

CSC Mentoring Programme

Handbook for Mentors



COMMONWEALTH
SCHOLARSHIPS



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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 Mentee 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 the ways you can provide support to your Mentee. It also provides information on how you can benefit from the programme, such as developing mentoring and leadership skills. Please refer to the Handbook for information on the programme structure, resources to support meaningful mentoring sessions and updates on virtual events for Mentors.

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 Alumni

As a Commonwealth Alumnus, 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 the CSC Code of Conduct for Alumni 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 Mentee with a third-party. Your Mentee 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

Mentors have a duty to report violations of CSC policy, applicable law and regulations conducted by their Mentee, and any other concerns that may pose a threat to the integrity of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, or safety of their Mentee and others. During their studies, your Mentee may experience unexpected issues which may affect their time in the UK. Your Mentee should contact their Programme Officer on matters related to financial aspects of their award, travel arrangements and visa and welfare issues.

As a Mentor, if you have serious concerns for your Mentee's welfare and personal safety and understand that the CSC has not been informed, you 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 you are familiar with 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

Due diligence checks

In applying for the CSC Mentoring Programme, you have consented to your personal information to be used to conduct necessary due diligence before we can proceed with the pairing process and formal agreements to participate in the programme. In most cases, the due diligence checks will be straightforward, however further information may be requested.

Roles, responsibilities and opportunities

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

As a Mentor, you can:

- Support your Mentee in understanding how the skills gained through their studies will support their development impact goals and be applicable to their home country context.
- Help your Mentee focus on the development impact potential of their studies and provide relevant sector and/or research information to support this.
- Provide motivation to your Mentee during intensive study periods, such as examinations, assignment submissions and vivas.
- Support your Mentee in adjusting to UK teaching and culture and create a safe environment for them to ask questions about social aspects of living in the UK.
- Provide guidance on how your Mentee can implement their knowledge and skills in the workplace following their Scholarship, and/or advise on employment where these skills are most needed to support sustainable development
- Support your Mentee in developing soft skills required for their personal and professional development.
- Direct your Mentee to their CSC Programme Officer on matters related to financial aspects of their award, travel arrangements, and visa and welfare issues.
- Encourage your Mentee to take advantage of the [CSC's engagement activities and events](#) and stay connected with the CSC community during their studies. This may include joining one or more of the [CSC Development in Action webinars](#) or getting involved in their [Regional Network](#).
- Share in your Mentee's successes during their studies, for example their attendance at conferences and events, award nominations, and publications. You should also share your news and achievements.





Your Mentee can:

- Ask for guidance on how to ensure their studies will support their development impact goals and be applicable to their home country context.
- Share updates on their studies and progress and keep you informed of their successes.
- Seek support in adjusting to living and studying in the UK.
- Ask questions about how to apply their studies to the workplace, or for support in identifying key employability skills to help them secure relevant employment on their return home.
- Learn from your experience and expertise to develop the skills and knowledge to support their academic and development goals.

Whilst the CSC understands there may be other ways in which you can support your Mentee during their studies, there are some aspects of their time in the UK that the role of a Mentor does not cover.

As a Mentor, you will not:

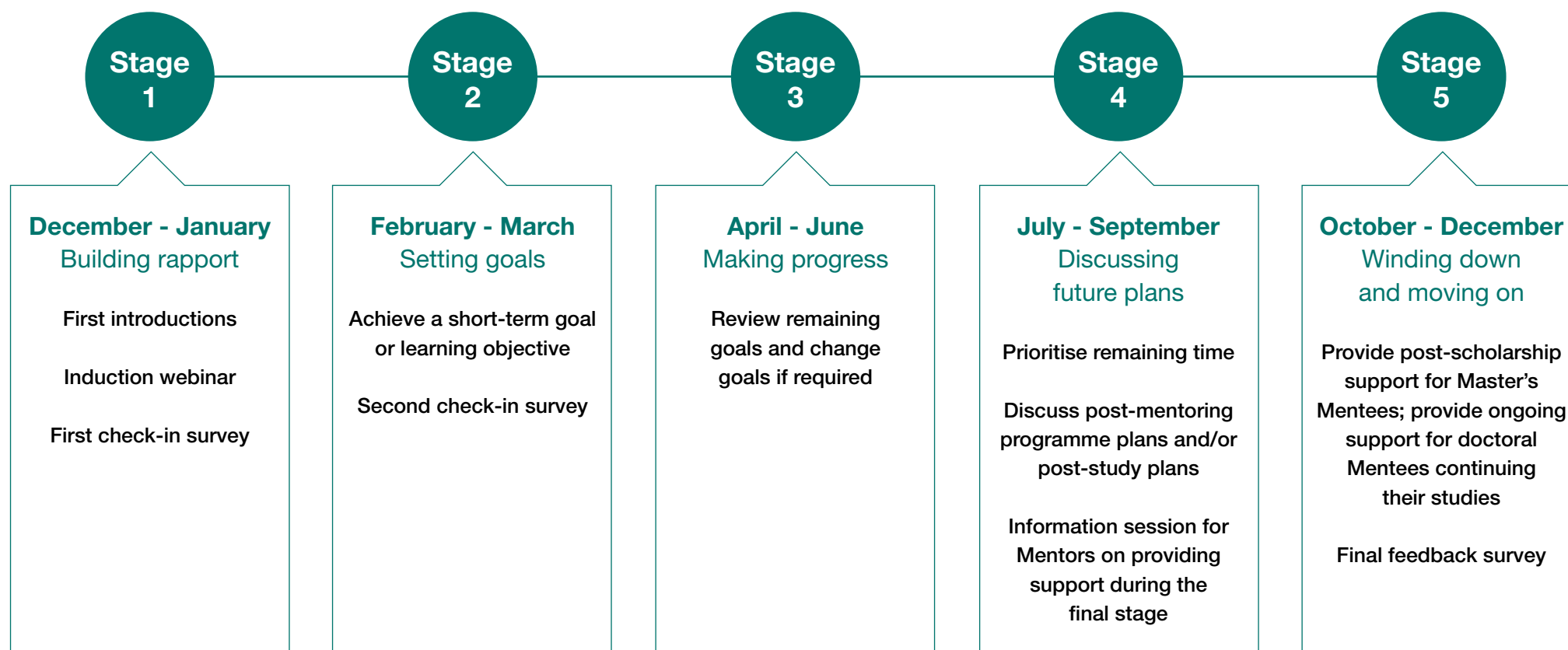
- Draft, write or proof-read essays or dissertations on your Mentee's behalf. You may advise on plans, or small sections of work, but will not complete work on behalf of your Mentee.
- Provide advice on immigration and welfare matters. Your Mentee should contact their CSC Programme Officer on matters 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.

Your Mentee will not:

- Expect you to draft, write or proof-read essays or dissertations.
- Contact you outside of the agreed communication channels and/or times, as you have both set out.
- Disclose personal or sensitive information about you or 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 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

As a Mentor, you are responsible for making the first contact by the deadline given in your pairing communication email.

In your initial communication, you should include the following information to help your Mentee get to know you and why you volunteered as a Mentor.

- Outline your motivations for volunteering to be a Mentor.
- Provide a short summary on your current work and the skills and knowledge you feel you can share with your Mentee.
- Ask your Mentee to introduce their course of study, development goals, and what they hope to gain from you as a Mentor.
- Let your Mentee know how they should contact and address you, for example the email address they should use, platform for future communications, formal titles.

Following this introduction, you and your Mentee should be able to identify core areas where you can provide support and set clear goals.

Decide how you will communicate

During your first meeting, you and your Mentee 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).





Activities for Mentors

- **Complete the first check-in survey:** Confirm with the CSC if you and your Mentee have established contact and discussed your goals.



Useful tips

- To help get to know your Mentee, you can use the **'Icebreaker' questions** on page 21.
- **Establish expectations.** It is important to agree on what you and your Mentee 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 22-23.



Stage 2: Setting goals

Timeline: February - March

A key part of a successful mentoring pairing is setting goals for personal and professional development. It is important that you and your Mentee set clear goals at the start of the programme so you know what support to provide, and your Mentee knows what they can approach you 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 achievable 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. Whilst your Mentee discusses what they would like to learn from you, you should also think about what you would like to learn from your Mentee and the skills you would like to develop as a Mentor.



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 I 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 Mentee 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.

Log your meeting notes

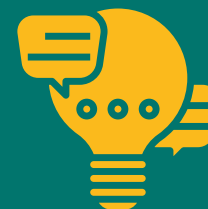
During your mentoring meetings, you should take notes on the topics discussed and any actions you have each agreed.

Use the [mentoring log table template](#) to record this information. You should agree with your Mentee 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 Mentors

- **Complete the second check-in survey:** Confirm with the CSC the progress of your pairing.



Useful tips

- **Encourage meaningful discussions with your Mentee:** For fruitful discussions with your Mentee on how to achieve both your goals, you can refer to the 'Effective communications' tips, on page 22.



Stage 3: Making progress

Timeline: April – June

Review your goals

During Stage 3, you should reflect on the progress you are making in achieving your programme goals. You should evaluate your remaining goals and discuss how to use the rest of time effectively. If you find some of the goals are not relevant anymore, you should discuss this with your Mentee and support each other in making any changes.

The key is to be flexible and self-reflective while you both monitor the progress of your goals and learning objectives.



Useful tips

- **Continue to keep meeting notes and log your mentoring time:** Before your meetings with your Mentee, 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](#).
- **Provide guidance on being self-reflective:** Helping your Mentee to reflect on their work and any challenges is important in supporting them to become independent learners and problem solvers. For information on 'Encouraging your Mentee to be self-reflective', refer to page 24.





Stage 4: Discussing future plans

Timeline: July – September

Discuss future plans

During this stage, you and your Mentee should prioritise the remaining time and discuss any goals to support their professional development and plans post-scholarship, or for future years of study.

Master's Mentees

- Building 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 their knowledge and skills in the workplace and/or existing employment post-studies.

Doctoral Mentees

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



Activities for Mentors

- **Attend an information session for Mentors:** Mentors will be invited to a virtual meet-up and information session. This will provide information on providing post-scholarship mentoring support for Master's Mentees and how doctoral Mentees can apply their learnings for the remainder years of their study.



Useful tips

- **Be open to feedback.** As part of the mentoring process, you and your Mentee 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 24.
- **Your Mentee should keep you informed about busy periods.** This may be a busy period for your Mentee with deadlines, examinations, or other work which may affect their commitment to regular meetings. If they are unable to meet or need additional support during this time, they should keep you informed. You should provide encouragement to your Mentee during this period.



Stage 5: Winding down and moving on

Timeline: October – December

Reflect on your achievements

During this stage, reflect on what you and your Mentee 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 Mentee use this time effectively to ensure you achieve any outstanding goals and continue to feel engaged and supported.

Master's Mentees

- During this period, Mentees will start returning to their home country. Discuss with your Mentee any concerns they might have about transitioning back home. You can direct them 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 they will implement the knowledge and skills they gained during their studies to achieve their development impact goals.

Doctoral Mentees

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

Activities for Mentors

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



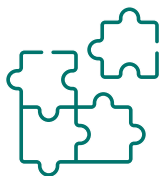
Useful tips

- **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 24.



Benefits of staying connected post-programme

Mentees and Mentors are encouraged to stay in contact 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



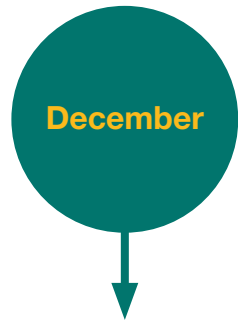
Maintaining a life-long peer

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



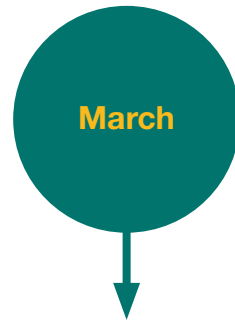
Monitoring and evaluation

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.



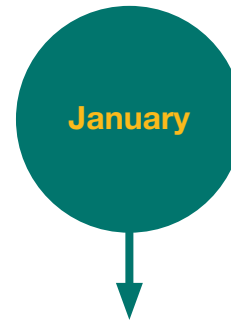
First check-in survey

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 Mentee.



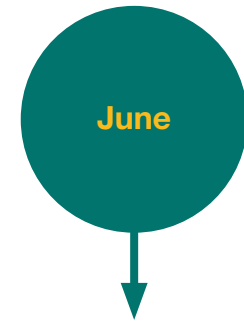
Second check-in survey

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 Mentor 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 6-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 Mentee 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 Mentors

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



Get to know your Mentee



Share information about your Scholarship experience



Share your knowledge and expertise



Set clear objectives



Foster conversations on your Mentee's development goals



Signpost your Mentee to resources to support their learning and development



Keep your Mentee updated on your work and/or research



Motivate and encourage your Mentee during busy or intense study periods



Encourage your Mentee to seek opportunities or challenges



Remind your Mentee of their development 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 Mentee 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.



Be open-minded and flexible to your Mentee's thoughts or ideas.



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 keep in mind to make adjustments while engaging with your Mentee. **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 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.
- Support your Mentee 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 your Mentee's understanding of your discussions. Summarise information that is communicated to avoid misunderstanding.
- Provide positive feedback.



Encouraging your Mentee to be self-reflective

Being able to identify strengths and weaknesses and using this to achieve goals and overcome barriers is a critical skill which you should encourage your Mentee to develop.

Below are some suggestions as to how you can encourage your Mentee to be self-reflective:

- Ensure you offer your Mentee positive and constructive feedback and suggestions throughout the cycle.
- Regularly ask your Mentee to think about their goals and their progress in achieving these.
 - What have they achieved so far?
 - What skills have they gained, or do they need to gain to achieve these?
 - Are they still realistic?
 - Is there anything that they are struggling with?
 - How do they think they can overcome this?
- Encourage your Mentee to think about their strengths and how they can use these.
- Encourage your Mentee to think about areas for development and what steps they should take.

Providing constructive feedback

As part of their goals, your Mentee may require you to give feedback on an essay plan, dissertation outline or a presentation they are giving. It is important that you provide positive and constructive feedback to support their learning and ensure that they don't feel de-motivated by any comments.

When providing constructive feedback, you should:

- Always give positive feedback alongside feedback on areas for improvement.
- Identify and comment on specific aspects of the work and avoid generalisations.
- 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.
- Invite your Mentee to think of changes and improvements with you, rather than telling them what to do.
- Encourage your Mentee to keep a note of the discussion and the feedback received so you can reflect on this later.
- End with clear action points or take-aways for your Mentee to take forward.
- Don't go overboard – provide feedback on key areas for comment.

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 Mentee 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 Mentee 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 with your Mentee outside the formal Mentoring Programme? If so, how will your relationship change and what do you hope to achieve?

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](https://www.cscuk.org.uk), or contact the Alumni Team at alumni@cscuk.org.uk

