



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Department of Politics &
International Relations
Mentoring Scheme 2019-20:
Guide for Mentees

Introduction

This guide provides information about the scheme, including expectations and frequently asked questions, as well as some useful tips on how to make the most of the opportunity.

The aim of the scheme is to help you explore your career options by meeting with a professional working with the civil service, think tanks, communications agencies or another field that relates to Politics and International Relations (IR). Equally, we are just as keen for you to gain insights from working with mentors in roles where the link to Politics and IR might not be obvious but insights and guidance on career paths and development can nevertheless be offered.

Becoming a mentee is your opportunity to connect with a professional who can offer insight into career development. It also offers you the chance to talk to this person about how to apply the skills and experience you've gained at University in a professional setting. Our mentors work in a diverse range of occupations, and can provide a valuable insight into what it's like to work – and look for work – beyond graduation. Even if you don't have a specific job in mind, mentoring provides you with the opportunity to discuss your ideas and thoughts which could help to inform your future plans. There may be interesting job roles you don't know about, and you can explore where and how you could make best use of your skills.

Benefits to you include:

- Find out about a job or area of work that interests you
- Explore where and how you can use your skills in the workplace
- Top-tips on application and recruitment processes
- A great way to practice your networking and communication skills

How the Scheme Works

Matching to mentors

The scheme will run from October 2019 through to May 2020. Mentor and mentee matching will take place at the end of October.

We will match mentors with mentees based on objectives that both students and mentors set out in their respective applications. Where a match doesn't align exactly with your area(s) of interest, we ask you to keep an open mind – all mentors can provide motivation and support. If you are unhappy with the mentor you have been allocated, please let us know as soon as possible.

We will need to manage demand as we will be unable to provide mentors for every single third year student. We have a limited number of mentors so encourage you to get your application in quickly once the application window opens on Monday, October 14th. The University [careers service](#) offers a full range of employability opportunities and information and we would encourage all students to make use of this.

Communicating with your mentor

We expect you to have a minimum of three hour-long meetings with your mentor over the course of the scheme. The sessions could be face-to-face or via Skype or any other video link platform. It would be helpful if the first meeting could take place face to face, but this might not be possible where mentors live abroad or at some distance to Sheffield so Skype would be acceptable in those circumstances.

A mentoring 'contract' will be agreed between the mentor and mentee to establish the mentoring objectives, agree confidentiality of discussions, frequency of email contact between the sessions and what to do in the unfortunate event that any sessions need to be rearranged etc. More meetings may take place as the mentor and mentee see fit. Mentees should use time in between sessions to prepare for - and follow up on - discussions and any action points agreed during the mentoring sessions.

It is down to you to initiate the first contact with your mentor and to take the lead on negotiating a schedule of communication that is appropriate for both you and your mentor.

Mentoring is not just about talking about your ideas; you should aim to convert your ideas into actions. Setting yourself two or three objectives ahead of each mentoring session can help you really progress your ideas. You may wish to use the [SMART](#) model for this: Specific, Measurable, Realistic action points with a Time focus. Keeping notes summarising what you have discussed and covered with your mentor will help you to focus and review your achievements. It's also a helpful tool to help you work out what you'd like to cover in your next session.

Bringing your mentoring to a close

The scheme will run from October 2019 to May 2020. We will contact you within the first month or so to check how it's going and will be in touch again towards the end of the scheme to let you know it is time to bring things to a close. At the end of the scheme, you might choose to continue the mentoring relationship independently or you might wish to bring the relationship to a close.

Topics for discussion with your mentor

See below for suggestions of possible topics you might wish to discuss with your mentor - **but these are just examples, it's entirely up to you what you want to**

cover. When you first contact your mentor, you might wish to suggest a few points you'd like to cover in your first session and you can then agree a more formal plan with your mentor during the first session.

Enhancing job / industry sector awareness
Find out about your mentor's current role – typical duties, tasks, entry requirements, satisfactions, frustrations, progression etc.
Expectations of graduates – moving from being a student to a professional
Industry overview: sector trends, political, social, economic or legal issues impacting on the sector (in the UK or overseas)
Information and insights into lifestyle implications of career options ie would the role involve working away from home a lot
Ask if it would be possible to arrange a tour of your mentor's workplace <i>[Please note this would at your own expense]</i>
Discuss differences between working for large companies and smaller ones in the same sector and implications for your career choices
Assessing options and suitability
Explore your motivations, priorities and values and how these might match different job roles/organisational or corporate values
Help you to evaluate your suitability for specific careers e.g. by going through a job description you have seen that interests you and discussing this with your mentor
Help you to identify development needs or skills /knowledge gaps and the steps I you might need to take to cover this
Consider how issues such as gender, age, ethnicity, disability or other personal circumstances could affect you in the workplace
Developing 'transferable/professional' skills
Effective communication skills
Effective team working skills
Effective presentation skills
Effective project management
Commercial awareness
Professionalism and professional behaviour – what this means
Job search and career planning
Plan a detailed job/placement search strategy identifying a list of companies to apply to
Proactive job search and identifying opportunities that may not be advertised
How to create and extend a professional network of contacts
Using social media for professional purposes /job search
Advice or feedback on CVs or application forms
Advice or feedback on interviews
Practice a mock interview
Advice on assessment centres
Advice on other techniques used by companies within the recruitment process e.g. presentations, situational judgement tests, aptitude tests, group tasks etc.
Share information on the company's recruitment process
Course/subject specific
Application of technical knowledge in the workplace
Identify opportunities related to the course
Further study or development opportunities

Top-Tips for managing your mentoring partnership

- **Set goals**

Before the first contact, do the objective setting task to identify your goals and expectations. Don't try and cover them all – identify the ones that jump out for you. Be realistic. Your objectives will need to be agreed with your mentor, and they may have additional suggestions.

- **Establish ground rules**

The partnership has to be realistic and sustainable for you both, and will have to reflect your respective work or study commitments. Email support between the Skype sessions can be agreed between you and your mentor once you are matched - this can include discussions regarding the frequency of email support and what works best for both you and your mentor. **You should lead the relationship and set up each session** - there should be a minimum of three hour long face-face or Skype sessions.

- **Respect your mentor's time and effort**

Your mentor has volunteered their time to help you, but they are also likely to have a busy workload. Don't bombard your mentor with emails or phone calls outside of the agreed contact pattern (some mentors may prefer only to be contacted during working hours – so do check this with them). Always acknowledge communication from your mentor, even if you aren't able to respond fully straight away. Don't forget to say thank you!

- **Allow for spontaneity**

While having an agenda for each exchange can keep you focused, recognise that conversations may take unexpected turns so be prepared to respond to the issues that arise. If some agenda items did not get covered, agree on which ones take priority for the next session.

- **Be reliable**

Show your commitment and demonstrate professional behaviour by keeping to agreed communication and response times.

- **Be aware of personal safety and professional boundaries**

If deciding to meet up for face to face meetings, always meet in a public place such as on the University campus. Do not meet in each other's homes, restaurants or similar settings.

- **Communicate effectively**

When communicating, try to ask questions in an open way, i.e. not just questions that elicit a yes/no answer. This will facilitate a dialogue and keep the relationship interactive. Be clear in your communication. Prepare beforehand, absorb and consider your mentor's guidance, and follow up on agreed actions in between scheduled contact times.

- **Give feedback**

Monitor how the partnership is progressing and review the actions that you have taken. Don't forget to acknowledge and thank your mentor.

- **Let us know if things go wrong!**

If your mentor does not respond to your emails, or if you encounter any difficulties, please let the staff members running the scheme know straight away (see contact details below). If we know you are having problems we will do our best to help and get any issue resolved.

Confidentiality and Personal Safety

We ask that you don't pass on your mentor's details (e.g. name, contact details or personal information) without their consent, and that this information is only used to contact them as part of the mentoring scheme. Similarly, they have been asked not to forward your details.

If you are visiting your mentor at their work premises, it will be your responsibility to check any health and safety risk assessments and check that the organisation has appropriate third party liability insurance for visitors to their premises.

If you are on the receiving end of behaviour or communication (including via Skype or email) that seems inappropriate or makes you feel uncomfortable please let us know straight away by telephoning Jennifer Watson on 0114 222 1662 or emailing pol-3rdyr-sms@sheffield.ac.uk.

The Department of Politics & IR mentoring scheme focuses on career related information and guidance. Counselling, medical and other student support services are available at the University and you are advised to seek specialist help from appropriate professional services if there are issues beyond career related matters that need to be addressed.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if my mentor doesn't respond to my email to set up the first session?

Mentors are asked to respond as quickly as they can - however, mentors may often have other commitments and busy work schedules that mean they are

unable to respond to your email straight away. Emails can also often be caught in spam filters. To make sure you are receiving all communication, add your mentor's email address to your contacts list. It is however acceptable to chase up your mentor if you don't hear after a few weeks so don't be afraid to send them a gentle reminder. If the problem continues, contact us at pol-3rdyr-sms@sheffield.ac.uk.

I have study commitments, imminent deadlines and am under pressure - what should I do? What if I have to cancel a Skype meeting with my mentor?

Mentors will often have a high number of commitments in their job, meaning they are likely to have set aside time in advance for your mentoring session. It is also unlikely they will be able to reschedule at short notice. You should therefore try really hard to meet your commitments with your mentor and avoid cancelling sessions, particularly at short notice.

Given that mentees may also have little spare time, mentors will have the same responsibility to follow through with their mentoring commitments.

If it is absolutely necessary for you to cancel, then please try to give at least 24 hours notice. The most important thing to do in this situation is to be open and honest and try to be as flexible as possible about rearranging, if your mentor is able to do that. Email or phone them straight away, apologise for the change of arrangement and suggest some alternative dates and times.

What if I don't get on with my mentor?

Remember, this is a professional partnership so try to resolve issues effectively with your mentor. However, if you are finding this difficult and need further advice, please email pol-3rdyr-sms@sheffield.ac.uk and all efforts will be made to either help you resolve the differences or match you with a more compatible mentor.

What if my mentor works in a sector I am not interested in?

We try our best to match partnerships based on respective objectives set out in the application. However, mentoring partnerships can be equally productive and successful with matches from different career areas. Keep an open mind, and review the objectives you wanted to achieve by taking part in the scheme. Discuss these with your mentor and see which of your objectives they can work on with you. No one mentor may ever be able to meet all of your requirements but you can always use your mentoring partnership to achieve some of your goals and gain new perspectives.

I have work and study commitments and am under pressure – I don't feel able to complete my mentoring tasks – what should I do?

Mentoring should be seen as an opportunity to develop your professionalism, your time management, and planning and organisation skills. If you have problems honouring the commitments of the programme explain these to the mentor and try to renegotiate the deadlines and expectations with them.

If after this, you feel unable to continue with the mentoring, please send an email to pol-3rdyr-sms@sheffield.ac.uk as soon as possible. It is important that you 'close' the mentoring relationship in a professional and courteous manner. Thank your mentor for the time they have given to you and summarise what you have learnt from the experience. They will be pleased to know you have gained something from the experience and their time was not wasted. Remember, you may not be able to benefit from this mentor's time, but another student might and we will need to manage the relationship with the mentor and maintain their support for the scheme.

If I visit my mentor in their place of work, will I be expected to pay for travel expenses?

As it is envisaged that mentoring is primarily undertaken via Skype, there should be no out of the ordinary expenses expected. If you and your mentor would like to have one mentoring session at your mentor's place of work, please email pol-3rdyr-sms@sheffield.ac.uk to let us know as we may be able to cover travel for one return journey in the UK.

How do I sign up? Are there any requirements for signing up? (e.g. year, subject)

To sign up, there will be an application form to complete which will include a 500 statement setting out your objectives and what you hope to achieve from mentoring. The [application window](#) will open at 09.00 on 14th October and will close at 23.59 on 24th October.

The scheme is open exclusively to final-year politics undergraduates (including dual honours students).

When will I know who my mentor is?

We will email all mentor-mentee pairs on Monday, 29th October.

How many mentees can a mentor expect to have?

A mentor is generally likely to work with one mentee only.