



University of
St Andrews | FOUNDED
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Mentoring Guidelines Handbook

Academic Year 2016/17

Key Dates:

From May until August

Matching of Mentors and Mentees

Summer Vacation

Incoming students sign up to the scheme and mentoring email partnerships begin

Semester 1 2016-17

Orientation week: meet and greet event

Week 1: Have your first meeting

Semester 2

Continue Contact

Evaluation by CAPOD

Convener:

Linda Gibson

Widening Participation Officer (Reach Project)

schools.access@st-andrews.ac.uk

Coordinator:

Vice Principal Ambassador – Widening Participation



A guide for mentors and mentees

The University of St Andrews Admissions team have designed this mentoring scheme to help new students settle in and make the most of their time from the very beginning of their studies, and to strengthen the University's community at St Andrews. Transitioning into university life can be a challenging process, particularly in terms of integrating into an existing community. This scheme seeks to ease the transition by matching new students with experienced students to form one-to-one peer mentoring relationships where students can benefit from the sharing of insider knowledge. The Mentoring Scheme is a voluntary system which is flexible, confidential and fits around your availability and preferences.

What is the Ambassador Mentoring Scheme?

The scheme enables 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 other students. A mentor is a volunteer student from any year or subject, who is available to their mentee to provide support and guidance during the first stages of the degree. The role is designed to offer practical help and advice, perhaps answering questions ranging from 'who do I talk to about my module?' to 'how can I get involved in events 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 at St Andrews and to help them gain a sense of belonging. The scheme lasts from the beginning of the academic year through to the end of the academic year – May 2016 (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 by establishing a link between new and existing students. Current students help new students feel at home by sharing their experiences and insights.

For the Mentee, it offers non-academic support and an introduction to university life. You will have someone 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 student life. It may seem difficult to make friends or that everyone else knows what they are doing. The scheme will help you settle in, adapt to a new study environment and get used to the possibilities to get involved in activities offered in the various departments within the University, and beyond.

For the Mentor, it is an opportunity to get to know new students and to enhance your interpersonal skills. What do you wish someone had told you at the beginning of university? If you are willing to share your experience of being a student and you are a friendly person, 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 and allowing you to develop transferable skills that will help you during their time at university and beyond. Involvement will be of benefit to your time at university and make you stand out to employers. You may develop communication, interpersonal and organisational skills.

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

For the Mentor:

- Develop leadership and management qualities
- 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

Dos and Don'ts

In order to help your experience of the Mentoring 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
- Contact the Mentoring Scheme Convener, Linda Gibson, 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 – if your mentee/mentor isn't comfortable being friends on Facebook or other social media channels, respect their decision
- Miss appointments without forewarning the other person
- Dictate to your 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: <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/students/advice/academic/>
- Via CAPOD's Academic Study Skill Support: <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/students/academic/advice/studyskillsandadvice/academicskills/>
- 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 Mentoring System supports a helping and supportive relationship formed on openness and mutual trust, non-judgemental attitude, support and encouragement.

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. While you should not deal with any academic support, you can offer advice with generic study issues such as using the library or how to find out more about events. Mentors should remember that they are ambassadors 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 system is for students across the years to have the opportunity 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

Your initial meeting will be at the **Mentoring reception event in orientation week**. At this event you should concentrate on getting to know one another and set your first meeting.



At your first meeting you might start by discussing the things that most concern the new student about starting their course. Identify current concerns or obstacles and explore possible solutions and actions to take. 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.

Contact can take various forms: face-to-face meetings, email, telephone 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 buddy 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, mentors and mentees are required to be in contact up until the end of the 2015/16 academic year. You should aim to have **a final face-to-face meeting by the end of 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 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 Scheme Convener, or if appropriate directly to the university's counselling service, or the Police.

What do the Convener and Coordinator do?

The Mentoring Scheme is supported by Linda Gibson in the Admissions Office and by the student Coordinator, Johanna Davidson. Johanna is responsible for running the programme online, and for organising the matches between students. Linda is the person to contact with any questions concerning the scheme. If you are participating in the Mentoring Scheme and feel that you need further support because, for example, you don't know how to help your mentee, please contact Linda Gibson. If you don't think the assigned pairing will work or feel at all uncomfortable in your mentor / mentee relationship, please contact Linda Gibson immediately.