

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.