

CSC Mentoring Programme

Handbook for Mentees



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Introduction

The CSC Mentoring Programme pairs Commonwealth Scholars with a Commonwealth Alumnus to support their knowledge and skills development and provide a practical understanding of how these can be implemented post-Scholarship to achieve development impact. Mentors may also provide support on living and studying in the UK.

Mentees and Mentors are paired using application responses across a number of areas, including:



Pairing country preference



Your subject and/or field of study



Topic area



Keywords



Motivations for becoming a Mentee/Mentor



Mentor's professional experience

Where possible, the CSC will match applicants using the above information. Please note, direct matches (based on studying the same subject and/or at the same institution) are rare and not the aim of the programme. The CSC programme encourages pairs to seek/receive support to develop personal and professional skills, and an understanding on how to implement the skills and knowledge gained during the Scholarship to achieve development impact.

Whilst the programme covers a one-year cycle, we hope the relationship you develop with your Mentor will continue beyond this and become a life-long partnership.

This Handbook provides information about your role and responsibilities, the objectives of the CSC Mentoring Programme, and what support you can seek from your Mentor to develop your personal and professional goals. Please refer to the Handbook for any information on the programme structure, expected outcomes of each stage, resources to support meaningful mentoring sessions, and CSC contact points and updates on virtual events for Mentees.

Please make this Handbook the first point of enquiry if you have any questions about the programme. If you require a larger print version of the Handbook or have queries not answered in the following pages, please contact the Alumni Team at alumni@cscuk.org.uk

CSC Policies

Mentees and Mentors must adhere to CSC policies and guidelines.

CSC Code of Conduct for Award-Holders

As a Commonwealth Scholar or Fellow, you are an ambassador for both the CSC and your home country, and your actions and communication will have an impact on the reputation of both. You are therefore expected to adhere to high standards of conduct and behaviour and to show respect to others and your surroundings at all times. You should familiarise yourself with the Code of Conduct, available on the [CSC website](#).

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a core requirement of the Mentor-Mentee relationship. You must not disclose any personal information, conversations, or issues raised with or by your Mentor with a third-party. Your Mentor will also agree not to disclose this information.

If you have any concerns about confidentiality, you should notify alumni@cscuk.org.uk

Duty to report

During your studies, you may experience unexpected issues which may affect your time in the UK. You should contact your Programme Officer on matters related to financial aspects of your award, travel arrangements, and visa and welfare issues. If your Mentor has serious concerns for your welfare and personal safety and understands that the CSC has not been informed, they have a duty to report these concerns to the Alumni Team.



CSC safeguarding policy

The CSC is committed proactively to safeguard and promote the welfare of our beneficiaries, and to protect its staff, Commissioners, beneficiaries and all those with whom the CSC comes into contact. The CSC requires staff, members of the Commission, applicants for and recipients of CSC awards and suppliers to act consistently with its requirements for safeguarding.

You should make sure that you are familiar with your UK host institution's own safeguarding policy and procedure including reporting mechanisms in case you should need to use it, but should also note the [CSC's Safeguarding Policy](#) which sets out the obligation for staff, members of the Commission, applicants for and recipients of CSC awards and suppliers to act consistently with its requirements for safeguarding. Any safeguarding concerns should be reported to the Commission at: csc.safeguarding@cscuk.org.uk

Roles, responsibilities and opportunities

During the programme it is important that both Mentees and Mentors understand their roles and responsibilities.

As a Mentee, you can:

- Ask for guidance on how to ensure your studies will support your development impact goals and be applicable to your home country context.
- Seek support in developing soft skills required for your personal and professional growth.
- Learn from your Mentor's experiences and expertise to develop your skills and knowledge and support your academic and development goals.
- Ask questions about how to apply your studies to the workplace, or for support in developing key skills to help you secure relevant employment on your return home.
- Seek support in adjusting to living and studying in the UK.
- Share updates on your studies and progress and keep your Mentor informed of your successes. You should also celebrate any successes or achievements made by your Mentor.

Your Mentor can:

- Help you focus on the development impact potential of your studies and provide relevant sector and/or research information to support this.
- Provide motivation during intensive study periods, such as examinations, assignment submissions, and vivas.
- Support you in adjusting to UK teaching and culture and create a safe environment for you to ask questions about social aspects of living in the UK.
- Provide guidance on how you can implement your knowledge and skills in the workplace following your Scholarship, and/or advise on employment where these skills are most needed to support sustainable development in your home country.
- Encourage you to take advantage of the [CSC's engagement activities](#) and events and stay connected with the CSC community during your studies. This may include joining [CSC Development in Action](#) webinars or getting involved in your [Regional Network](#).
- Share in your successes during your studies, for example your attendance at conferences and events, award nominations, and publications.



Your Mentor will not:

- Draft, write or proof-read essays or dissertations on your behalf. They may advise on plans, or small sections of work, but will not complete work on behalf of their Mentee.
- Provide advice on immigration and welfare matters. You should contact your CSC Programme Officer on matters related to financial aspects of your award, travel arrangements, and visa and welfare issues.
- Disclose personal or sensitive information about their Mentor with a third party. Please note the 'Duty to report' information on page 4.

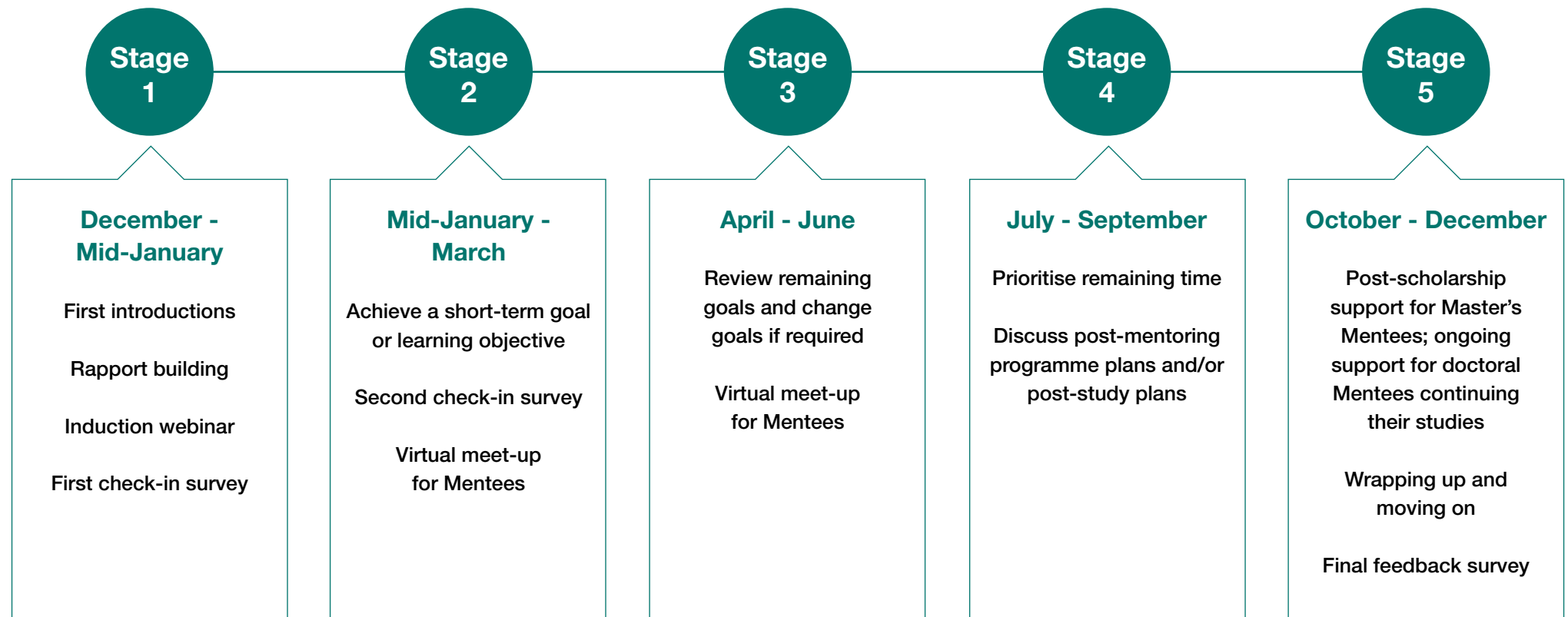
As a Mentee, you will not:

- Expect your Mentor to draft, write or proof-read essays or dissertations.
- Try to contact your Mentor outside of the agreed communication channels or times, as set out in the first introductions stage of the programme cycle.
- Disclose personal information about your Mentor or sensitive discussions with a third-party.



The mentoring cycle

To ensure Mentors and Mentees get the most out of the programme, mentoring stages have been developed to guide your progress. The CSC will stay in contact with you throughout the programme and provide updates and support via regular mailings and events.



Stage 1: Building rapport

Timeline: December to mid-January

All Mentees and Mentors will be invited to an induction webinar to learn more about the Mentoring Programme, what to expect, how to make the most of this opportunity, and ask any questions you may have.

How to get started?

First introductions

Your Mentor is responsible for making the first contact via email.

In their email, they will include information about why they volunteered to be a Mentor and some background information about their Commonwealth Scholarship and/or Fellowship and current employment.



You must respond to your Mentor's email as soon as possible to establish your first contact. In your response, you should:

- Take the opportunity to get to know your Mentor- ask questions about the information they've shared.
- Outline your reasons for applying to the programme.
- Share a short summary on your studies and intended home country benefit.
- Share the development goals you hope to achieve as a result of your studies.
- Provide information on your employment background and how this is relevant to your studies.
- Share your availability to schedule your first virtual meeting.

Decide how you will communicate

During your first meeting, you and your Mentor should agree the following:



- All communication and personal information shared is confidential.
- The preferred platform to hold meetings. We advise a video platform for face-to-face communication as it helps in building rapport.
- The frequency of communication and meetings. We advise a minimum of two contact hours per month.
- Your pronouns (he/him, she/her, they/them).

Setting goals

A key part of a successful mentoring pairing is setting goals to develop personal, professional and social skills. It is important you and your Mentor set clear goals at the start of the programme so they know what support to provide, and you understand what you can ask them about.

- We recommend setting 3-5 goals at the start of the mentoring cycle. Tips to set goals are:
 - Use the **SMART approach** – objectives should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time bound.
 - Set a mix of short-term and long-term goals.
 - **Short-term goals** are straightforward and be achieved through a one-step objective. Short term goals serve as building blocks to achieve long term goals.
 - **Long-term goals** are more extensive, need more planning, and can take up to a few months to be achieved. Within your long-term goals, you should identify **learning objectives**. These are brief, clear and specific statements of what you would like to achieve through smaller activities and skills development.
- Use the [SMART goals record](#) to note and track the progress of your goals.
- Remember, this is a two-way learning experience. You should also discuss what your Mentor would like to learn from you and the skills they would like to develop through the mentoring programme.



Examples of Mentee goals

- I will create a routine or timetable to maintain study-life balance during my second term of studies.
- I will adopt a new extra-curricular activity to increase my social circle while I am in the UK.

Examples of Mentor goals

- I will develop my active listening skills to ensure I accurately understand the information or challenges my Mentee is sharing with me and to effectively respond with tailored and appropriate advice or guidance.

An example of a SMART goal

Specific

Be specific about the end results

To develop my time management skills and submit my assignment on time, using my department's agreed referencing system.

Measurable

Goals should be measurable to help monitor progress and success

Break down your goal into measurable steps. For example:

- Discuss time management tips and techniques with my Mentor.
- Identify any questions or queries you have about the referencing system used by your department. Who can I ask in my department? Is this a style my Mentor is familiar with?
- Share guidance provided by my department so my Mentor understands my questions and what I have been asked to do.
- Agree with my Mentor to share updates at fixed intervals on my research and assignment writing progress and discuss where I may be behind or ahead, the reasons for this and how to learn from and address these.

Achievable

Goals should be within your capabilities but challenging and offer an opportunity for development

You may wish to discuss your strengths and limitations. In this example, this could include understanding the format of your assignment, putting forward an argument, writing skills, and sourcing your references.

Relevant

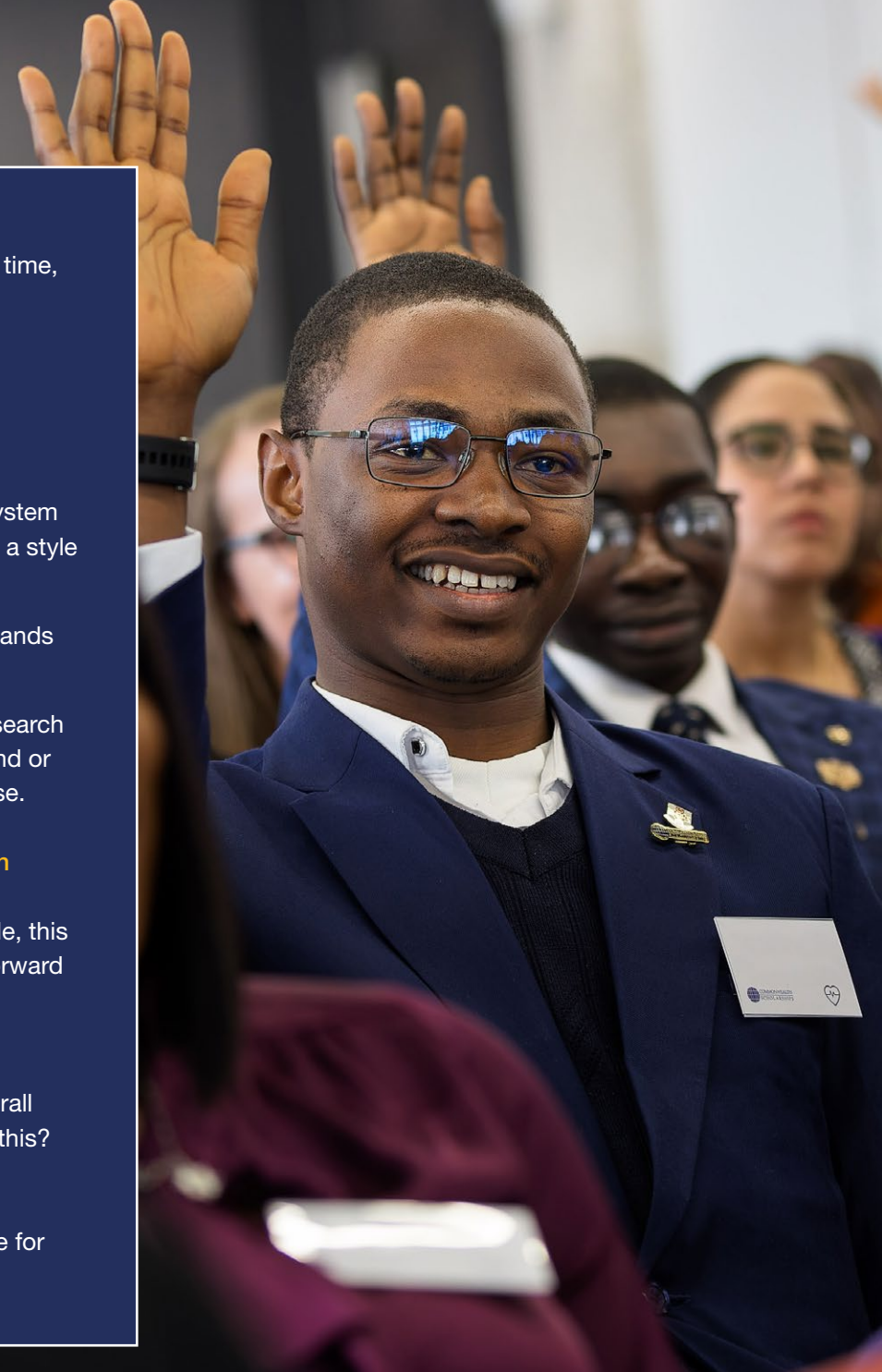
Reflect if your goal is relevant to what you are trying to achieve

Have you identified the right elements to focus on to achieve your overall goal? Is there anything missing, or anything that will not contribute to this?

Timebound

To help track your progress, goals should be timebound

Break down your time into measurable steps to meet the final deadline for the completion of the work and your goal.



Keeping a record

Record your goals

It is important to keep a record of the personal goals you and your Mentor set.

Use the [SMART goals record template](#) to note your goals, review them occasionally, and monitor the progress of when you achieve your short- and long-term goals.

Record your meeting notes

During your mentoring meetings, you should take notes on the topics discussed and any actions you have each agreed.

Use the [mentoring log table template](#) to record this information. You should agree with your Mentor if you would like to share your notes at the end of each meeting or conversation and confirm any action points. Before your next meeting, review your meeting notes and the action points.



Activities for Mentees

- **Complete the first check-in survey:** Confirm with the CSC if you and your Mentor have established contact and discussed your goals.
- **Attend the first virtual meet-up:** Mentees will be invited to attend a virtual meet-up to connect with fellow Mentees, learn about different experiences of participating in the programme, and receive information on the next stage.



Useful tips

- To help get to know your Mentor, you can use the 'Icebreaker questions' on page 20.
- **Establish expectations.** It is important to agree on what you and your Mentor expect to get out of the mentoring relationship.
- Everyone processes information differently, and as a Mentor, it is important to be aware of how best to communicate with your Mentee. **For ideas on communication methods**, you can refer to the guidance on 'Effective Communication' and 'Communication and neurodiversity' on pages 21-22.

Stage 2: Achieve a short-term goal or learning objective

Timeline: Mid-January – March

Focus on achieving a first goal

As you begin Stage 2, you should agree with your Mentor the short-term goal or learning objective that you would both like to focus on at the start of the programme.

Identify key roles and responsibilities between you both and review your [SMART goals record](#) to plan how you will achieve your selected goals.



Activities for Mentees

- **Complete the second check-in survey:** Confirm with the CSC the progress of your pairing.
- **Attend the second virtual meet-up:** Mentees will be invited to network with fellow Mentees, learn about the benefits of the programme, and receive guidance on key points to discuss with your Mentor in the coming stages.



Useful tips

- If you have doubts about how to achieve your selected goals or need clarification, ask your Mentor.
- For fruitful discussions with your Mentor on how to achieve your goals and learning objectives, you can refer to the 'Effective communications' tips, on page 21.

Stage 3: Review your goals

Timeline: April – June

Review your goals

During Stage 3, you should review and evaluate your remaining goals and discuss how to use the rest of the formal mentoring cycle effectively. As you both work towards your goals, you may find some are not relevant anymore. You should discuss this with your Mentor and seek their support in making any changes.

By the end of Stage 3, you should be fully engaged in the programme and feel that keeping in touch with your Mentor is part of your learning and Scholarship experience.



Useful tips

- **Continue to keep meeting notes and log your mentoring time:** Before your meetings with your Mentor, be prepared to share updates on your goals, ask questions, and note topics for discussion to maximise the value of your time together. You can refer to your previous meeting notes and SMART goals log, templates available on the [resource webpage](#).
- **Learn together.** Explore ways in which you can learn from your Mentor on how to achieve your goals, discuss challenges faced so far, and identify ways to overcome these.



Stage 4: Prioritising the remaining time

Timeline: July – September

Consider any final goals

During this stage, you and your Mentor should prioritise the remaining time and discuss any final goals around your professional development and plans post-Scholarship, or future years of your study.

Below are suggestions on things you may wish to discuss with your Mentor during this stage in the cycle, alongside supporting any ongoing goals.

Master's Mentees

- Building your professional skills such as networking, leadership and critical thinking.
- Preparing for new career opportunities by refining your profile (CV, LinkedIn).
- Planning for further studies.
- Understanding how to implement your knowledge and skills in the workplace and/or existing employment post-studies.

Doctoral Mentees

- Applying what you have learned during the past year to your future years of study.
- Drawing on your Mentor's expertise on how to advance your research and maximise impact.
- Building your research skills, such as communicating your research to different audiences, applying for funding and networking within your field.
- Presenting your research and building your professional network.



Useful tips

- **Be open to feedback.** As part of the mentoring process, you and your Mentor should be open to providing and receiving constructive feedback that will help you both to further develop your skills and achieve your goals. You can find information on receiving constructive feedback on page 23.
- **Keep your Mentor informed about busy periods.** This may be a busy period for you with deadlines, examinations, or other work which may affect your commitment to regular meetings. Keep your Mentor informed if you are unable to meet or if you need additional support during this time.

Stage 5: Wrapping up and moving on

Timeline: October – December

Reflect on your achievements

During this stage, reflect on what you and your Mentor have achieved so far and what you have valued as part of your pairing. The final weeks of the mentoring cycle will pass quickly and it is important that you and your Mentor use this time effectively to ensure you both achieve any outstanding goals and continue to feel engaged and supported.

Master's Mentees

- During this period, you will start the process of returning to your home country. Discuss with your Mentor any concerns you might have about transitioning back home. You can refer to the CSC's 'Resources for Personal and Professional Development', available on the [CSC website](#).
- Areas of discussion may include reverse culture shock, employment concerns, balancing work and family life, and plans for future studies.
- Reflect again on how you will implement the knowledge and skills you gained during your studies to achieve your development impact goals.

Doctoral Mentees

- Reflect on how you will move forward with your studies, taking into consideration advice and guidance from your Mentor.
- Discuss areas of support you may still require for the rest of your studies and to access this support.
- Share ideas on how you can promote your research to increase your impact as a researcher and develop your professional profile.
- Reflect on how you will implement the findings of your research to achieve your development impact goals.



Activities for Mentees

- Complete the **final feedback survey** to share your experiences as a Mentee.

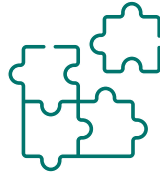


Useful tips

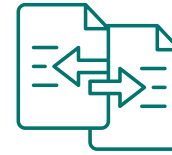
- **Reflect on any outstanding goals** and how you will use the remaining time effectively. Refer to information on 'Making the most of your final weeks' on page 23.

Benefits of staying connected post-programme

Mentees and Mentors are encouraged to continue staying in contact with each other once the formal programme ends. Benefits of staying in contact may be:



Collaborating on work projects, publications and research studies



Sharing updates about studies and work



Meeting in-person when visiting respective countries for work/study



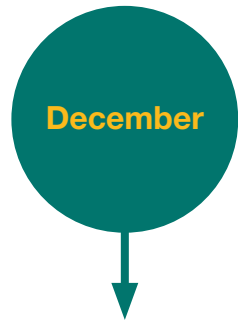
Maintaining a life-long peer

You can read testimonials on how previous Mentees and Mentors have benefited from ongoing contact and participation in the programme on the [CSC website](#).



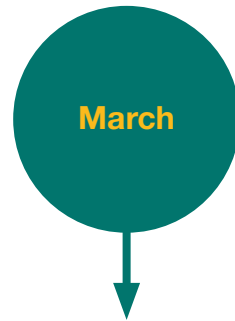
Monitoring and evaluation

The CSC will monitor and evaluate the mentoring cycle to ensure all participants get the most out of the experience and to support the future development of the programme. You will be asked to complete the following surveys.



First check-in survey

You will be asked to complete a check-in survey (short survey between 3-4 questions) to confirm if you are now in contact with your Mentor.



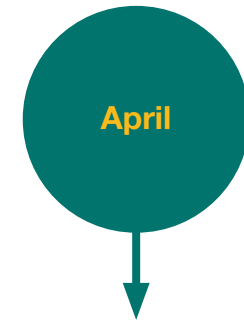
Second check-in survey

You will be asked to complete a final check-in survey (short survey between 3-4 questions) to confirm the progress of your mentoring pairing.



End of programme survey

You will receive a formal evaluation survey about your experiences as a Mentee and the CSC Mentoring Programme. The survey will be sent to all Mentors and Mentees and ask questions about the materials provided, cycle touch points, personal development opportunities, and wider gains of the pairing.



Post 4-month survey

This will be the final survey you receive about your pairing and will ask you to reflect on the short-term and/or ongoing benefits of taking part in the CSC Mentoring Programme.



Managing pairings

In some instances, due to study/work pressures and other commitments, Mentees and Mentors may lose contact with each other during the programme.

In such cases, please contact the CSC Alumni Team to share your concerns/queries. The Alumni Team will follow up with your Mentor and keep you informed about the status of your pairing.

You can contact the team at alumni@cscuk.org.uk

There is the possibility that not all pairings will continue and complete the cycle. This is typically the result of external circumstances and not a reflection on the Mentee-Mentor relationship. In these situations, the Alumni Team will terminate the pairing. Reasons for unsuccessful pairings vary and some are outlined below:

- Mentee or Mentor has not submitted their agreement form confirming participation.
- Mentee or Mentor can no longer participate in the programme due to other commitments and/or unforeseen circumstances.
- Mentee and Mentor mutually agree that the pairing cannot continue.

Resources

Top tips for Mentees

The following tips are designed to highlight some of the ways you can engage with your Mentor. This will help you achieve your goals and gain appropriate knowledge and skills to support your academic and professional development.



Get to know your Mentor



Set clear objectives



Be willing to learn from your Mentor



Self-evaluate and assess your skills and abilities effectively



Don't be afraid to ask questions



Keep your Mentor updated on your studies and/or research, and extracurricular activities



Explore ways to overcome challenges or barriers you may face in your studies and research



Be open to feedback from your Mentor



Test your ideas and ask your Mentor to provide feedback



Strengthen your understanding of your development impact goals

The tips mentioned above will help shape your conversations with your Mentor and help you achieve your objectives of participating in the programme. There are many ways Mentees and Mentors can work together and learn from each other during the programme.



Icebreakers

First introductions can sometimes feel awkward. As such, you may wish to ask your Mentor some icebreaker questions during your initial communications and meetings. If you ask an icebreaker question you should also share your answers.

Below are a few icebreaker questions you may want to ask and answer as part of your introductory messages.

- Tell me five facts about you.
- Why did you apply for a Commonwealth Scholarship?
- What are your professional goals?
- What is your favourite memory from your Scholarship?
- What does success look like to you?
- What are your hopes for this mentoring pairing?
- What do you like best about your job?
- How do you learn best?
- What do you think are your key strengths?
- What have been the most significant learning experiences in your career?
- What knowledge and skills do you feel I possess that could be of benefit to you?
- What areas of learning would you most like to develop?

Effective communication

Communication is a two-way process and the ability to communicate effectively is an important skill in both professional and personal relationships.

Below are some tips to help develop effective communication skills.



Be an active listener. When communicating it is important that you actively listen to the other person. This involves both paying full attention to the speaker and allowing them to talk uninterrupted while showing verbal and non-verbal signs of listening, such as nodding and making encouraging or empathetic sounds.



Explanation techniques - keep it simple!
Be clear and succinct when providing advice or suggestions. This may be by using non-technical language or providing examples to help illustrate your point.



Be empathetic and understanding, even if you don't agree with the other person. It is important to respect their point of view and find a common understanding.



Stay calm. Discussions can sometimes be frustrating; however it is important that you stay relaxed and calm and find alternative ways to provide feedback.



Ask open-ended questions to encourage longer and/or quality discussions.

Communication and neurodiversity

Neurodiversity refers to the natural diversity in human brains and the way in which it functions. It is important to understand that the cognitive abilities of individuals differ widely, and that these abilities should be seen as variations rather than forms of disability. A neurodiverse individual might have conditions such as autism, dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and dyspraxia.

Communication is key in understanding individuals and making them feel safe and valued. Neurodivergent people communicate differently and being aware of how to communicate can help you better engage and connect with them.

Below are some of the considerations to bear in mind to make adjustments while engaging with your Mentor. These considerations are applicable to communicating with all individuals.

- Educate yourself about misconceptions and stigmas surrounding neurodivergent individuals.
- In the initial rapport building stage, find out the best way to build connection by asking questions such as:
 - What would you like me to know about you?
 - How would you like me to communicate with you?
 - How would you like me to check in with you?
 - How do you prefer to receive feedback?
 - How and when should I ask or remind you of deadlines?
 - How best can I support you?



- Use direct and clear language. Keep information brief. Where communicating via email, avoid long emails and include bullet information to indicate important action points.
- Allow breaks during your mentoring meetings.
- Ask for support or clarification in planning and breaking up tasks into parts.
- Be mindful about someone's challenges. Avoid using terms such as 'clumsiness', or being 'a nerd', as it can trigger anxiety.
- Check both your understanding of conversations and actions. Summarise information that is communicated to avoid misunderstanding.
- Provide positive feedback.

Receiving constructive feedback

As part of your goals, you may require your Mentor to give positive and constructive feedback. It can sometimes be difficult to receive feedback, particularly if you have spent a long time on a piece of work or feel that you have a great idea. It is important that you understand how to receive and interpret feedback and how you can learn from this.

- Always approach feedback positively and calmly. This will help you to listen and respond.
- Actively listen to the feedback given to ensure you understand the points being made.
- Make it a conversation. Ask for specific examples and clarifications and don't be afraid to ask questions about areas you are unsure of or don't understand.
- Consider ways you can address the feedback given. If you agree with the points made, think about what you can do differently and talk this through with your Mentor. If you don't agree, talk this through with your Mentor to understand why they may feel differently and clarify if there may be misunderstandings.
- Keep a note of the discussion and the feedback received so you can reflect on this later.
- Remember to thank your Mentor, even if you don't agree or aren't sure how to use their feedback.

Making the most of your final weeks

The final weeks of the mentoring cycle will pass quickly and it is important that you and your Mentor use this time effectively to ensure that you both achieve any outstanding goals and continue to feel engaged and supported.

- Start conversations to wrap up the pairing.
- Reflect on what you have both achieved so far. This may be as part of the goals set, or additional skills and knowledge you have learned from each other.
- Review what goals are still outstanding. Why are these goals outstanding?
- How have you and your Mentor changed your approach or way of thinking? How will this be of benefit in future?
- What new challenges or learning opportunities do you now feel able to approach?
- Will you stay in contact outside the formal Mentoring Programme? If so, how will your relationship change and what do you hope to achieve?
- If you choose not to stay in contact with your Mentor, take this time to acknowledge the support you have received and how you will use this in the future.



Contact us

Do you still have questions about the CSC Mentoring Programme?

You can refer to the Frequently Asked Questions page available on the [CSC website](#), or contact the Alumni Team at alumni@cscuk.org.uk

