.McDonald@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:P.McDonald@exeter.ac.uk)
- **Abigail Smith**, Student Employment Support Officer (Mentoring) (Part-time Tues & Fri)  
[abigail.smith@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:abigail.smith@exeter.ac.uk)