



University
of Exeter

Career
Zone

The Career Mentor Scheme

MENTOR GUIDE

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Introduction

Thank you for volunteering to mentor on the University of Exeter's Career Mentor Scheme. As one of the largest mentoring schemes in the country, you are part of a powerful network that supports over 600 mentees each academic year.

By generously sharing your personal and professional skills, knowledge and experience you will be instrumental in improving the career prospects and employability of our students and recent graduates. By participating in the scheme, mentees can grow in confidence, develop important skills, and have a more realistic understanding of their chosen profession. With your support, they may also be able to grow their network and ultimately make better informed choices about their career.

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with useful information to support your mentees throughout the scheme. It covers mentee and mentor expectations, planning recommendations and suggestions on how to respond to challenging scenarios. It is important to note that each mentoring partnership is unique and decided between mentors and mentees. This guide is therefore intended as a reference.

Thanks again for your support and we hope you enjoy your mentoring experience!

Abi, Paula, and Sarah

The University of Exeter Career Mentor Scheme Co-ordinators

careermenderscheme@exeter.ac.uk

Career Mentor Scheme Overview

The scheme's overarching principles are:

To facilitate career development for University of Exeter students and recent graduates through unique partnerships with experienced professionals, such as yourself.

The process is largely led by the mentees who apply for a mentor that feels most relevant to them, based on mentor profiles advertised on our internal career's platform. In their application, mentees are asked to explain how their chosen mentor's experiences align with their own career plans. The team will review all applications to ensure a suitable match is made. When a match is confirmed, the team will send the mentee profile to mentors prior to introduction, and you can advise if you have any concerns about the match at this point. Mentees are required to complete training prior to being introduced at the beginning of the scheme (in either June or December).

What is career mentoring?

"Mentoring is to support and encourage people to manage their own learning in order that they may maximise their potential, develop skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be." Eric Parsloe, Oxford School of Coaching and Mentoring

The University of Exeter's Career Mentor Scheme is about alumni and friends of the university volunteering their time to support current students and recent graduates through career development.

Mentees are provided with guidelines so they can better understand what mentoring is for. They are advised that:

Career Mentoring is:

- ✓ A professional relationship.
- ✓ A partnership that develops over 6 months, which encourages learning and development.
- ✓ Focused on expanding horizons, thought processes, and developing decision-making skills.
- ✓ Focused on building personal and professional development.
- ✓ Personalised to their mentee's aims.
- ✓ Honest and supportive.
- ✓ Confidential (within appropriate boundaries).

Career Mentoring isn't:

- ✗ Always task focused – discussions around careers can be just as useful.
- ✗ Therapy for personal issues.
- ✗ A tutor/student relationship focusing on an academic outcome.

- χ Direct sponsorship.
- χ The mentor making decisions on behalf of the mentee.
- χ Assuming access to your networks. *
- χ An opportunity to ask you favours e.g. a job or an introduction, etc.*

* *If you are in the position, and are happy to, you are more than welcome to offer your mentee work experience or shadowing opportunities, invites to networking events or introduce them to contacts you feel appropriate etc. However, there is no expectation for this to happen, and your mentees have been advised not to ask about these directly.*

Timeline

The table below provides an overview of the activities for the two schemes that take place each academic year.

Spring Scheme	Autumn Scheme	Activities
December – February	June – August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentors are invited to sign up to the scheme and review their profiles
February – May	September – November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor opportunities are advertised to students and recent graduates. • Mentees apply for their chosen mentor based on how the mentor's profile aligns to the mentee's career goals. • Mentee profiles are sent to their matched mentor. • Accepted mentees complete training.
June	December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor and mentee are introduced via email. • Mentees are expected to contact their mentor within 3 working days of introduction. • Mentoring month 1
July – October	January – April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring months 2 – 5

November	May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring month 6 • Partnerships end and participants contacted for feedback.
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Key Things to Remember:

Your mentee should begin the mentoring partnership by emailing you within 3 working days of the introduction.

- The team will check in to make sure things are running smoothly, however please let us know if your mentee hasn't contacted you.

Communicate with your mentee at least once a month during the scheme.

- Contact may be more regular than this if you both agree.
- Mentees are asked to let you know if they are experiencing a busy time at university (i.e. an assignment period) or if they will be on holiday, and will be out of contact for a short period.
- Please let your mentee know if there are circumstances which means you won't be able to be in contact.

Set objectives and an action plan with your mentee for the six months of the scheme. These can be reviewed during your regular meetings as ideas develop.

- Some mentees may have a very clear idea of exactly what they want to achieve, however some may need some support to figure out their next steps.

Keep your meetings confidential. Your mentee has also been made aware of commercial confidentiality and its importance.

If you are concerned about the wellbeing of your mentee, please contact the team.

- You can also refer to the [Wellbeing](#) section in this guide.

Keep in touch.

- Let the team know if you have any questions during the scheme, or are facing challenges, and we will do our best to support you. We also love to hear about your successes!

The Mentees

The scheme is open to all students, both undergraduate and post-graduate, as well as graduates up to three years post-graduation. The requirement for acceptance on the scheme is for the mentee to demonstrate they have a career plan which aligns with your experiences and commitment to the partnership for six months.

Supporting International Mentees

The university has dedicated support available for the international student community.

The [Career Zone webpages](#) for international students contain a wealth of information both for international students looking to work in the UK or globally after their studies. There are specific virtual courses your mentee can follow for both [China Career Ready](#), and [India Career Ready](#)

We do not expect mentors to offer visa advice for mentees, however the International Student Support Office may be able to support your mentee and we recommend directing your mentee to them if they have questions. They have listed potential working visa routes [here](#).

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

International students may benefit from more general mentoring about work culture in the UK and how this may differ to their home country. This may also be the case if you work internationally as well.

Supporting Graduate Mentees

Graduates can benefit from your support and guidance in the early stages of their careers.

If you are mentoring a graduate, they may need help with...

- Transitioning from study to working life
- Finding their first job or a new job
- Progressing in their current role or sector
- Developing their sector knowledge

Your experience and expertise can be valuable in guiding your mentee through these areas. You can learn more about the graduate schemes at the university and other resources available in the [Employability Schemes](#) section of this guide.

Wellbeing

If you have any concerns about your mentee's mental health or wellbeing, it is best to direct them to the dedicated team at the university. All students have access to wellbeing support which can be accessed [here](#). Please let us know as well so we can provide signposting if required.

Handling Challenging Scenarios

All mentees are provided with training before the start of the scheme. This covers expectations and how they can make the most of your support.

If you ever feel unhappy with the behaviour of your mentee, we advise you take the following steps:

- Look at the support available on the [Career Mentor Scheme](#).
- 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 your mentee directly, contact the team as soon as possible by emailing careermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk

If your mentee is experiencing any serious personal problems, the university has several agencies that we can refer mentees to [here](#). You can refer your mentee to this website but please get in touch with the team if there are any concerning issues.

Your Mentoring Skills

Encouraging personal reflection.

Example prompts for this could include:

- What were the positives about the experience, what was achieved?
- Are there any ethical / moral / social issues that you wish to explore?
- Is there anything you need to do next?
- Is there anything that you would do differently next time, given a similar situation?

It's good practice to ask for reflections before offering your own advice.

Giving constructive feedback and advice.

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

Demonstrating active listening.

We recommend that you...

- Clear your mind of distractions.
- Make eye contact.
- Be aware of body language - pay attention to the mentee's facial expressions, gestures etc.
- Use questioning techniques such as "*how did that make you feel?*"
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Paraphrasing – restating in your own words to check understanding.
- Ask questions if you don't understand.
- Be non-judgmental.

Getting Started

Your mentee will begin the scheme by emailing you to introduce themselves. They will have been given the following ideas to talk about during your first meeting:

How you both see the partnership working

- Aims (purpose of the scheme).
- Structure (setting objectives and 6-month action plan).
- Frequency and method of contact.
- Duration of meetings.
- Confidentiality (commercial and personal, and exceptions).

Getting to know you

- Education.
- Career history.
- Current employer.
- Typical day at work.
- Skills used in the workplace.
- Build rapport.

Your mentee is also provided with a guide which will be sent to you for reference.

How to Structure Your Mentoring Partnership

To help you get to know your mentee, you could use tools such as a personality quiz. This is not to put your mentee into a definitive box, but it provides a guide for what your mentee's strengths are, how they learn, and areas that can be developed. Below are links to several tools which you could explore with your mentee to help them learn more about themselves and the direction their skills and interests could take them.

Tools

- <https://www.16personalities.com/>
- <https://www.ucas.com/careers-quiz>

A Guide for the Next 6-Months

The guide below is to help you structure your meetings. Each mentoring partnership is unique, and you should adjust and tailor your meetings as needed to ensure you are both getting the most out of the partnership.

Month 1

In your first meeting, start by getting to know your mentee and what they want to gain from the partnership. Your mentee's application will have been shared with you so you can refer to that and together, plan the objectives for the next 6 months.

Ask your mentee about:

- Their interests.
- Any points from their application you'd like them to expand on.
- What their end goal is.
- If they need help with their CV? Their LinkedIn profile?
- Do they have job interviews coming up?
- If they are working, are there any challenges or milestones to be aware of?
- Do they need help developing specific skills?

Agree when you will both meet:

- Choose a date/time that will be convenient for both of you.
- Will you meet online, in-person, or over the phone?
- Are there any times when either of you will find it difficult to communicate.
- Have either of you got holidays coming up that may clash with your meetings?

Finally:

- Make a clear plan and agree in it writing so you both have something to refer to later.
- If you set tasks for your mentee to complete in between meetings, make sure the deadlines and expectations are clear.
- Let your mentee know if you are available for help/questions in between your meetings. What is the best way for them to contact you?

Month 2

This is when you can both start working together and making progress towards the objectives you have set.

Think about:

- Are there activities you can complete with your mentee to help them develop their skills?
- Do you need to review their work/CV/task with them – provide constructive feedback?
- Are there any resources you can share with your mentee such as podcasts or articles you would recommend?
- Talk about the [tools](#) they have used – do they agree with the results?
- Are there any useful connections you can recommend they follow on LinkedIn?

Month 3

This could be a good time to review what has been covered so far.

You could ask your mentee:

- How they feel they are progressing towards the objectives that have been set?
- Does anything in the plan need to be adjusted or added to?
- Have there been any challenges during the partnership?
- Are there any areas of development that need more focus?
- What have been their biggest accomplishments so far?

You can also provide your feedback as to how you feel your mentee has progressed and make new suggestions that could support their development.

Months 4 & 5

You're both over halfway through the partnership. Continue progressing through any activities/tasks you have set and keep checking how your mentee is progressing.

Think about:

- Any additional resources you could recommend.
- Would it help your mentee to network in their area? (Refer to the [Developing Employability Skills](#) section in this guide)
- Is there an opportunity for your mentee to put any new skills they have learnt into practise?

Month 6

It's now time to reflect on the last 6-months and discuss together what has been achieved. You could consider the following:

- What have been the main milestones or accomplishments?
- Are there any outstanding actions? How can the mentee continue with those?
- What is next for your mentee? Can you suggest what their next steps could be?
- Decide if and how you will stay in touch.

The team will be in touch with you both to acknowledge the end of the partnership and to ask you to complete a questionnaire. Your feedback is important and will be used to monitor quality and develop the scheme further. Many of the sections in this guide have been included because of the feedback received from mentors.

Employability Schemes at the University of Exeter.

The university has several supported employment schemes to help current students and graduates to secure paid work:

[Paid part-time work and paid internships.](#)

There are a range of internships available to all students that offer flexible hours and working arrangements throughout the academic year. All opportunities are paid and provide an opportunity for the student to gain valuable experience, develop key skills alongside their studies, and build their CV.

Student Campus Partnership

There are paid part-time internships available on campus across Exeter and Penryn, supporting academics or professional service teams. These are advertised throughout the year on the university's career platform, Handshake. Students can find out about the latest opportunities by subscribing to the Internships Bulletin using [this link](#).

Student Business Partnership

The Internships Team partner with supportive employers in the southwest who want to recruit students into paid part-time roles. Again, these are available throughout the year and advertised on Handshake. Students can subscribe to the [Internships Bulletin](#) to learn about the latest opportunities.

The Internships Bulletin is sent out every Friday via email.

Professional Pathways

Professional Pathways offers sector-specific, extracurricular student training working with local businesses, charities, and entrepreneurs. After students have completed a 1-week training programme, they will complete a paid 35-hour internship with a recommended employer in their sector of interest. Professional Pathways takes place in June each year and students can apply from late November. You can learn more on our [webpage](#).

Green Consultants

If your mentee is interested in sustainability, this is a fantastic scheme to refer them to. Green Consultants is an award-winning programme designed to provide students with additional skills and experience required to work in the highly competitive environmental and sustainability sector. Learn more on the student webpage [here](#).

Other casual work opportunities in sectors such as retail and hospitality are advertised on Handshake which all students can access.

Graduate Schemes

The university has a dedicated scheme for graduates to help them transition between education and work. The [Graduate Business Partnership](#) (GBP) scheme is open to all graduates who have qualified from any UK-based university in the last three years. All GBP roles are advertised on Handshake and the best way to learn about the latest

opportunities is to encourage your mentee to subscribe to the [Graduate Bulletin](#). This is sent out every Friday via email.

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

If your mentee is graduating soon, you can refer them to the [Get Ready to Graduate](#) webpage from the Career Zone.

Developing Employability Skills Outside of Work

Networking

Meeting other professionals through networking is an effective way for your mentee to connect with others who share the same interests, and an opportunity for them to build helpful connections.

Career Mentoring Events

The Career Mentor team will invite you and your mentee to quarterly networking events. These will provide you with an opportunity to meet with your mentee (if they book on), and to meet and network with other students, graduates and mentors who are involved in the scheme. If you have any questions about future networking, contact the team at careermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk.

[Take a look at this video from the Career Mentor Scheme Summer Soiree in July 2023.](#)

Networking in Exeter

There are regular networking events taking place in Exeter that are recommended by the university's Student Employment Team. If you think your mentee could benefit from networking, ask them to contact internships@exeter.ac.uk and the team will signpost them to upcoming events.

Networking in Penryn

As above, the team can recommend local networking events in and around Penryn where students are welcomed. Ask your mentee to contact internships@exeter.ac.uk

Events on Campus

The events on campus include guest speaker presentations and workshops covering everything from communication skills to commercial awareness across a range of sectors. You can signpost your mentee to future events using the links below:

- [Events in Exeter](#)
- [Events in Penryn](#)

Communication Skills

The art of communication is something that continuously develops and exploring this with your mentee will help you identify how you can best help them in this area.

Regular workshops take place on campus to help students develop their skills including persuading, influencing and negotiation and presentation skills. Mentees can learn more by following the links in the [Events on Campus](#) section in this guide.

If your mentee is an international student and they need extra support with English speaking, see the [Supporting International Mentees](#) section in this guide.

Career Management

Careers Consultants at the University

All students and graduates who have qualified in the last 3 years will have access to a professional career's consultant at the university. They can assist your mentee with job searches, applications, their CV, and interview preparation. Your mentee can request an in-person or online appointment by emailing careers@exeter.ac.uk.

Other Initiatives that Support Skills Development at the University

There are many resources and initiatives that can help students develop their skills, put their knowledge into practise, and gain useful experiences that can be added to their CV. These are listed below.

- [Grand Challenges](#)
- [The Exeter Award](#)
- [Aspiring Educators](#)
- [Working Abroad – Global Employability](#)
- [Skills Sessions](#)

Our Employability and Careers Consultant, Rachel Sloan, has put together [this short video](#) to explain the skills sessions available to students.

What happens at the end of the scheme?

The team will get in touch with you and your mentee to acknowledge the end of the partnership and to ask you both to complete a questionnaire. Your feedback is important and will help us to monitor quality and further develop the scheme.

You can also share your feedback at any time by emailing the team using the details above.

Contact Details for the Team

Paula, Sarah and Abi are available to help with any questions you may have throughout your mentoring partnership. Please send an email to careermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk.

If you would like to speak to someone in person, please send us an email with your availability and we will arrange a time to do so.

[>> Go Back to the Start >>](#)