

Career Mentor Scheme – Application Advice

The Career Mentor Scheme is competitive, so a good application is crucial to make the best impression possible as your application will be shortlisted against other students and will be shared with your mentor if you are successful. Here are some tips, techniques and an example answer to help improve your chances of being selected for the scheme.

Top Tips

The Basics

- Draft your answers first. Check them over in a Word document before submitting your form - if you have cut and paste answers make sure they have transferred properly.
- Take your time. Make sure you have enough time to allow for thorough preparation, technical hitches or other problems.
- Check your spelling and grammar.
- Save a copy. You may be able to refer to it for future applications, giving you a good basis to answer similar questions for employer application forms.

Application Questions

- Keep in mind the specific mentor you are applying for. Make reference to how you will gain specific skills/insight into that particular role or sector. Showing knowledge and passion for the sector you are interested in will express motivation and commitment, increasing your chances of a successful application.
- Remember, if you state any skills you must be able to evidence them. Use the STAR approach (shown below), to give examples of where you have demonstrated these. This will give your answers structure and help show why you should be selected.
- Be positive! Like any job application, you need to display confidence and state why you should be chosen to take part, but remember to be truthful, and use professional language.

The STAR Approach

The STAR approach – **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction and **R**esult can be used to answer situational questions on application forms e.g. “Describe a time when...” or “Give an example of...”. The **Situation** and **Task** are usually combined, forming the introduction. The **Action** you took should form the main body of your answer, and the **Result** should be your conclusion. Try to be as specific as possible e.g. “we raised £400 for charity” stating what you learned and what you would do differently. Here is an example:

Situation	How, when, where, with whom?	“Whilst employed at Weaver Bros. last Summer ...”
Task	Describe the situation or task you faced	“...I was responsible for updating the stock control system.”
Action	What action did YOU take?	“I looked at factors such as when stock was last ordered, its use and how often it was used. I worked out a method of streamlining paperwork involved in this process and redesigned relevant forms, which I then submitted to my manager.”
Result	What did you achieve /what did you learn from the experience?	“My ideas were accepted and implemented achieving a 15% reduction in stock levels.”

Try and use examples to from a **range of situations**, e.g. academic, part-time or voluntary work, and travel etc. The focus of these examples should be you. Even if was a group situation, selectors want to know what *your* specific role was in achieving the result.

Example Answer

Here is an example of a strong application to the scheme (please note, the example has been shortened and anonymised). Parts of the application have been highlighted with comments to help explain how this student created a high-scoring application.

What careers research have you done?

My interest in finance stems from academic pursuits. **I have attended a number of employer sessions, such as [COMPANY NAME] presentations, Careers Fairs and mock interviews,** giving me insight into the industry. I communicated with contacts developed through these events who have provided further advice. **I regularly visit TargetJobs and Inside Careers websites, to increase my awareness of current employment opportunities, and read Economia magazine,** which includes articles on accountancy, regulatory changes and student support, also improving my commercial awareness.

Comment [JR1]: Commitment to research of their chosen field.

Comment [JR2]: Showing motivation to gaining insight into the sector they are interested in

I have undertaken several work experience placements, **including [COMPANY NAME] and [COMPANY NAME], enabling me to understand the operations of possible employers. I spoke to current trainees and senior managers on topics such as professional qualifications, industry trends and skills required to succeed,** resulting in learning about the ACA qualification and training structure.

Comment [JR3]: Evidence of work experience, and commitment to gaining appropriate skills.

What do you wish to gain from a career mentor?

My primary objective is to build my network of contacts, and learn about the finance sector. I intend to gain insight into the accountancy culture, future industry opportunities and how to expand my career options. **Building contacts is crucial in the finance industry, which is particularly driven by long term relationships,** and by being mentored I would learn effective networking skills to help improve my employability. I aim to exploit my mentor's knowledge, integrating this to help make better decisions about my career. Asking a mentor certain questions on industry issues **will also allow me to gain an edge when completing applications.**

Comment [JR4]: Knowledge of important elements in the industry.

Comment [JR5]: Demonstrating focus on career goals.

Learning operations of banking, finance and accountancy firms from my mentor will **also aid my long term career goal to start my own practice.** Through attending networking events, I have developed **the ability to build relationships that I want to enhance during the scheme.** Being mentored will provide me with more opportunities to build contacts, and skills useful for the workplace.

Comment [JR6]: Showing ambition and drive to succeed on their chosen career path.

Comment [JR7]: Certain skills the mentee wants to improve, demonstrating self-awareness.

What makes you a suitable mentee?

After meeting [EMPLOYER NAME] at [COMPANY NAME] presentation, I contacted them before a telephone interview; their invaluable advice allowed me to succeed in the interview. After my internship with COMPANY, I sought advice from my former manager for my Taxation module, helping me gain **a first class.** I was subsequently able to seek further advice, gaining an appreciation for support mentors and past employers can provide and am encouraged to be consistently involved with my mentor to fully exploit this opportunity.

Comment [JR8]: Previous experience of networking, showing student is motivated to use opportunities they are given.

Comment [JR9]: Specific example where student has achieved result.

My determination to exceed expectations was proven when I arranged a tour for my school cricket team to India. Facing a number of issues regarding visas and transport, I successfully overcame these by arranging sponsorship and numerous travel agents to find the most cost effective method to commute to and from India, allowing the trip to continue. I view this scheme as an opportunity to learn from experienced professionals, and will make the most of this opportunity, **building skills through networking and communicating, and learning from my mentor's experience in the industry.**

Comment [JR10]: Effective use of the STAR approach.

Comment [JR11]: Reference to what the mentee wants to gain from the scheme.

Further Support

Links and advice on application forms can be found on the [CareerZone Application Forms](#) webpage. If you have any other queries, please contact: careermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk or call 01392 722034