

UKSBM Mentoring Scheme – Expectations and Guidelines

If you have any questions or comments, contact our [UKSBM Career Development Officer](mailto:s.b.vanbeurden@exeter.ac.uk) Samantha van Beurden; s.b.vanbeurden@exeter.ac.uk or in their absence, our [UKSBM President](mailto:i.kellar@sheffield.ac.uk), Ian Kellar; i.kellar@sheffield.ac.uk.

Overview

The UKSBM mentoring scheme supports career development by connecting researchers across career stages. Mentoring is a relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. Mentoring is not peer support, and there should be a difference between the career stages of mentor and mentee. The mentoring relationship is built on mutual trust and respect, and it is not a power-based relationship. Mentoring is a process for the informal transmission of knowledge, social capital, and psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career, or professional development. Mentoring entails informal communication, usually face-to-face, although it may be supported by digital technology such as video or teleconferencing. It should take place over a sustained period of time, between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom, or experience (the mentor) and a person who is perceived to have less (sometimes referred to as the protégé).

Eligibility

Who is eligible to apply?

UKSBM members who identify as -

Early Career Researchers (ECRs) are eligible to apply as mentees and will be able to indicate whether they wish to receive mid-career or senior mentorship.

Mid-Career Researchers (MCRs) are eligible to apply as mentees and, as part of a new pilot, may also apply as mentors.

MCRs are well suited to act as mentors, drawing on recent, relatable experience to support early career researchers through key transitions. Mentoring also contributes to MCRs' own development, helping to build leadership skills and confidence as they progress toward more senior roles. Strategically, including MCRs as UKSBM mentors increases the scheme's overall capacity and flexibility, strengthening the mentoring community across career stages. MCRs may apply to participate in both roles simultaneously, acting as a mentee and a mentor, if they wish.

Senior academics are eligible to apply as mentors and will be able to indicate whether they wish to provide mentorship to individuals at the PhD, ECR, or MCR career stage.

Mentee and mentor qualities

Mentees should:

- Actively listen
- Be honest
- Be motivated

- Be prepared for meetings
- Be proactive
- Be reflective and self-aware
- Be willing to learn

Mentors should:

- Be encouraging
- Be non-judgemental
- Be willing and able to give time
- Signpost to opportunities for career development (i.e., flag awareness of opportunities)
- Develop a professional friendship
- Develop insight through reflection
- Listen with empathy
- Offer a sounding-board
- Offer practical advice
- Share experience (usually mutually)

Mentorship format and structure

Where can meetings take place?

Meeting location should be flexible. Meetings can take place face-to-face in a mutual location or workplace, over the telephone, videoconference, and/or at UKSBM annual meetings. There is no expectation for mentors and mentees to travel for meetings, but if either or both parties would like to travel to meet, that is okay. Please keep in mind that meeting online gives more flexibility for matching you with a suitable partner.

How much time will I need to commit, and how often are meetings?

Time requirements will differ for each mentor-mentee dyad, depending on the mentee's goals and career stage. These are flexible and should be agreed between mentee and mentor. As a guide, UKSBM recommends that the mentor and mentee meet a minimum of three times a year. The duration of the relationship will depend on the mentee's goals and the time needed to reach them. We expect the mentoring relationship to last around two years, with an optional third year based on discussion and agreement of the mentor and mentee. However, the relationship may informally last as long as agreed by both parties.

Who initiates meetings and maintains the relationship?

The dyad will receive an official introduction email from UKSBM. The first meeting should be initiated by the mentor in response to this email (as mentees might be hesitant to make the initial contact). After the mentor has initiated the first meeting, it is then the responsibility of the mentee to follow up for future meetings. Meeting frequency should be led by the mentee.

What should the first meeting cover?

At the first meeting, there should be some discussion to ensure that the match is appropriate to help the mentee reach their goals. For example, you might reflect on the following: do the mentor and mentee get along? Does the mentor have appropriate skills and experience to foster the mentee's goals? Does the mentee have goals that are appropriate for a mentoring relationship?

It is recommended that the dyad use the Mentoring Template Agreement in **Box 1** to guide the first meeting.

If after the first meeting you both decide that the relationship is not suitable, the mentee should contact the [UKSBM Career Development Officer](#), or in their absence, the [UKSBM President](#), and we will try to reallocate you to a more suitable mentor.

What types of topics should be covered in meetings?

This list is not exclusive, and we encourage mentees to think about goals to work on during their mentoring meetings. Some topics could include:

- Developing supervision skills
- Exploring new career opportunities/alternatives
- Goal setting
- Grant writing
- Identifying strengths and weaknesses (e.g., CV development, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills)
- Lab management
- Leadership skills
- Learning organisational culture
- Management skills
- Networking
- Proposal writing
- Publishing
- Skill development
- Work/life balance

For MCRs, mentoring may also focus on promotion pathways, transitioning into leadership roles, grant strategy, or building interdisciplinary collaborations.

What types of topics are not suitable to cover in the mentoring relationship?

Mentoring is not designed to be a therapeutic relationship, although both parties might benefit psychologically from the topics covered in the meetings. There is no expectation that mentors should be sponsors (e.g., give jobs to mentees, go through job applications, grant applications, or papers), nor should they intervene in or resolve disputes.

Are there any other expectations during the scheme?

It is good practice for the mentor and mentee to record brief notes about what they've discussed at each meeting and any actions, and to keep an email chain of these minutes.

As a mentee, you might want to consider the possibility of becoming a mentor after your term as a mentee (subject to career stage).

Reporting

We value your participation in the mentoring scheme and are committed to ensuring it continues to offer meaningful support to our members. To help UKSBM understand the scheme's impact and improve future rounds, we ask all participants to provide feedback.

As part of the scheme, participants will be asked to provide brief updates at key points in the mentoring relationship:

- **After the first meeting:** Mentees should report back **within one month** to confirm the agreed frequency of meetings, initial goals, and intended duration of the mentoring relationship (we suggest one year as a starting point).
- **At 6 months:** UKSBM will contact both parties for a brief check-in to see how the relationship is progressing and whether any support is needed.
- **At the end of the relationship:** At the end of the mentoring relationship, both mentors and mentees will be invited to submit a brief narrative about their experience — what worked well, what could be improved, and what they gained from the process. These reflections will inform ongoing development of the scheme and, with your consent, may be shared via the UKSBM website, newsletter, or social media to celebrate and showcase mentoring within our community.

Box 1: Mentorship Agreement Template

The purpose of this template is to help both parties develop mutual goals, boundaries, and clarity around mentorship expectations. This has been adapted from Hook et al.

This template can be used flexibly for any mentor–mentee pairing, including MCRs acting as both mentors and mentees.

The mentor and mentee should discuss and agree the following:

- Goals: What do you hope to achieve as a result of this relationship?
- Steps to achieving your goals (e.g., meetings, manuscripts/grants, collaboration on projects, steps to achieving independence)
- Meeting frequency and duration
- Where meetings will be held
- Confidentiality: All matters discussed should remain confidential
- Plan for measuring mentorship effectiveness (e.g., reviewing meeting minutes, goals, and outcomes)
- Plan for ending the mentoring relationship: Should this be based on time or specific goals?

References

1. Bozeman, B.; Feeney, M. K. (2007). "Toward a useful theory of mentoring: A conceptual analysis and critique". *Administration & Society*, 39(6), 719–739.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0095399707304119>
2. Hook, Edward W III and Audrey Wrenn. UAB Center for Clinical and Translational Science Mentoring Contract.
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