



# Career Mentor Scheme

## Mentee Guide

December 2021 – May 2022

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## Career Mentor Scheme overview

The Career Mentor Scheme matches students and graduates with experienced professionals for careers support and guidance alongside one-to-one insight into their sector. Our mentors are a mix of alumni and non-alumni volunteers, based across the world and in a range of sectors.

Later in this guide, we will introduce you to the mentee action plan and encourage you to set some individual aims and objectives. Please set aside some time to really consider what it is that you wish to achieve. We acknowledge that this will be unique to you, 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.

Our mentors choose to engage in the scheme for many different reasons, however ultimately, they are all individuals who are freely giving up their time and resources because they have a desire to help University of Exeter students and graduates reach their full potential. Our mentors are extremely valuable to the scheme and to the University as a whole. We take time to forge positive relationships with them and they may also be engaged in other activity across the University. Please ensure that you act in a respectful and professional way throughout the duration of the scheme, keeping in mind that your mentor's interaction with you could influence their decisions as to how much time and support they wish to give to the University in future.

Some of the benefits of taking part in the scheme for mentors include:

- It is a good opportunity to give back to the University.
- It is a chance to gain an insight into current student life.
- They can catch up on news regarding the University.
- It provides an opportunity to work with someone with a fresh perspective.
- It opens up the potential to learn about a different culture.
- They can reflect upon their own achievements and career path.
- It provides an opportunity to gain voluntary experience for their CV.
- It is a way to develop their own information, advice and guidance skills.
- They can develop their communication skills by working with someone they wouldn't usually be in regular contact with.

### What do we mean by '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 timescale (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 a mentor doing work on behalf of the mentee.
- A case of a mentor making decisions on behalf of the mentee.
- An opportunity to ask for any 'favours', for example asking directly for a job/work experience/internships, an introduction to hiring managers, access to your mentor's network contacts etc.
  - N.B: Mentors are able to advise you on how to look for jobs/internships, or how to expand your network etc., however please do not ask your mentor to provide these opportunities for you.
  - Occasionally, mentors may be able to offer an introduction or work experience/shadowing opportunity etc., which you can accept, however this should be done freely at the mentor's discretion and not by request.
- Therapy for personal issues.
- A tutor-student relationship with the main focus being on producing an academic outcome.
- A friend-friend relationship with the main focus being on personal development outside of work. As such, we respectfully ask that you avoid making any social media (Facebook, Twitter etc.) connections with your mentor during your official six-month partnership. Connecting on LinkedIn is perfectly acceptable.

## Key points to remember:

- **Training** – You will be expected to complete online Career Mentor Scheme training at some point during September-November 2021. Completing training is a compulsory part of the scheme and you will not be introduced to your mentor until you have done so. Failure to complete training will result in your partnership being withdrawn.
- **Contacting your mentor** – After completing training in you will be introduced to your mentor via email in December 2021. You are expected to make contact with your mentor via email **within one week**. In this email, you should aim to introduce yourself, outline your aims for the scheme, ask your mentor one or two questions about themselves and suggest an initial meeting.
- **Setting objectives and action planning** – Ideally you should have at least an idea of your objectives for the scheme before being introduced to your mentor. We would advise that you spend your first meeting with your mentor agreeing the objectives that you wish to achieve by the end of the scheme and completing the six month action plan to ensure these are met.
- **Professionalism** – By participating in this scheme, you have agreed to act as an ambassador for the University. Therefore, you are expected to act in a professional manner at all times with anyone that you meet through the scheme and to do what you say you will do in a timely manner.
- **Confidentiality** - Please remember the need to keep information discussed between you and your mentor and any information about their organisation confidential.
- **Keep in touch** – Please keep the scheme staff updated with your progress and contact us if you have any questions during the scheme. Regularly check your email, including during vacation periods and respond to any emails from your mentor and the Career Mentor Scheme team within three days.
- **Feedback and evaluation** – You will be asked to complete an evaluation form at the end of the scheme. **By signing up to the scheme you have committed to providing this information.**

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 mentor

Some mentees tell us that they find it difficult to know what to write in their initial email to their mentor. It is totally understandable that you may feel anxious about what to write but remember that your mentor wants to help you and any information that you can give them about your interests and aspirations will aid that process. You may find it helpful to use the 'elevator pitch' that you wrote during your training as a basis for your initial email. We would always suggest asking your mentor some questions in this first email too as your partnership should be a "two-way street".

The table below provides you with several suggestions to guide your discussions during your first interactions with your mentor. You can access more [resources for mentees](#) on the Career Mentor Scheme webpage.

Discussion topics	Notes
About the scheme: <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>	
About you: <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>	
About your mentor: <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 or continue developing these as a mentee.</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>	
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### Staying in touch with your mentor

- As the mentee you are expected to take the lead in contacting your mentor every month. This means being proactive in setting meetings and sending polite follow up emails to your mentor if you do not get a response. We would recommend waiting about one week to send a follow up email, if required.
- If you have arranged a meeting with your mentor, it is a good idea to check in with them the day before to confirm arrangements. Give as much notice as possible if you are running late, need to change plans or in extreme circumstances, cancel.
- We will provide you with your mentor's email address and in most cases, their phone number. We will also provide them with yours. We recommend using email as the primary method of contact and phoning your mentor only if you are struggling to get a response by email or if you are e.g. delayed for a meeting. Do discuss with your mentor early on in your partnership how they would prefer you to contact them, as some mentors may prefer phone calls to emails as standard.
- You should expect that your conversations with your mentor will remain confidential, in terms of both what you share with them and what they share with you. This applies to any personal details and experiences that you share with each other. In addition to this you need to remember the importance of commercial confidentiality. It is possible that you will have access to sensitive information pertaining to your mentor's role or organisation. You should 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.
- Let your mentor know in advance if you are travelling, have exams etc. and will be unable to answer emails or to take calls. It would be a good idea to share the [University term dates](#) with your mentor.
- Follow up with your mentor after each meeting and thank them for their time.



## Meetings with your mentor and Covid-19

We understand that both the government and University guidance surrounding in-person meetings is having to constantly adapt to the evolving situation with Coronavirus. At the time of publishing this guide (September 2021) government and university guidelines are as such that we can advise that mentors and mentees may meet in person if they wish to do so. Please remember that people are coping with the current situation in many different ways and that it is important not to assume how someone is feeling, or what they are comfortable with. Many of our mentees and our mentors will have very legitimate reasons why they are particularly concerned about their health and livelihood, or that of a loved one. Please remember that it is your responsibility to protect your own vulnerabilities, and to keep yourself safe in every way. We also ask that you are kind and respectful towards the position of others as we all navigate this difficult time.

## Guidance on virtual meetings

When setting up for a video call with your mentor, use a well-lit and ordinarily little-used space in your home that provides you with enough room for your equipment and resources. You may be sharing your home with your family or flatmates so a protected workspace may not be easy to create. Some ideas you could use to aid your productivity include

- using headphones,
- having a sign on your room door or laptop 'please do not disturb until ...'
- agreeing with others not to use domestic appliances during a certain time period.

We recommend that you:

- Get ready in advance with your technology and agenda items.
- Remember to switch on your camera where possible, blur your background (or choose a suitable location) and consider your non-verbal communication. You will also need to think about how you are dressed and whether it is appropriate for this meeting.
- Speak slowly and clearly and pause before responding to others as sometimes there is a time lapse between transmissions.
- Avoid distractions like checking email.
- Remember to try to build rapport with your mentor by asking them something about themselves and making small talk.
- Summarise at the end of the conversation, agreeing any key points or actions to take forward and thank them for their time.

## Setting objectives and action planning

### A. Setting your objectives

During your first meeting with your mentor, you should spend time setting the objectives that you wish to achieve by the end of the scheme and complete the six-month action plan to ensure you meet these objectives and get as much benefit from the scheme as possible.

We appreciate that all mentees will have different objectives, however, below are some suggestions of common objectives to get you started. Please remember to share your objectives with your mentor so that they can review them and discuss any amendments with you if necessary and agree your action plan.

### Job hunting objectives

- 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.
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**Personal development objectives**

- 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 work experience/job shadowing (not offered by all mentors and not an expectation of the scheme).
- Receive help to improve my CV.

## B. Creating and implementing your action plan

Please complete the six-month action plan below, which helps you to track and achieve your objectives. Some sections have been pre-filled with mandatory activities during the year.

Month	Objective	Actions	By Who?	By When?	Notes
December 2021	Establishing your mentoring relationship.	You will be introduced to your mentor after you have completed 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.	December 2021	
	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 amend if necessary.	Mentee, with the help of their mentor.	Mid December 2021	
January 2022					
February 2022					
March 2022					
April 2022					
May 2022	Evaluate partnership.	Complete online evaluation form sent by the University.			

### Taking responsibility and behaving professionally

Always try to ensure that you respond to all emails and other contact from your mentor in a timely manner, answering any questions and keeping your tone professional. Remember that some data may be sensitive and/or confidential.

Wherever possible, try to uphold commitments you have made and complete all suggested actions by the agreed date. However, if there is a genuine reason why you cannot do so, it is very important that you communicate this to your mentor professionally and in good time. You should then work with them to resolve the issue and agree an amended action plan.

Be honest about your needs and wishes through the duration of the scheme. Of course, you want to push yourself and achieve as much as you can with your mentor but be realistic. It is better to achieve 5 objectives really well during the 6 months, than to half-achieve 10!

## Support and dealing with difficulties in a mentoring relationship.

The Career Mentor Scheme has been set up to benefit mentees and we want to make sure that you enjoy the experience, while increasing your personal skills and future employability prospects. Despite the best endeavours of both the mentor and mentee, there are occasions where for some reason the mentoring relationship does not work as well as has been anticipated.

If the case arises that you are experiencing difficulties with your mentoring partnership, we advise that you take the following steps:

- If you feel comfortable doing so, speak to your mentor first to discuss the situation and to identify what the issue is. It may be that the mentor is completely unaware of the problem and an agreement can be reached in order to move forward. When dealing with difficulties:
  - Act quickly before the issue has chance to escalate.
  - Speak to your mentor 'face to face' if possible (e.g. via Skype or similar) or failing that by email.
  - Discuss the issues but try to focus on possible solutions.
  - Ask for your mentor's thoughts and ideas on how to deal with the situation as well as presenting your own viewpoint.
  - [Negotiate](#) and agree action. Be prepared to compromise and commit to whatever is agreed.
- If you do not feel comfortable speaking to your mentor directly, or doing so does not resolve the situation, please contact us via [careermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:careermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk) immediately. A member of staff will then ask to speak with you to discuss the problem in confidence and to try to find a solution. We will act as a mediator between you and the mentor where necessary.
- In the unlikely event that the situation does not improve and the partnership must be withdrawn, the Career Mentor Scheme team will contact the mentor to do so. In such circumstances we cannot guarantee that a new mentor will be found for you, as there may not be enough time to complete the necessary procedures that come with setting up a new mentoring partnership. You will of course be welcome to apply for future rounds of the scheme if another mentor cannot be found for you during the scheme you originally applied to.

### Disclosing health/disability information

If you have a disability or longer-term health condition that may affect your participation in the Career Mentor Scheme, the team would recommend sharing any relevant health and disability information with your mentor so that they can offer you maximum support. The decision to disclose any information is a very personal one, however if you do decide to share information it will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Further information on disclosing a disability can be found on the "[Supporting Equality and Diversity](#)" section of the Career Zone. If you would like further support in disclosing health and disability information to your mentor, please contact the Career Mentor Scheme Team and we can discuss the next steps with you.

### Other support at the University

If you are ever experiencing any personal difficulties that you would like support for, the University has a number of agencies (internal and external) you can refer to. See <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/students/az-services/>

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

It is worth bearing in mind that if you are having to practice social isolating or distancing due to COVID-19, this can have an impact on your mental health. For information on self-care and other treatments for mental health issues please see: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>.

### At the end of the scheme

Your mentor will have given a lot of time and effort to your partnership. Please ensure that you thank them for their help and end the relationship positively...you never know if a mentor may pop up later in your career!

Please make sure you remember to complete the evaluation form, as your feedback is vital for us to be able to improve the scheme for the future.

### Career Mentor Scheme contact details

- **Career Mentor Scheme email:** [careermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:careermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk)
- **Postal address:** University of Exeter Career Mentor Scheme, Employer Engagement and Student Employment, University of Exeter Forum, Stocker Road, Exeter, EX4 4SZ

## Other careers support/opportunities

You can find lots of information about careers and employability opportunities and support on the Career Zone [webpage](#), including:

[Ask an Alum](#) (online careers Q&A with Exeter alumni)

[Paid internship schemes](#)

[The Exeter Award and The Exeter Leaders Award](#)

[Careers fairs](#)

[Events and skills sessions](#)

[Global opportunities](#)

You can also access further support and resources via [Handshake](#). This system allows students and recent graduates to search for [jobs and opportunities](#), book [appointments](#) with careers consultants and view upcoming [careers skills sessions](#). Graduates, you may have difficulty in accessing this system the first time you attempt to do so after graduating. In this instance, contact [careers@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:careers@exeter.ac.uk) and someone will be able to help you

## Lastly...

We really hope that you will have a positive experience of the Career Mentor Scheme and that you will find it to be beneficial. Please remember that the mentoring team are here to help and support you should you ever need it. Even if it is a small thing that you would like to run past us, please always feel free to do so. We are here for problems big and small and we would always rather hear from you than discover at the end of the 6 month scheme that you had encountered an issue you couldn't resolve alone and have therefore not benefitted from your mentoring partnership. Our door is always open and we love to hear from you! Enjoy the scheme...