

Career *Mentoring Toolkit*



www.abdn.ac.uk/mentoring



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“Mentoring is hugely rewarding and allows me to give something back to students who are considering what their careers could look like. I have been hugely impressed with how prepared my mentees have been, and how much energy they bring to the partnership. I have kept in touch with many of them, and I’m delighted to see their careers flourishing. It’s a pleasure to have played a very small part in that success.”

Jo Robinson - Head of Digital, Sodexo

Welcome & Introduction



Thank you for joining us as a mentor on the University's Career Mentoring Programme. I hope that you will find the experience both enjoyable and interesting. I am hugely grateful for the time and guidance you are giving to help our students develop their employability skills and in supporting their transition from academic study to the world of work.

The University of Aberdeen's 2040 strategy centres upon four key themes: to be a more inclusive, interdisciplinary, international and sustainable University. This is underpinned by a range of commitments, including preparing our graduates to thrive in the diverse workplaces of the future by working with external partners and alumni graduates for global employment. We also seek to foster our students' intellectual development, creative thinking, innovation and entrepreneurship to enable them to be change-makers across the globe. The Career Mentoring Programme is integral to realising this commitment.

This Toolkit outlines what our mentoring programme entails from the mentor's perspective. It explains how the programme operates and compliments our short "Introduction to Career Mentoring" course which has been sent to you and is also available in our mentoring software platform, SUMAC.

Included in this Toolkit are tips, mentoring exercises and strategies for developing and strengthening your career mentoring interactions. The Toolkit is designed as a starting point for those with no experience of mentoring and can also be useful as an aide-mémoire for those with some prior mentoring experience. Whatever your position, I hope this Toolkit is practical and that you will contribute to its evolution by providing feedback.

I wish you every success in the rewarding experience of mentoring our students.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tracey Innes".

Tracey Innes
Head of Careers and Employability Service

Career Mentoring at Aberdeen

Our Career Mentoring Programme (CMP), established in 2011, is an employability initiative designed to support students' career planning and personal development. It provides an opportunity for students to be matched with an experienced professional to gain careers advice, support and guidance in a specific profession or sector. We call the pairing of a professional mentor with a student mentee a "partnership". The three-month programme is available each spring and autumn, with a separate medical mentoring scheme in early summer.

Mentoring partnerships are managed through our dedicated mentoring platform, SUMAC, and mentors are encouraged to meet with their mentee either in person, online via e.g. Teams/Zoom, or by phone. There is also a chat facility available within SUMAC. As a Mentor, we request that you commit 1-2 hours of your time each month for the duration of the programme.

When students apply to participate in the CMP they are required to undertake an online introductory workshop. This sets expectations of their engagement and asks them to identify what they wish to gain and achieve within the CMP. They are also invited to self-assess their confidence in 10 key skills areas, including digital proficiency, interpersonal skills and career development.

Being a Career Mentor

A good Career Mentor is an individual with a sound and broad knowledge of a particular employment area or role, and the skills required within this area or role. A mentor should have good communication skills, be non-judgemental, be a good listener and have the ability to encourage, motivate and develop others.

Typical roles of a mentor include:

ADVISER

Provides advice, which the mentee decides how best to use.

SOUNDING BOARD

Testing ideas and suggestions.

MOTIVATOR

Encouraging and motivating to achieve.

FACILITATOR

Highlighting opportunities for personal development.



Preparing for your first mentoring partnership meeting

Your first meeting as a mentoring partnership will allow you to get to know each other and decide what you wish to discuss throughout the partnership, and the expectations of what it will achieve. You may wish to share your career journey so far with anecdotes to establish common ground. The initial meeting can confirm the schedule of meetings and how these will take place: online, by phone or in person. We encourage, where possible, that each partnership meet together face-to-face at least once during the partnership at your offices or place of work.

Here are some preparatory questions to reflect upon before your first meeting:

- What can I offer someone I mentor?
- What career experiences have helped me most in my own professional and personal development?
- What are the important lessons learnt from my own career path?

At your first meeting we recommend that the following items are discussed and agreed:

Getting to know each other

- Find out about your mentee e.g. their degree programme, career goals, interests, previous work experience.
- Provide an overview of your background, experience and career journey.
- Clarify if there is any specific information about your professional area that the mentor particularly wishes to explore.

Meeting schedule and professional etiquette

- Decide on the frequency and length of meetings. We recommend a minimum of three meetings, approximately one per month.
- You can schedule meetings and chat to your mentee via the software platform, SUMAC.
- Choose an appropriate location for your meetings.
- Confirm how you wish to communicate: by email, through the SUMAC chat function, and if it's appropriate to be in contact between scheduled mentoring sessions.
- Discuss confidentiality: this is essential for building trust and rapport. Conversations between the mentor and mentee should be confidential.
- Agree objectives for future meetings.

Understanding the Mentoring Programme

- Discuss the expectations of the programme (both mentor and mentee) - refer to the University of Aberdeen's Career Mentoring Policy ([on pages 6 and 7](#)).
- Agree the success criteria for the mentorship partnership.
- Use our online resources to help you: www.abdn.ac.uk/mentoring/resources.

The Mentee's Role

Your mentee has been encouraged to take the lead on setting up meetings with their mentor and agreeing the focus of each meeting in advance. All students have been advised to take time to schedule mentoring meetings taking into account assessment periods and vacation times - and to recognise that mentors have busy diaries too!

Sample Meeting Agendas

The sample meeting agendas below are intended as a source of ideas. Please use these to start your career mentoring discussions, noting that other subject areas are likely to emerge as the mentorship partnership develops. These are not exhaustive or prescriptive: these career-related issues have been a common focus in previous career mentoring interactions with students.

A. Sample Meeting Agenda 1 – Explore: Introduction and goal setting

- a) Introduce each other and share information about your education backgrounds. Is there any common ground between you in modules studied, society engagement, interests etc?
- b) Confirm the purpose of today's meeting, including clarifying what the mentee is seeking to achieve by participating in the mentoring programme, and what they have identified as their SMART goals.
- c) Mentor to provide insights into their own career journey since graduation, including information about their profession, career path and challenges or opportunities within this area.
- d) Confirm the schedule of future mentoring meetings, where and how these will take place and discuss the etiquette for being in touch between mentoring meetings.
- e) Clarify if there are any actions to be undertaken ahead of the next meeting – for example, if the mentee should undertake a SWOT analysis following today's discussions (a SWOT analysis template is available on the mentoring resources under Skills development resources).

B. Sample Meeting Agenda 2 - Develop: Skills development and networking

- a) Recap on any actions or activities arising from the first meeting.
- b) Discuss the key employability skills and competencies required in your professional area. How do these relate to the mentee's "MySkills" profile (your mentee will have completed this as part of their introductory module. For more information see www.abdn.ac.uk/careers/skills/myskills)?
- c) Discuss the importance of having a professional network and offer the mentee strategies for networking in this context.
- d) Consider how to start networking conversations, how to make effective introductions and how to overcome feelings of shyness.
- e) Clarify if there are any actions to be undertaken ahead of the next meeting – for example if the student should update their LinkedIn profile, or if there would be an opportunity to involve your mentee in a workplace activity that enables them to meet colleagues informally.

C. Sample Meeting Agenda 3 - Connect: Career planning and next steps

- a) Recap on actions or activities arising from previous meetings.
- b) Discuss what the mentee's career plans are in relation to their professional interests, values and skills and what the current opportunities and challenges are in your field. Are there specific job search strategies that you recommend?
- c) Review what makes a professional CV, cover letter or application form in your profession. Provide feedback to the mentee on a recent CV they have prepared.
- d) Discuss interviews: are these face-to-face panel interviews? Is there an increasing use of video interviews? How would you encourage a student to prepare for interview success?
- e) Clarify if the mentee can continue to keep in touch at the end of the formal mentoring partnership.

D. Additional meeting/activity suggestions

Other areas or activities you may wish to explore with your mentee include:

- **Interview focus:** perhaps offer your mentee a practice interview
- **Tour:** invite your mentee to your premises and provide a tour of the organisation
- **Job role:** set your mentee a task of researching a specific job role
- **Work shadowing:** arrange for your mentee to shadow you or a colleague for a day
- **Business meeting:** invite your mentee to attend a meeting or seminar
- **Presentation:** ask your mentee to prepare and deliver a short presentation on an agreed topic.

Concluding the mentoring partnership

We hope that the mentoring partnership has been engaging and enlightening for both the mentor and mentee. At the end of the partnership we encourage the mentee to update their LinkedIn profile to reflect on their experiences, and to tag you (with permission). We will send you a short evaluation survey and we welcome your feedback on the Career Mentoring Programme.

Troubleshooting

Occasionally mentoring does not go to plan. If you have any concerns during the mentoring programme please contact us (mentor@abdn.ac.uk) and we will be happy to discuss and help resolve the issue.

Career Mentoring Programme Policy

The Career Mentoring Programme links students with working professionals who are willing to share their experience and expertise. The initiative is designed to help students make contacts in specific employment areas and to provide them with an opportunity to enhance their professional skills and employment knowledge outside of their academic study. Work placements, internships or future graduate employment are NOT guaranteed as part of the programme.

Participation in the University's Career Mentoring Programme assumes full understanding of and adherence to the content of this policy. Please read it carefully and contact the Careers and Employability Service (mentor@abdn.ac.uk) if you have any questions about its content before you commence your mentoring relationship.

Mentors and Mentees

- Participation in the Career Mentoring Programme is voluntary for both mentors and student mentees.
- Mentors and mentees are expected to maintain regular contact with each other for the duration of the mentorship.
- Participants are expected to commit to a minimum of 1-2 hours per month to the programme.
- Mentees are expected to take the lead in arranging, keeping track of and recording any actions from mentoring meetings.
- Mentors and mentees are required to prepare for each meeting to maximise benefits from mentoring interactions.
- Student-funded or university-funded journeys to visit mentors within or beyond the UK with either an overnight stay or a flight in an aircraft, students must register with the University Insurance (www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/insurance-367.php).
- Mentors and mentees may contact the Careers and Employability Service at any time during normal office hours (9-5pm, Monday to Friday) for assistance or advice, or to discuss mentoring issues. Email mentor@abdn.ac.uk.
- As far as possible, mentors and mentees should endeavour to reply to communications from their assigned mentor/mentee and from the University within 5 days.
- Participants should inform their mentor or mentee of any major absences such as illnesses that limit their ability to respond to communications.
- Mentors and mentees will inform the Careers and Employability Service immediately if they are unable for any reason to continue to participate in the programme.
- Mentors and mentees should respect confidentiality. Confidentiality should be discussed during the first meeting when boundaries are established. Mentees should be prepared to sign confidentiality agreements when required by their mentor's organisation.

- Participants are reminded that the mentorship represents a professional relationship. It is the responsibility of both mentors and mentees to conduct themselves appropriately. Face-to-face meetings should be arranged at the mentor's place of work, at the University or in a public place such as a café.
- Mentors and mentees can informally extend the mentoring process beyond the 3 month period if both wish to do so.

The Careers and Employability Service will:

- Provide support for all student mentees and mentors, and provide supporting mentoring documentation in advance of each mentorship commencing.
- Provide a Career Mentoring Toolkit to support mentors in their interactions with mentees.
- Address issues arising in a mentoring relationship providing these are brought to the attention of the Careers and Employability Service in a timely manner.
- Ensure that all personal details are maintained in a secure environment (our SUMAC system) and are not revealed to a third party.
- Provide help with travel expenses, subject to available funding, for student mentor visits outwith Aberdeen City and Shire. Note financial support must be approved by the Careers and Employability Service prior to the visit.
- Recognise and reward a mentor's contribution to the programme via an e-certificate (available on request).

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Final comments

The University of Aberdeen Career Mentoring Programme website (www.abdn.ac.uk/mentoring) contains:

- Further information including previous mentor/mentee case studies
- Frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the programme
- Resources for students

A successful mentoring partnership is based on clarity of commitment and expectations. The mentorship represents a professional relationship; the purpose of the partnership is to improve the student's careers knowledge and employability. The direction of the mentorship may change as the partnership develops, and any goals and objectives should be regularly reviewed.

If during the mentorship partnership the mentee raises any concerns or experiences beyond the limits of mentoring please be aware that the University has a range of support systems available. We would invite you to contact us in confidence, or encourage the student to access appropriate support via www.abdn.ac.uk/students/support/.

Career Mentoring Team
Careers and Employability Service
Email: mentor@abdn.ac.uk
www.abdn.ac.uk/careers

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