

Undergraduate Mentoring Scheme Handbook

School of Psychology and Neuroscience



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Convener: Paul Gardner (Senior Lecturer)

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A guide for mentors and mentees

Transitioning into university life can be a challenging process, but it is a process and not fixed by your first day experience. Some people take a few days, others weeks, and some of us can't wait until the first opportunity to visit home! This Mentor scheme is a University supported informal system which can ease the transition by matching new students with experienced students to form one-to-one peer mentoring relationships where students can gain confidence and benefit from the sharing of insider knowledge. This is also intended to enhance the community of students studying Psychology & Neuroscience. The Mentor Scheme is a voluntary system which is flexible, informal and fits around your availability and preferences. This scheme is designed and run with the support of the Centre for Academic, Professional and Organisational Development (CAPOD).

What is the Psychology & Neuroscience Mentor Scheme?

The scheme helps new students to get the information they need to find their way around; and to encourage integration and engagement with their new community by meeting and learning from current senior students. A Mentor is a volunteer student from Psychology & Neuroscience who is available to their mentee to provide support during the first stages of the degree. The role is designed to develop confidence and offer encouragement, as well as practical help and advice, giving new students a point of contact, the opportunity to have someone to attend events with, and perhaps to answer questions ranging from 'who do I talk to about my module?' to 'how can I get involved in activities outside the course?'. The mentor / mentee relationship is one built in a series of discussions in order to aid the transition of new students to life studying Psychology & Neuroscience at St Andrews and to help new students gain a sense of belonging. The scheme lasts from the beginning of the academic year through to the beginning of the Spring Semester (though of course the relationship between mentor / mentee may last longer if you want it to).

The scheme is **not about academic support**, and students should seek guidance on academic issues from their Module Convener, the University's Advice and Support Centre (ASC) or from CAPOD. Mentors are not expected to take the place of professional staff.

Why get involved?

The scheme is designed to be mutually beneficial, enhancing the community within Psychology & Neuroscience by establishing a link between new and existing students. Senior students can help new students feel at home by sharing their experiences and insights.

For the Mentee, it offers non-academic support and an introduction to the School and its many activities. You will have a friendly face at School events, someone to share your enthusiasm for the subject and to ask questions that you wouldn't perhaps feel comfortable asking a member of staff. As a new student to St Andrews you may feel overwhelmed in the adjustment to University life. It may seem difficult to make friends or that everyone else knows what they are doing. You may want opportunities to connect more with your fellow Psychology & Neuroscience students. The scheme will help you settle in, adapt to a new study environment, become more confident in your academic community, be aware of how your studies will develop in the transition from subhonours to honours and get used to the possibilities to get involved in activities offered in our School and beyond.

For the Mentor, it is an opportunity to get to know new students, share your enthusiasm for your subject and to enhance your interpersonal skills. What do you wish someone had told you at the beginning of university? What would you have liked to know about the move from subhonours to honours? If you are willing to share your experience of being a student you can make a big difference to someone else's time at university.

What are the benefits?

Peer mentoring is a mutual way of learning, building confidence and allowing you to develop transferable skills that will help you during your time at university and beyond. Involvement will be of benefit to your time in Psychology & Neuroscience, to your time at university more generally and make you stand out to employers. You will develop communication, interpersonal and organisational skills. Mentors will receive a stamp in CAPOD's Passport to Excellence for the Professional Skills Curriculum scheme when they attend the Mentor Briefing session.

For more information on the scheme:

[Careermatters/professionalskills/](#)

For the Mentee:

- Gain practical advice, reassurance, encouragement and support
- Learn from the experiences of others
- Gain a different perspectives on situations
- Increase your social and academic confidence
- Become more empowered to make decisions
- Gain valuable insight into the next stage of your university career
- Get to know honours students and gain insight into the step from sub-honours to honours
- Gain a larger network within Psychology & Neuroscience

For the Mentor:

- Develop leadership and management qualities
- Be instrumental in developing a stronger network within Psychology & Neuroscience
- Increase your confidence, social insight and motivation
- Engage in a volunteering opportunity, valued by employers
- Enhance your CV
- Gain recognition for your skills and experience
- Benefit from a self-reflection and a sense of personal growth
- Get a stamp in CAPOD's Passport to Excellence scheme

Great how do I sign-up!

You will have received an invitation by email but in case you have misplaced it you can sign-up via this link:

<https://sumac.ac.uk/account/university-of-st-andrews/scheme/232>

If you have any difficulties just email psychmentor@st-andrews.ac.uk

Dos and Don'ts

In order to help your experience of the Mentor Scheme run smoothly it is very important that you adhere to these guidelines, so please read the following carefully before you sign up to be either a mentor or mentee.

DO!

- Build trust through reliable and respectful behaviour; understand and respect other people's feelings, cultural backgrounds and beliefs
- Listen carefully and demonstrate that you have heard the other person. Try to recognise when to talk and when to listen.
- Talk through problems and explore options
- Communicate clearly in a non-confrontational and non-judgmental way
- Respect things you are told in confidence
- Agree and establish boundaries, and if someone oversteps them do seek support
- Maintain regular contact, and inform the other person if you are away or ill
- Respond to queries or requests in a timely fashion. Aim to reply to communications within 3 days. Let the other person know if you are away or are otherwise unable to respond to communications.
- Respect the other person's space and time commitments
- Take responsibility for your personal safety
- Point mentees in the right direction if they need advice from Student Services, ASC or CAPOD
- Contact the Mentor Scheme Convenor, Paul Gardner, or the Coordinator, Gianluca Gammei, if you come across any problems

DON'T!

- Expect the mentee / mentor to become your best friend or confidante
- Expect academic advice or support. Mentors should not assist with coursework (for example, they should not help with the planning or writing of presentations or essays)
- Expect an immediate response from your mentee / mentor. Remember that there are many demands on an individual's time
- Intrude on a person's personal time or space. This includes social media.
- Miss appointments without forewarning the other person
- Dictate to your Mentor/Mentee what they should or shouldn't do – problem solving should be a dialogue
- Make requests that may put the other person in a difficult situation (eg, asking them to meet you outside a safe environment or asking them to keep something confidential which you know should be passed on)

If your mentee requires academic support advise them to contact their Adviser, a Module Convener or ASC with any questions relating to academic matters.

Academic advice is also available in the following places:

- [On the University website](#)
- [Via CAPOD's Academic Study Skill Support](#)
- Via the Student Union: <http://www.yourunion.net/support/education/>

A number of sources of advice on personal, health and financial matters can be found on the university website: <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/students/advice/> and via the Student Union: <http://www.yourunion.net/support/>

What are the expectations of a mentor / mentee?

The Mentor System supports a helping and supportive relationship formed on openness and mutual trust, non-judgemental attitude, support and encouragement. It doesn't involve a huge time commitment from either mentor or mentee.

A mentor should be enthusiastic, friendly, reliable, knowledgeable, responsible, good communicator, empathetic listener, informative and a good role model. You should share experiences and insights, and refer mentees to an appropriate professional should any problems arise that cannot be dealt with. Equally, if your Mentee doesn't come to you for help, then don't force a relationship. While you should not deal with

any academic support, you can offer advice with generic study issues such as using the library, and Department specific issues such as who to contact with a question about a module, or how to find out more about events. Mentors should remember that they are ambassadors of Psychology & Neuroscience at St Andrews and must agree to behave in a suitable fashion.

A mentee should be prepared to communicate and ask for help when it is needed. You need to be committed to the relationship and make sure your expectations are realistic. You do not need to be especially worried about the transition to university life in order to be part of the scheme, as a primary goal of the scheme is to build a community for students across the School and to have more opportunities to get to know one another.

Both mentor and mentee **must respect any boundaries established**, and be sure to respect the other person's background and beliefs.

You do not need to worry about having enough time as there are no set time commitments. It is up to you to agree upon and manage the degree of contact you have.

Contact

The initial opportunity for a meeting between mentor and mentee will be at the **Psychology & Neuroscience reception event(s) in orientation week**. There will then be a dedicated Mentor scheme event held in **Week 1** which will give everyone the opportunity to meet. There will also be opportunities for getting in touch before this point, via email or other online platforms.

At your first one-to-one meeting you might start by discussing the things that most concern the new student about starting their course. The mentor might think about what would have helped them most on arriving at St Andrews.

You should aim to **meet face-to-face at least twice** in the early part of Semester 1, and then however frequently you like after that. These meetings should not be formal, a 15-minute chat over a cup of coffee may be all that is needed. And if the mentee decides they don't want to / need to meet, then the mentor will respect that decision.

Contact can take various forms: face-to-face meetings, email, telephone/Skype calls and texts, messages via Facebook and other social media platforms. You should agree between you which of these you are most comfortable with. It may

suit you to schedule meetings in advance so that the Mentor relationship can be managed around other commitments, or you may feel it easier to simply check-in with one another every couple of weeks via email or text. Meetings should be held where both mentor and mentee feel comfortable.

Under the scheme, it is anticipated that mentors and mentees will be in contact up until the beginning of Semester 2. You should aim to have **a final face-to-face meeting by the end of week 2 in Semester 2.** (Of course, you are welcome to continue the relationship as long as you like, but this is the time requirement for the scheme.)

Confidentiality

The Mentor relationship is private and confidential. However, there may be exceptions to this, if:

- 1) Both mentor and mentee agree that the mentor can speak to a third party about the issue.
- 2) The mentor believes there is a risk of harm to the mentee or any other person. In which case, the mentor should report the issue to the Mentor Scheme Convener, Paul Gardner (plgst-andrews.ac.uk), or if appropriate directly to Student Services, or other appropriate body.

What do the Convener and Coordinators do?

The Mentor Scheme is supported by Paul Gardner and by a student Coordinator, Gianluca Gammei (psychmentor@standrews.ac.uk) in the School of Psychology & Neuroscience. Gianluca is responsible for running the programme online, and for organising the matches between students and he is the person to contact with any questions concerning the scheme in general. If you are participating in the Mentor Scheme and feel that you need further support because, for example, you don't know how to help your mentee, or if you don't think the assigned pairing will work or you feel at all uncomfortable in your Mentor / mentee relationship, please contact Paul Gardner, School of Psychology & Neuroscience, Room 1.01, 01334 46 2075, [email: plg@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:plg@st-andrews.ac.uk)

Support from CAPOD:

The Mentor Scheme is supported by CAPOD who will help to evaluate the impact of the scheme at the beginning of semester 2. All mentors and mentees will be invited to complete a short on-line evaluation, and your assistance with this is much appreciated.