



Cardiff University Careers and Employability Service
'Cardiff Alumni Mentoring Programme'

Mentor Guide 2013

About Cardiff Alumni Mentoring Programme

The Careers & Employability Service is piloting a new scheme connecting current students to former Cardiff University students who have gone on to lead successful careers in a wide variety of fields.

The pilot programme will be managed by the Cardiff University Careers & Employability Service in collaboration with the Development & Alumni Relations team.

The aim of Cardiff Alumni Mentoring scheme is to find career mentors for our current students. Our mentors are professionals from a wide range of sectors who are willing to share their advice, experiences and career journey to date in order to help their mentee with planning their next steps, decision making and exploring opportunities.

How will we match mentors and mentees?

Our students will apply for the scheme, using a comprehensive application process. They provide us with details of their course, previous work experience, career areas of interest and motivations for wanting a mentor.

We will read through every single application and shortlist according to where we can find appropriate matches. We use the information mentors provide on their registration form as the basis for this. The matching will be done by hand – we have no software to help us. We feel that this helps us to make more accurate matches and hopefully facilitate more successful partnerships as a result. Some mentors may prefer to request that we send a few possible matches, others may be happy with just one.

Once we have found a suitable match, we will invite the mentee for a one-to-one session with us. We outline the requirements, ask them to sign a Statement of Commitment, talk through the match and ensure they are aware of what is involved. This will happen with all of our mentees. Again this will help us to instigate fruitful mentoring relationships.

All of our matched mentees will then be invited to an induction workshop, which will further clarify how the programme works and how they can make the most of the opportunity.

Cardiff Alumni Mentoring Timeframe

As this is a pilot programme, we will regularly review the programme directly with mentors and mentees over the coming months to track success and resolve any issues which arise. Longer term, it is anticipated the programme will be run over a set start to end 12 month period with regular review and feedback mechanisms throughout for all participants.

Mentor and Mentee Expectations

Mentors and mentees take part in the programme for a wide variety of reasons and will have their own specific expectations. We will try our best to manage expectations throughout to ensure that mentoring is an enjoyable and valuable experience for you and your mentee.

What can mentors expect from mentees?

All mentees will sign a **Statement of Commitment** which asks them to agree to the following:

- Taking the lead in contacting their mentor and ensuring that communication is maintained regularly throughout
- Responding to communications in a timely manner
- Agreeing levels of contact and confidentiality and observing these arrangements
- Ensuring that the focus of the mentoring is careers related

If you are experience any difficulties with your mentee, please contact us the central Careers & Employability helpdesk on 029 2087 4227 as soon as possible.

What should mentees expect from mentors?

By agreeing to become a Cardiff Alumni Mentor, you are committing to:

- Sharing your advice and experience within a careers context
- Being as honest as is reasonably possible
- Treating the relationship as confidential and offering an impartial perspective

It will really help our mentees to make the right choices if they can obtain a true insight into the ups and downs of working in your sector/organisation/role.

What will be the most common expectations of our mentees?

- Insights: sector/industry info; routes into certain roles; organisational culture
- Skills: building confidence; improving employability skills; networking
- Support: comments on their CVs and application process; feedback; making new contacts
- Added extras*: office/site visits, work shadowing; work experience

We will spend time working with all of our mentees before the programme starts to ensure that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them.

*Alumni Mentors are under no obligation to provide any of these additional opportunities

What makes a good mentor?

A good mentor is someone who is honest, encouraging but also willing to offer constructive criticism. Someone who will share their own experiences, give their opinions but also encourage their mentee to form their own ideas.

Many mentees will have concerns about being considered as a burden, that they won't know what they can ask, that they may appear naïve and lacking in direction. A good mentor will be approachable whilst maintaining a professional relationship, will accept that their mentee is just starting their career journey and will need some support and will also adhere to their commitment to the programme.

Although we will encourage mentees to drive the partnership, below are some suggestions as to what you could cover in your meetings to ensure the experience is as valuable as possible for your mentee.

About you:

- Your educational background: Have you sought further training since leaving university, and why?
- What sort of extracurricular activities did you do at university? Did you hold a part-time job? Did either have any impact on your future career?
- Your career history: how does your current role build on previous ones?

Your current job:

- What are your main responsibilities? What hours do you work?
- What's a typical day like? Are you part of a team?
- What do you like about your job? What are your future career plans?

About the organisation you work for:

- How would you describe its culture? In what direction is it heading?
- How do you compare to your competitors? What is the benefits package like?

About the field/industry:

- Do you anticipate any changes or trends? How do salaries compare to other industries?

Job Search techniques:

- Vacancies: where should they look for jobs in your field? What are typical application processes?
- CVs/application forms/covering letters: please ask the student if they would like you to give them feedback on these.
- Interview techniques: how to tackle tough interview questions. Perhaps you could run a ½ hour mock interview with your mentee for practice.
- Networking: how can the student build their network of contacts within your field?

General

- How did you find the transition from university to work? What do you see as the major changes?

What makes a good mentor? (Continued)

The mentor may take on different roles at different stages of the mentoring relationship which can include the following:

- Sounding board – offering the opportunity to try out new ideas in safety
- Listener – giving time and space and helping them problem solve
- Coach – giving encouragement and feedback
- Networker – helping to develop connections
- Role Model – examples to learn from
- Critical friend – telling the truth (even if it hurts)
- Change agent – challenging the status quo
- Visionary – being inspirational

Your role as a mentor will be to help them achieve their objectives and one way of doing this is to follow a three point model.

Evaluate – help to recognise the strengths and weaknesses of the mentee in order to identify personal development needs. This could include:

- reviewing the mentee's activities to date
- considering areas for development
- evaluating the mentee's current skills and experience

Stimulate – encourage and motivate the mentee to develop him or herself. This could include:

- focusing the mentee on key areas they want to develop and suggest possible ways of developing them (coaching skills)
- supporting and encouraging the mentee throughout the process and recognise success
- signposting and opening up professional networks

Facilitate – you may be in a position to help the mentee with access to learning opportunities, influential people or resources. This could include:

- discussing personal objectives and parameters
- identifying the resources the mentee will require
- reviewing progress

Meetings and Communication

We anticipate our partnerships combine, if possible, face to face meetings with email and telephone communication. Some partnerships will be conducted entirely at distance.

Face to face meetings

- We recommend that you aim for approximately four meetings over a six month period. Where this is not a possible, we would suggest arranging one or two slightly longer meetings. It will always be helpful if your mentee can meet you at least once (with the exception of overseas mentors). Please note that, unfortunately, we cannot cover travel expenses for either mentors or mentees.
- We suggest meeting in quiet yet neutral environments, such as a café, at least for the first meeting. It will help to put your mentee at ease. It could be beneficial if your mentee is able to meet you at your place of work too, as this will provide a better insight into your working environment.

Setting Expectations

- It is important to set down expectations from the first meeting/communication. Both mentees and mentors need to be clear about what they can hope to achieve/offer through the partnership.
- Agreeing ultimate outcomes early on will provide a framework and keep the relationship focused, helping you to identify possible tasks, activities, timescales and deadlines.
- If your first contact is by phone, a follow-up email to confirm discussion points may be advisable.
- You may wish to use an informal agreement, such as the **Statement of Commitment** issued by the Cardiff Alumni Mentoring Programme, to clarify expectations.

Mentoring Activities

Here are some of the ways you can help your mentee develop their employability:

- Comment on your mentee's CV – perhaps using your own as a point for comparison
- Look at job descriptions, application processes and identify subsequent skills gaps
- Invite your mentee to industry networking events, seminars etc
- Conduct a mock interview and provide feedback
- Suggest a career plan and job search strategy with your mentee
- Introduce your mentee to colleagues in and outside of your organisation
- Identify work experience opportunities if available

For more advice on what you might cover, see 'What makes a good mentor?' (see page 4).

Distance Communication by Email / Skype etc.

Distance mentoring will enable us to expand the programme in the future - forming matches with mentors based outside of Cardiff and even overseas. It can be a more flexible way for mentors to take part, as communication can be conducted at convenient times. Moreover mentors will have the luxury of reflection and considering their responses to mentee questions.

We estimate that Cardiff Alumni Mentoring will involve around 15 hours commitment but this is largely based on a partnership involving face to face meetings. Translating this time commitment to an e-mentoring relationship can be tricky. However e-mentoring partnerships equally need structure and direction in order for them to be manageable and effective.

- Set down your parameters in the beginning. How often would you like your mentee to contact you? Once a month? Twice? On average, we expect our e-mentoring partnerships to have exchanged emails 10 – 12 times during the course of the match.
- Do you want them to email your work address or your personal email? How quickly can they expect a response from you?
- It is important to consider what can be successfully conducted by email and equally what cannot. Depending on your mentee's objectives, you may decide that you will need to include some telephone/Skype communication too. Providing a career history and feedback on written applications is good for email but offering advice on what kind of role might suit your mentee may require a more interactive discussion.
- In order to provide your mentee with alternative ways of contacting you and more of an insight into you as an individual, you may wish to invite them to connect on LinkedIn or perhaps you might even set up a separate private Facebook profile for you as a mentor. This may require a new email address but this could in fact help you to manage your mentoring exchanges separately. Your mentee might wish to do the same too. Skype is also a useful resource.
- Setting the tone of your emails will set the tone of your relationship. Email can encourage less formal interactions and students are often not used to using email as a formal medium. If you prefer your relationship to be more business- like, adopt an appropriate tone and your mentee will invariably echo this in their responses.

Points to consider

When communicating, try to ask open questions and respond in an open way (i.e. not just yes/no).

- This will facilitate a dialogue and keep the relationship interactive.
- If you find you haven't got time to respond fully to a mentee's email, drop them a quick note to say you will be in touch soon. E-mentoring relationships can easily fail if either party assumes that the other has lost interest due to delayed responses.
- We plan to create a LinkedIn group for mentors together with networking events, asking other mentors to share their experiences on what has worked for them when using email/telephone based mentoring.

Support and Resources

We are particularly keen for you to get in touch if things are not going well, as we can help to resolve failing partnerships. However we will also be delighted to hear success stories too.

If you have any difficulties or issues with the programme, please contact the Cardiff University Development and Alumni Office directly on (029) 20 876473.

LinkedIn group

We plan to set up a LinkedIn group for mentors and will be sending through details in due course. Please do join the group. This will provide you with an opportunity to share experiences with fellow mentors, start discussions and network.

Mentor FAQ 1

What if I am unable to deliver what my mentee expects of me?

If you are new to mentoring, you may feel unsure about what your mentee expects from you. Cardiff Alumni Mentoring is a career mentoring programme which aims to focus the student on getting a job and on the transition from university to working life. As this is something you have probably been through, it is certainly something you can talk about and help them with.

However, every mentee has slightly different expectations and it is important to establish these at the outset. If you feel you are not the best person to help in certain areas, then perhaps you can introduce your mentee to personal contacts who are better placed to assist. Some mentees will be very focussed and specific, whilst others may need more general guidance. Some mentors worry that they are not “doing” enough but it is important to remember that it is the little things that count, like having an impartial sounding board and feeling they are being supported.

What if my mentee has applied to my organisation but has been unsuccessful?

They have got someone ideally placed to give them thorough and honest feedback and to help them to develop so that they succeed next time. You can help your mentee work on selling themselves by setting up mock interviews, looking at transferable skills and suggesting areas where they could improve.

I am an e-mentor. Do you have any advice on how to get the most out of an e-mentoring relationship?

Although e-mentoring may sound easier than meeting face-to-face, there are certain things you should think about at the outset. It is a good idea to establish how frequently you intend to communicate and to factor in any periods when either of you is unavailable so that this is not interpreted as not getting in touch. You may also need to work harder to ensure that your mentee is meeting their objectives – for example, as you will not be able to ask for a completed CV by the next meeting, you will need to set a date by which they should send it.

I am not in the position to arrange work experience for my mentee, is that a problem?

You are under no obligation to provide your mentee with work experience and this is made clear to all participants at the induction.

A key objective of the scheme is however that the student gains an insight into your industry, so you should spend some time talking about day to day tasks, office politics and office etiquette, trying to give them a really good feel for what working life is like for you. If you are in a position to arrange any form of experience or work shadowing, this would obviously be of great benefit to your mentee.

Is our relationship confidential?

The relationship needs to be open and honest from both sides and we emphasise the need for confidentiality to all mentees in their screening sessions. You should reiterate this on your initial contact with your mentee however, possibly drawing up a memorandum of understanding between yourselves to clarify this issue alongside as other expectations.

Mentor FAQ 2

I have not heard from my mentee in a while and I am concerned that the relationship is not progressing

Although your mentee is supposed to take the lead in making contact, it could be that they feel intimidated or worried they might be seen as a burden. For this reason, we will encourage mentors to take the lead if they have not heard anything after the induction, to break the ice and kick-start the partnership.

If you have already had contact with your mentee and you are finding it hard to maintain because your mentee is not returning calls or emails, please let us know ASAP.

My mentee is no longer interested in a career in my work area, should I stop mentoring my mentee?

Many students do have misconceptions about what careers in certain sectors entail and Cardiff Alumni Mentoring helps to bridge this gap by providing them with a realistic picture. Even if your mentee decides they no longer want to work in your sector, there is still a great deal you can help them with. You can give them advice on CVs and interviews, as well as helping them to address skill gaps. You may also be able to introduce them to someone who works in the field they have now chosen. Most importantly though, you have already saved them a great deal of time by helping them to find out what they *don't* want to do.

I am not based in Cardiff, when will I see my mentee?

Although it would be ideal to have a mentor based in Cardiff or in South Wales, this is not always the case, especially with specific industries such as investment banking, law and advertising. We do ask mentors based outside of Cardiff to be more flexible with meetings: it may be easier for your mentee to visit you during reading weeks or holidays, for example. If you do find yourself in Cardiff, please let your mentee know so that you can co-ordinate a visit. You might also consider less frequent but longer meetings.

Where should the meetings take place?

We do ask that, where possible, you have at least one meeting with your mentee at your place of work. This way you can show your mentee around your offices and introduce them to colleagues. This will help them to get a sense of the company culture. Subsequent meetings should take place at mutually convenient places.

What if my work commitments change and I no longer have time for the programme?

Cardiff Alumni Mentoring requires a very small time commitment, so in most cases you should be able to continue with the programme. If you are struggling with time pressure, you could discuss ways of continuing the relationship that demand less time. E-mentoring, for example, means that you don't have to be available at a mutually convenient time and you can respond to queries when it suits you. However, if you really feel you can no longer commit to the programme, please let us know as soon as possible.