

Career Mentor Scheme

Mentee Guide

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**Career Mentor Scheme Overview**

The Career Mentor Scheme gives you (the mentee) the opportunity to be mentored on a one-to-one basis by a professional working in your chosen future profession/sector for 12 months. Mentors have kindly volunteered their time and commitment to provide guidance, insight, contacts and general employability support to help you and we want you to make the most of this opportunity.

All students that are successfully matched with a Mentor attend a training session in January. The training slide and a copy of this handbook are available online at: <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/careers/events/resources/> (under “*Student Mentee Training*”).

**Important points to remember from the training:**

* **Contacting your mentor** – After attending the mentor training in January, you will be introduced to your mentor by email, you are then expected to contact your mentor within one week(see *Initial contact: Getting to know your mentor,* page 4).
* **Meeting your mentor** – You should arrange at least one meeting with your mentor over the 12 months, it is usually best to do this early on so you can get to know each other before you start communicating regularly. This meeting should be at the mentor’s place of work, or if not, in a public place (see *Travelling to meet your mentor,* page 5).
* **Setting objectives and action planning –** Soon after first contacting your mentor, you should set the objectives that you wish to achieve by the end of the scheme and complete the 12-month action plan to ensure you meet these objectives. Please remember that your objectives and action plan must be shown to and agreed by your mentor. If you successfully achieve all your objectives by the end of the scheme, you will be awarded with a certificate (see *Setting Objectives, Action Planning and Awarding Success*, pages 6-8).
* **Representation** – By participating in this scheme, you have agreed to represent yourself as an ambassador of the University, therefore, you are expected to act in a polite and proactive manner at all times, with anyone you meet through the scheme.
* **Keep us informed** – Please keep the Coordinator, Jane Harding, updated with your progress and if you have any problems communicating with your mentor. Try to check your email at least once day and occasionally during vacation periods, and respond to any emails from your mentor (see *Support and Contact Information*, page12).
* **Feedback and evaluation** – You will be asked to provide progress feedback twice during the course of the scheme and to complete an evaluation form at the end of the scheme. It is essential that you respond to these requests so we can ensure the mentoring partnership is running effectively and to help develop the scheme (see *At the end of the scheme,* page 11).

If you have any questions, please contact the Coordinator, Jane Harding, [careermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:careermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk) and she will get back to you as soon as possible.



**Initial contact: Getting to know your mentor**

After attending the mentor scheme training in January, you will be introduced to your mentor by email; you are then expected to contact your mentor within one week. This table provides you with a number of suggestions to guide your discussions during this first contact with your mentor.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Discussion Topics** | **Notes** |
| About the Scheme:   * Aims (purpose of the scheme) * Structure (setting your objectives and action plan) * Frequency and method of contact * Location and duration of meetings * Confidentiality |  |
| About you:   * Degree course * Interests * Societies * Career aspirations * Previous work experience (voluntary work, paid work, role in societies) * Achievements |  |
| About your mentor:   * Education * Career history * Current employer * Typical day at work * Skills used in their work (see *Appendix 1* for question suggestions, page 14-15) |  |

**Next Step: Setting Objectives, Action Planning**

Following this first contact, you should hopefully know your mentor slightly better. The next step is to set your objectives for the year and create an action plan to ensure you achieve these objectives (see *Setting Objectives, Action Planning and Awarding Success*, page 6-8).



**Travelling to meet your mentor**

You should arrange at least one meeting with your mentor over the 12 months, it is usually best to do this early on so you can get to know each other before you start communicating regularly. This should take place at their place of work, but if this is not possible, another suitable, public location should be used.

When visiting your mentor please make sure you have told someone who cares about you where you are going and when you are due to return. Always take your mobile phone with you and keep some change in case you need to use a pay phone.

**Travel expenses**

The scheme can cover the cost of travel expenses for one meeting with you mentor.

As the current funding for the scheme will end in July 2013, **all travel claims (with receipts) must be submitted by July 2013**. All students should check with the Coordinator, Jane Harding, to make sure that the scheme will be able to cover their request, before booking any travel tickets or finalising travel arrangements.

We have a limited budget and strongly recommend that you travel via the most economic method. If booking a train, be sure to book tickets well in advance and to use a railcard if you have one. It may work out cheaper to mix and match single tickets rather than buying a return. If travelling to London a good company to buy tickets from is Megatrain or Megabus as they are usually cheaper. If your ticket costs over £40 please make sure to let us know before you purchase tickets. Unfortunately we cannot fund more than one trip to see your mentor or overnight accommodation.

**How to claim**

You can only submit one travel expenses claim form with reasonable expenses for travelling to meet your mentor.

**Funding for the scheme will end in July 2013, so all travel claims (with receipts) must be submitted by July 2013.**

Please download and complete the student expense form, found online at: <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/finance/operations/forms/> (click “*Student Expenses Claim Form - Single Entry v1.3*”). Once complete, please return the form (with receipts) in the post to:

University of Exeter Career Mentor Scheme

Employment Services

University of Exeter Forum

Stocker Road

Exeter

EX4 4SZ

Or drop the form and receipts in at the Career Zone reception, Forum, to be directed to the scheme Coordinator, Jane Harding.



**Setting Objectives, Action Planning and Awarding Success**

Soon after first contacting your mentor, you need to set the objectives that you wish to achieve by the end of the scheme and complete the 12-month action plan to ensure you meet these objectives and get as much benefit from the scheme as possible.

Begin by completing the *1.* *Set your Objectives* form below and complete the 12-month action planning form *2.* *Create your Action Plan*, page 7-8. You must then share both these forms with your mentor so that they can negotiate, if necessary, and agree that the objectives and action plan can be achieved by the end of the scheme.

At the end of the scheme, you will be asked to complete an evaluation form which will allow us to see if you’ve achieved the objectives agreed with your mentor. You will then receive an award outlining your achievements from participating in the scheme, presented at a Career Mentor Scheme celebration event in March 2014.

1. **Set your Objectives**

Please complete the following form to set the objectives that you would like to achieve by the end of the scheme. Tick the boxes which apply to you – please remember to share your objectives and action plan with your mentor so that they can negotiate, if necessary, and agree.

**By the end of the scheme I hope to have achieved the following:**

**Job Hunting**

Increased my knowledge of job hunting resources in this sector (e.g. web pages, printed materials and recruitment events)

Increased my knowledge of effective application forms in this sector

Increased my knowledge of effective interview techniques in this sector

Increased my knowledge of finding internships and work experience in this sector

Other (please write in the space below)

**Personal Development**

Improved my personal development skills (e.g. confidence building, listening skills)

Improved my knowledge of further education/professional courses related to this sector

Received help to improve my CV

Received academic support

Other (please write in the space below)

**Sector/Career**

Widened my contacts and networking opportunities

Increased my knowledge of sector entry requirements

Increased my knowledge of good/bad aspects of the profession

Received work experience/job shadowing (not offered by all mentors)

Other (please write in the space below)



1. **Create your Action Plan**

Please complete this 12-month action plan, which helps you plan your year and achieve your objectives set out on the previous page.

Plan when you will achieve your objectives during the year, by filling them in the first column. In the second column include the actions of how you will achieve each objective, for ideas see *Mentoring Activities Suggestions,* page 9. Some sections have been prefilled with mandatory activities during the year.

Remember to share your objectives and action plan with your mentor so that they can negotiate, if necessary, and agree.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Month** | **Objective** | **Actions** | **Notes** |
| **January**  **2013** | * First contact and establishing your working relationship | * Contact your mentor within a week after attending the mentor training |  |
| **February**  **2013** |  |  |  |
| **March**  **2013** |  |  |  |
| **April**  **2013** | * Review Partnership | * Respond to feedback requested by the university |  |
| **May**  **2013** |  |  |  |
| **June**  **2013** |  |  |  |
| **July**  **2013** |  |  |  |
| **August**  **2013** | * Review Partnership | * Respond to feedback requested by the university |  |
| **September**  **2013** |  |  |  |
| **October**  **2013** |  |  |  |
| **November**  **2013** |  |  |  |
| **December**  **2013** | * Evaluate partnership | * Complete the evaluation form sent by the university |  |
| **March**  **2014** | * Career Mentor Scheme celebration event – receive award & network | * Attend Career Mentor scheme celebration event. Network with other mentees & mentors. Receive your Career Mentor Scheme Award. |  |



**Mentoring Activities Suggestions**

You can use the following activity suggestions during the year to help you get the most out of the scheme. They are helpful ideas to include in your action plan (pages 7-8), which will help you meet your overall objectives for the scheme.

**Ideas of topics to discuss with your Mentor:**

**Job Hunting**

* Ask your mentor to send you a list of job hunting resources in this sector (e.g. websites, printed materials, recruitment events).
* Ask your mentor to recommend the best places to search for internships and work experience in this sector.
* Download/print some application forms for jobs you may like to apply for in the future. Fill these in, like you would for a real job application and ask your mentor for comments on what you have written, see if they can suggest any improvements.
* If possible, practice the application process used at your mentor’s company.
* During a meeting with your mentor, ask them if they could consider giving you a mock interview.

**Personal Development**

* Discuss with your mentor the skills needed to build relationships and networks.
* Send your mentor some answers to basic competency and strength-based questions for them to comment on (See list in appendices 1 and 2, pages 14-17).
* Ask your mentor what further education/professional courses are available and related to this sector.
* Your CV – Ask your mentor for their professional opinion of your CV, discuss whether any parts could be reworded to promote yourself and your experience better. See if there are any areas you lack experience in and how you could improve this. Remember that you can also receive specific CV advice from one of our trained Careers Consultants at the University.
* Activity: Work through the SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) together on the following page with regard to your career prospects/skills).



* **Activity SWOT careers analysis**: The chat below should be used to undertake an analysis of yourself with regard to your career/skills. How are you going to maximise your strengths and opportunities, overcome your weaknesses and minimise threats?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **STRENGTHS** (current) | **WEAKNESSES** (current) |
| Things within my control.  *e.g. Leadership skills* | Personal barriers; things stopping me, but still within my control.  *e.g. Poor handshake and presentation skills* |
| **OPPORTUNITIES** (future) | **THREATS** (future) |
| People, resources, opportunities.  *e.g. Networking in my current role* | Things outside of my control.  *e.g. Economic downturn affecting jobs* |

**Career/Sector**

* Ask if your mentor can put you in contact with a recent graduate working in this sector to gain a perspective on entering the profession in the current economic climate.
* Ask your mentor what they believe are the top 3 personal skills for someone to succeed in their industry (e.g. honesty, leadership, effective teamwork).
* Ask about the transition from university to work, about what they experienced and perhaps what you can expect.
* Discuss with your mentor what their first job was, how they felt when they started and what they experienced.
* Ask your mentor if they would like to share any difficult experiences at work and how they resolved them.
* Ask your mentor about their greatest achievements in their career so far. Ask how the opportunities arose, how they felt about them at first, and how they accomplished the tasks.
* Discuss the commercial awareness and business ethics issues in their sector.
* Discuss the importance of corporate social responsibility.



**At the end of the scheme**

Your mentor will have committed much time and effort into the Career Mentor Scheme and it is expected that you end the relationship positively at the end of the 12 months.

You are expected to take the lead on ending the partnership in a professional manner (either in person, telephone or email). We advise that you cover the following points:

* Thank your mentor for taking time out of their busy schedule in order to provide advice and support.
* Identify and acknowledge the objectives achieved and the actions during the year which the mentor helped with (e.g. useful contacts, any work experience, or helping with your coursework).
* Let your mentor know of any recent exam/coursework results or at least how you feel they went.
* Inform your mentor what you plan to do next to achieve your professional goals (e.g. what you plan to do in order to successfully achieve employment after university or whether you may carry on with your education).
* If you would like to continue the professional relationship, informally, ask if your mentor would be happy to do this (please inform Jane Harding, the scheme Coordinator).

It is definitely worth ending on a positive note, you never know if a Mentor may pop up later in your career!

**Feedback and Evaluation**

You will be asked for informal feedback during the 12 months and to complete a final evaluation form at the end of the scheme. Please make sure you remember to complete the evaluation form as it is vital for us to be able to improve the scheme and to ensure funding for the future.



**Support and Contact Information**

**Dealing with difficulties in a mentoring relationship**

The Career Mentor Scheme has been set up to benefit students and we want to make sure you enjoy the experience as well as hopefully 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 feel unhappy with your mentor we advise you take the following steps:

* 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 to move forward.
* If this does not resolve the situation, contact the Career Mentor Scheme immediately. A member of staff will then ask to meet with you to discuss the problem, in confidence, to try to find a solution, acting as a mediator between you and the mentor. If they agree that the mentoring relationship must be terminated they 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.

**Career Mentor Scheme Contact Details**

* **Career Mentor Scheme email:** [careermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:careermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk)
* **Jane Harding,** Career Mentor Scheme Coordinator [j.e.harding@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:j.e.harding@exeter.ac.uk), Telephone: 01392 722034
* **Jo McCreedie,** Employer Liaison Officer (Internships) [J.McCreedie@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:J.McCreedie@exeter.ac.uk), Telephone 01392 722617.
* **Postal Address:** University of Exeter Career Mentor Scheme, Employment Services, University of Exeter Forum, Stocker Road, Exeter EX4 4SZ
* **Online resources:** The training slide and a copy of this handbook are available online at: <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/careers/events/resources/> (under “*Student Mentee Training*”).

**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. For contact information and to login to the portal, visit: <https://sid.exeter.ac.uk/aspx_shared/login.aspx>



**Other Employability Opportunities**

* **Career Zone Webpage**

You can find all information about careers and employability opportunities and support on the Career Zone Webpage: <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/careers/>

* **My Career Zone Portal**

This is a system which allows students and recent graduates to search for jobs and opportunities, book appointments with careers consultants, and view upcoming career drop in sessions. More information and the log in page can be found here: <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/careers/mycareerzone/>

* **eXepert Scheme (careers advice from Alumni)**

The eXepert scheme offers students and recent graduates the opportunity to contact experienced alumni to gain advice on how to enter their chosen sector, work for a certain company, as well as benefit from possible networking opportunities and contacts. For information and to apply, visit: <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/careers/research/exepert/>

* **The Exeter Award and The Exeter Leaders Award**

We advise all students to complete The Exeter Award, and the Exeter Leaders Award. The mentee training counts towards the Exeter Award “other eligible activities”. Further information can be found here: <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/exeteraward/index.html>

* **The eXfactor**

Two days of interactive graduate development and recruitment activities designed to help you develop, reflect on and articulate **personal and employability skills** required for any career path. For more information, visit: http://www.exeter.ac.uk/careers/events/exfactor/

* **Paid Internships Schemes**

We offer an array of different internships to suit the needs of different students. These include Student Business Partnerships and Student Campus Partnerships. We also offer opportunities for recent graduates such as the Graduate Business Partnerships. Further information can be found here: <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/employability/workexperience/>

* **Careers fairs**

Our main careers fairs take place in the Autumn term. They are a great way to meet employers and get information about the variety of jobs that you can aspire to.

* **Talks and Presentations**

Sessions on effective application skills, presentation skills, interview techniques and employer presentations run throughout the year. You can book a session online through the My Career zone portal: <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/careers/mycareerzone/>

* **Opportunities Abroad**

Working abroad will dramatically boost your confidence, enhance your CV and develop graduate level skills and global employability competencies that employers are looking for. It may also allow you to develop your language skills. More information can be found here: <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/careers/global/>



**APPENDIX 1**

**Competency-based Interview Questions**

**Adaptability**

* Tell me about the biggest change that you have had to deal with. How did you cope with it?

**Communication**

* Describe a time when you had to win someone over, who was reluctant or unresponsive.
* Tell me about a situation where your communication skills made a difference to a situation.
* Describe a situation where you had to explain something complex to a colleague or a client. Which problems did you encounter and how did you deal with them?
* Demonstrate how you vary your communication approach according to the audience that you are addressing.
* Describe a situation when you had to communicate a message to someone, knowing that you were right and that they were wrong and reluctant to accept your point of view.

**Conflict management**

* Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a conflict within your team.

**Decisiveness**

* Tell me about a time when you had to make a decision without knowledge of the full facts.
* What big decision did you make recently? How did you go about it?
* Tell me about a decision that you made, which you knew would be unpopular with a group of people. How did you handle the decision-making process and how did you manage expectations?

**Flexibility**

* Describe a situation where you had to change your approach half-way through a project or task following new input into the project.
* Describe a situation where one of your projects suffered a setback due to an unexpected change in circumstances.
* Describe a situation where you were asked to do something that you had never attempted previously.

**Influencing**

* Describe a situation where you were able to influence others on an important issue. What approaches or strategies did you use?

**Integrity**

* Tell me about a time when you showed integrity and professionalism.

**Motivation, enthusiasm and drive**

* When did you work the hardest and feel the greatest sense of achievement?



**Leadership**

* Describe a situation where you needed to inspire a team. What challenges did you meet and how did you achieve your objectives?
* Tell me about a situation where you had to get a team to improve its performance. What were the problems and how did you address them?
* Describe a project or situation where you had to use different leadership styles to reach your goal.

**Resilience and tenacity**

* Give an example of a situation where you knew that a project or task would place you under great pressure. How did you plan your approach and remain motivated?

**Risk taking**

* What is the biggest risk that you have taken? How did you handle the process?

**Teamwork**

* Describe a situation in which you were a member of team. What did you do to positively contribute to it?
* How do you ensure that every member of the team is allowed to participate?
* Give an example of a time when you had to deal with a conflict within your team? What did you do to help resolve the situation?

**Customer focus**

* Can you give me an example of an occasion when you feel that you have provided a piece of good customer service?
* Can you tell me about a time when you have dealt with a customer who was unhappy with the service they received?

**Problem solving**

* Tell me about a time when you identified a new approach to a problem

**Planning and organisation**

* Describe a situation where you have planned and organised an event, project or activity which involved a fixed deadline. How successful was the result?

**Time management**

* Tell me how you plan your week and establish your priorities

**Commercial awareness**

* Tell me about a particular business story you have read recently. What changes have there been in our industry recently? What are the main risks facing our industry or company?



**APPENDIX 2**

1. **Strengths based interviewing**

The idea behind this relatively new (but popular) interview style is to identify candidates whose own strengths and preferred working style matches the job role, therefore trying to ensure high motivation and performance in successful candidates.

This type of interview will give you an opportunity to talk about your natural strengths and the situations in which these are at their best. They seek to find out what you “love to do”, rather than what you “can do”.

Examples:

• What makes a good day for you?

• What energises you?

• Do you prefer detail or the bigger picture?

• What makes you more likely to succeed in this role than other applicants?

• What makes you less likely to succeed in this role?

• What gets done on your “to do” list? What never gets done?

• Do you need to be an expert in something to be a leader?

• When would your friends and family say you are happiest?

These questions are harder to prepare for (that may be why employers like to use them!) and encourage you to think “on your feet”.

Further information and help with answering these types of questions can be found here: <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/careers/events/resources/> under the “*Interview Experience*” section.



1. **The STAR approach**

Another approach is the STAR approach (Situation, Task, Action and Result) can be used to answer situational questions on an application form or in a job interview e.g. “Describe a time when you…..” or “Give an example of…..”

It’s a bit like a mini essay. The Situation and the Task are usually combined and form 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”. If you failed to achieve your objective say what you learned and what you would do differently next time.

Here is an example:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **STAR** | **EXAMPLE ANSWERS** |
| **Situation**  How, when, where, with whom? | Whilst employed at Weaver Bros. Last summer |
| **Task**  Describe the situation or the task you were faced with | I was given the task of rationalising the stock control system |
| **Action**  What action did YOU take? | I would look at factors such as when the stock was last ordered, what it was used for and how often it was used. I worked out a method of streamlining the paperwork involved in this process and redesigned the relevant forms, which I then submitted to my manager. |
| **Result**  What results did you achieve / conclusions did you reach / what did you learn from the experience? | My ideas were accepted and implemented and a 15% reduction in stock levels was achieved” |

Remember, these types of questions are the most important on the formand they also crop up in most graduate interviews.

Try and use examples to answer these types of questions from a range of situations, not just from academia e.g. vacation or part-time work, university clubs and societies, voluntary work, holidays and travel, personal and family experiences, etc.

It’s all about you………the focus of these examples should be on you – even if the situation involved a group, and interviewers will want to know what *your* specific role was in achieving the desired result.



The University of Exeter Career Mentor Scheme is supported by:



In October 2010 the University of Exeter Career Mentor Scheme was accredited by the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation with the “Approved Provider Standard”. More information about this can be found on their website: <http://www.mandbr.org.uk/about/>

