



University College Dublin
Careers Network



Alumni

UCD Career Mentoring Programme

Mentee Handbook



2025/26

Table of Contents

01 Welcome and Introduction

02 Aim of the programme Timeline

03 The Mentoring Partnership

- What is mentoring
- Benefits of mentoring
- Why do mentors volunteer

- The effective mentee
- Getting the most from mentoring
- Confidentiality

07 The Mentoring Journey

- Preparing for mentoring
- Expectations and goals
- Setting SMART objectives

- Introductory email
- Maintaining professional standards
- Preparing to meet your mentor

09 The Mentoring Process

- Structuring your mentoring process
- Keeping in touch
- A plan for the first meeting

- Suggestions for topics to cover in mentoring meetings
- Ending the mentoring relationship
- Reflection on mentoring experience

13 Mentee Testimonials

15 Appendices and Tools

- Expectations and Goals
- SMART objectives
- Mentoring Agenda for First Meeting – Checklist

- Mentoring Meetings Record
- Reflection on Mentoring Experience

22 Further Careers Support and Resources



Introduction and Welcome

Congratulations on being accepted to the UCD Career Mentoring Programme!

This is a unique opportunity to connect with professional alumni to receive personalised careers advice and sector insights in your chosen career. We're confident that taking part in this programme will allow you to move forward with your career planning.

This Mentee Handbook is designed to provide you with:

- Key points about mentoring and how the UCD Career Mentoring Programme works
- Information about how to make the most of your mentoring relationship
- A guide to which you can refer throughout the year.

In addition, the Handbook contains information about how mentoring relationships can operate; giving guidelines about the role of mentors and mentees, levels of commitment and relationship boundaries. It also contains resources you might find helpful to work on throughout the programme such as a SMART Goals worksheet, a First Meeting Agenda, Meetings Record and Reflective Questions worksheet.

Please read this Handbook carefully before you meet your mentor. It is important that you are aware of how the programme works and what is involved before mentoring begins in order to avoid misunderstandings about the nature and scope of the partnership.

UCD Career Mentoring Programme team



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We will check in with you periodically throughout the mentoring programme. Students can also reach out to Andrea if they need any support or guidance while participating in the programme. Alumni mentors can contact Catherine with any queries or issues they may have.

We wish you every success with your mentoring partnership!



UCD Career Mentoring Programme

Aims and Objectives

The aim of the UCD Career Mentoring Programme is to match students with alumni who are able to offer support with:

- Developing their career ideas
- Clarifying their goals
- Improving their employability

The UCD Career Mentoring Programme provides an important opportunity for both the mentee and mentor to meet new people, develop transferable skills and expand networks.

Timeline

UCD Career Mentoring Programme 2025/26



The Mentoring Partnership

What is Mentoring?

Mentoring allows you to gain professional advice that is focused on improving your career aims and personal development. For this programme we are adopting Clutterbuck's (2004) definition of mentoring:

"Mentoring is... a partnership between two people built on trust. The mentor offers ongoing support and development opportunities to the mentee. Addressing issues and blockages identified by the mentee, the mentor offers guidance, counselling and support in the form of pragmatic and objective assistance. The mentoring relationship is confidential".

Fundamentally, mentoring is a developmental relationship between a mentor (more experienced) and a proactive mentee (seeking support).

Benefits of Mentoring

There is a lot you can gain from being mentored by an experienced professional. However, be aware of the limitations too. The following outlines what help is and isn't permissible:

You can ask for help with:	You cannot ask for:
Job hunting techniques including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support reviewing your CV, covering letters and application forms.• How to find and apply for work experience.• Practice with interviews• Skills required for the workplace and how to develop these.	A job opportunity or work placement
Understanding recruitment and hiring process	Employer sponsorship or advice regarding visa/immigration issues
Networking skills such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How to increase your network.• How to navigate networking groups and events.• Which professional bodies would be relevant to join.	Access to their networks or contacts. This might be offered by your mentor but is not an expectation of the programme.
Navigating personal and professional boundaries within the workplace.	Advice regarding personal issues.

Why do Mentors Volunteer?

Our mentors are professionals who have graduated from UCD. They give their time voluntarily and as well as mentoring, they may also be engaged in other activities across the university. There are various reasons why they might choose to mentor students, but ultimately, they have a desire to help you reach your full potential.

These are some of the other possible motivations for them to participate in the mentoring programme:

- An opportunity to give back to the university
- A chance to gain insight into current student life and catch up on current university news
- A chance to work with someone with a fresh perspective
- The potential to learn about a different culture
- A chance to reflect upon their own achievements and career paths
- Gain voluntary experience for their CV
- Develop skills in advice and guidance
- Further develop their communication skills working with someone they wouldn't usually be in contact with

Please note, a mentor will provide you with guidance and advice relating to their own expertise and experience - it is not their role or responsibility to find you a job.



The Effective Mentee

While no template for the perfect mentee exists, there are certain qualities that accelerate success. For an effective mentoring relationship, a mentee:

- Assumes responsibility for their own personal development and the success of the mentoring relationship
- Listens actively
- Questions thoughtfully
- Follows up on commitments
- Provides honest feedback
- Commits time and energy

Remember, as a mentee, it is your responsibility to establish goals and manage the process to ensure you make the most of this opportunity for your personal development. What a mentee gets from the mentoring experience depends significantly on what they put into building the relationship.

As you enter into a mentoring partnership, you should focus on:

- Showing interest and being proactive
- Communicating your thoughts openly and honestly
- Identifying the skills you have and those that you would like to develop
- Having a clear idea what you would like to get from the mentoring relationship
- Understanding what is expected from you and coming prepared to meetings
- Having realistic expectations of your mentor
- Being appreciative of your mentors time



Getting the most from mentoring

Some tips to keep in mind to get the most from your mentoring partnership:

- You drive the process – You are responsible for driving the mentoring process, not your mentor. To achieve this, you need to think about what you want to achieve from your mentoring relationship. This can then be discussed and agreed with your mentor.
- Your mentor's role – Your mentor will be able to offer advice and support on a range of issues to do with your career, but they are not expected to be able to deal with all your enquiries and problems. One of their roles will be to signpost you to more appropriate sources.
- Professional boundaries – Both yourself and your mentor need clear guidelines about levels of responsibility and commitment. The relationship itself must have clear boundaries.
- Meeting up – Ensure that you communicate clearly with each other about the times you plan to meet, including consideration of time differences if mentors live and work abroad, and agree when and how you will contact each other if you have to cancel a meeting.
- Preparation – Ensure that you are well prepared for your meetings and that you have carried out any actions that you have agreed with your mentor.
- Frequency of meetings – Mentors and mentees are expected to meet at least 3 times during the mentoring period (typically one hour per meeting), and meetings can be online or in-person. It is up to both parties to agree on the duration, frequency and format of the meetings.
- Your safety – You should always hold your meetings in public or professional settings, not in private.

Confidentiality

Anything that you discuss with your mentor is confidential, unless your mentor feels that either you or anyone else may be at risk of potential harm, in which case they may make the Career Mentoring Programme Team aware.



The Mentoring Journey

Preparing for Mentoring

Before starting your partnership it's a good idea to think about what you want to achieve at the end of the 6 months. Is it to apply for jobs, to be more confident in interviews, to decide if you have chosen the right career path? Partnerships will have different objectives depending on individual career aspirations, but you should have enough objectives to sustain the partnership over 6 months.

Mentee Expectations and Goals

Take a little time to reflect on your expectations and goals before beginning your mentoring partnership, which may be helpful in aligning the mentoring meetings to your needs. But remember - you are not bound by your goals. You can keep reviewing and revising them during the programme. If a goal you set at the beginning of the programme is no longer relevant to your career planning feel free to amend it.

Appendix 1: Expectations and Goals

Setting SMART goals

To ensure the mentoring relationship is effective, it is important that there are tangible outcomes from the mentoring process and these agreed actions can be captured as goals for the mentee to work towards.

In order to be effective, objectives need to be distinguished from a general expression of intent. They must be clear, achievable and provide a definition of success. Setting SMART goals can help you clarify your ideas, focus your efforts, use time and resources productively, and increase your chances of realising your goals.

SMART goals have five key characteristics:

- **Specific** - Clearly describe your objective
- **Measureable** - How will you measure your success or progress?
- **Achievable** - Do you have the resources, knowledge, and experience to achieve this? What do you need?
- **Relevant** - Does this contribute towards your aims?
- **Time-Based** - Set clear deadlines for review or completion

Appendix 2: SMART Goals



The Introductory Email

Sending the first email to your mentor can be daunting so we have provided some pointers of what to possibly include in your introductory email:

- Thank them for this opportunity.
- Introduce yourself and your broad aims for the programme.
- Think about why you need help from your mentor and briefly communicate this.
- Show interest in your mentor's career.
- Ask how and when they would like to set up the first meeting.
- Be professional and pay attention to grammar etc.

Be proactive in setting up meetings and sending polite follow up correspondence to your mentor. If you do not get a response right away, we would recommend waiting around a week before following up. If you still do not get a response, please get in touch with the Programme Team and we will make enquiries on your behalf.

Maintaining Professional Standards

This is a professional partnership, so you make sure you:

- Communicate respectfully, including using correct grammar & spellings.
- Take the lead in contacting your mentor and replying in a timely manner.
- Let your mentor know if, for example, you are unable to attend a meeting or have a holiday booked.
- Play a positive part in your own mentoring - contribute ideas and provide constructive feedback if asked.
- Be honest about your career needs and wishes.
- Think 'Integrity' - fulfil your commitments.

Preparing to Meet your Mentor

Before starting your mentoring partnership, it's a good idea to familiarise yourself with your mentor's professional expertise, so you understand how they can support you.

- Read through their mentor profile on the UCD Alumni Network platform
- Check their LinkedIn profile.
- Research their business or organisation.
- Demonstrate that you are interested in their career by asking questions.



The Mentoring Process

Structuring Your Mentoring Process

After committing to a mentoring relationship, both participants should consider how they wish to tailor the process to their specific situation. You may wish to follow the below steps in structuring the process to meet your needs:


Defining the Relationship

- Establish a personal rapport. Take time to get acquainted and make a personal connection. Getting to know each other can go a long way in promoting the overall success of your efforts. It could be initiated by a discussion of family, hobbies, or interests. Make an effort to find common ground.
- Review goals. In advance of each meeting, goals could be sent to the mentor giving an opportunity to review and reflect on them beforehand.
- Discuss your reasons for participating. Take the time to explore why each of you has chosen to participate in the mentoring process and establish how this programme can be mutually beneficial.
- Establish protocols for communications, meetings etc. This should include when and where you plan to meet and for how long, how both of you would like to be contacted outside of meetings (and any boundaries around this), is there a need for reminders/confirmation etc. who will take notes at meetings etc. Share any concerns about the partnership, the process or each other.
- Exchange expectations. Discuss each other's goals, motivations and expectations.

Managing the Process

- Prepare for meetings
- Communicate openly to resolve differences

Evaluating the Results

- Review progress periodically in relation to goals
 - Raise any issues or concerns with the Programme Leads
- 



Keeping in Touch

You should maintain the momentum throughout your partnership and the expectation is that you will ultimately be responsible for this. Let your mentor know if:

- You are not available at any time, for travel or exams etc. It might be helpful to share the university term dates with them.
- You are unable to uphold commitments such as preparing for a meeting.
- You feel that you have taken on too much. Naturally you want to achieve as much as you can from the partnership but it's important to be realistic as well.

It's a good idea to plan your next meeting at the end of each session and review your overall aims for the programme regularly, as these may change over time. Be mindful of completing any tasks your mentor may have set for you within the agreed timeframe. We understand that life doesn't always go to plan but if this situation arises, good communication is important.

A Plan for the First Meeting - Getting to know your mentor

At the start of a mentoring partnership, it is essential to discuss mutual expectations and establish a set of ground rules as to how the relationship will be conducted. This will ensure that the relationship develops effectively and that the mentees' needs are met. The contract need not be in writing, but it should at least be discussed and agreed upon verbally.

The first mentoring meeting is critical for building rapport and the result of this conversation will be an agreement that spells out the expectations and responsibilities of both mentor and mentee. You may be nervous, but the mentor will have prepared for the meeting and will be keen to hear all about you.

Take the time to get to know each other. Here are some ideas to cover:

- Start with what you might have in common.
- Break the ice by talking about why you have joined the programme; what are your passions, aspirations and interests? What do you do when you are not at university?
- Define time commitments and general rules of behaviour.
- Confidentiality - What do you both expect regarding confidentiality in this relationship?
- Expectations - What do you want most from your mentor?
- Goals - What do you want to have achieved by the end of the mentoring sessions?
- Success criteria and measurement - How will you both know if you have succeeded?
- How do you address stumbling blocks - What might get in the way/take you off track? What process should you have in place to deal with any stumbling blocks you both encounter?

Appendix 3: Mentoring agenda for the first meeting – checklist

Suggestions for topics to cover in mentoring meetings

Here are some ideas of topics to cover in your subsequent mentoring meetings:

1. Explore and plan career options

- Discuss the range of career options and pathways in chosen disciplines
- Visit the mentor's workplace/discuss different work environments in the industry
- Discuss the transition from university to work
- Discuss a list of future personal and professional goals

2. Develop professional networks

- Discuss skills needed to build relationships and network
- Attend a professional association meeting
- Compile a list of contacts that you could meet with in the mentor's field

3. Learn and practise the skills needed to access employment

- Have your CV, cover letters and selection criteria critiqued
- Have a mock job interview with your mentor and receive constructive feedback
- Discuss what employers look for in graduate job applicants
- Attend 'Shadowing' opportunities in the work place
-

4. Develop knowledge

- Develop a reading list and discuss a few articles at a time, emphasising their practical application and relevance
- Discuss problems emerging in professional or academic contexts and share views on their most effective resolution

Appendix 4: Mentoring Meetings record



Ending the mentoring relationship

As your mentoring relationship comes to an end, it might be an idea to spend a bit of time with your mentor asking for and giving feedback to assess the success of the mentoring partnership and to review if objectives were met. You can discuss with your mentor if you will both remain in touch and how this will be maintained.

We would also encourage you to reflect on your experience of taking part in the programme to consolidate your learning.

Appendix 5: Reflection on mentoring experience

The Programme Team will send a feedback survey in May to mentees and mentors and honest feedback is always welcomed so that we can keep working on the programme to make sure it's tailored to the needs of both students and alumni.

The Programme Team will also invite mentees to join an optional, reflective 'share session' with other mentees.



Hear from Previous Mentees

Ann Nicole Yuson, Architectural Science 24/25 Mentee

When I first signed up for the UCD Career Mentoring Programme, I wasn't sure what to expect. At the time, I was in a tough place academically, uncertain about where I was heading and struggling to find clarity. Feeling stuck, I was at a point where any form of guidance felt essential.

Joining this programme turned out to be a real shift for me. Meeting other mentees who were facing similar questions and challenges provided a reassuring sense of solidarity. As a result, I made new friends and started building connections that felt genuine and supportive.

Through the programme, I was fortunate to be paired with an incredible mentor, an experienced project architect, who clicked with me right away. Studying architecture can be intense and isolating at times, and having someone who truly understands that makes all the difference. She was generous with her time, open about her own experiences, and never made me feel like my doubts were a burden. On top of that, she helped me refine my portfolio and, more importantly, helped me stay grounded when I felt completely overwhelmed by the demands of my course. Whether we were brainstorming ideas or just talking through a tough week, her support consistently made an impact.

Even after the programme officially ended, we stayed in touch. Being a steady source of insight and encouragement, I couldn't have asked for a better mentor. I am still incredibly grateful for all that my mentor shared and for the opportunities this programme has offered.



Mark Smith, Medicinal Chemistry & Chemical Biology 2024/25 Mentee

I had a really positive experience with Career Mentoring at UCD. I found a mentor who had a career pathway I was interested in, and they had great success in their career so I was excited to learn more.

We engaged through the UCD Alumni Network platform, through which we organised two phone calls. The initial call discussed my mentee goals, which were addressed excellently with my mentor, alongside an informative discussion of their career. One goal was to polish my CV for graduate role applications — I was in my final year of my degree. Our second call gave an in-depth review of my draft CV. The review taught me the key skills and practises in resume and CV design.

I was equipped with multiple insights to a career I am pursuing. I feel confident in my future plans, and how to achieve them, thanks to the support of my mentor. My mentor thanked me also for my own insights as a student, something I didn't expect. We have exchanged details to remain in contact, expanding our network.

I'm glad I explored this opportunity at UCD. The connection gave a fresh perspective on my final year of college, relieving some stress whilst actively preparing for my future.



Sean Liu, Plant Biology and Biotechnology 2024/25 Mentee

The UCD Career Mentoring Programme provided me with invaluable insight and support in regard to my future career path.

My mentor assuaged my uncertainties and shared her own experiences which helped narrow down and focus my priorities for future employment/studies. I had a rough idea of what I hoped to accomplish in the future and with my mentor's help, I was able to refine my CV, my interview skills, as well as improve my overall confidence in my future career path.

Additionally, the individualistic nature of this programme meant that undergraduates, such as myself, could begin to build up a social network of likeminded individuals who could provide further support for future endeavours.

Overall, I had a fantastic experience with the mentoring programme, and I cannot recommend it enough for those of you who have a rough idea of what you want to do, but no idea of how to accomplish/achieve your goals.

Appendix 1

Expectations and Goals

Question: What are you hoping to gain from mentoring?

Answer:

Question: What are your Goals or areas for development?

Answer:



Appendix 2

SMART Goals

Goal:	Specific:	Measurable:	Achievable:	Relevant:	Time-Based:
E.g. Grow professional network	Using LinkedIn, I will connect with people from xx sector or organisation.	I will connect with three relevant people.	I have a LinkedIn profile and I know how to search for new contacts.	These new contacts will give me insight into the type of people that works at xx organisation, their experience, and qualifications	Review at next meeting on 1/1/24.

Appendix 3

Mentoring Agenda for First Meeting – Checklist


Contact details	Notes
Exchange contact details and agree best methods to contact (only provide personal mobile/email if you are happy to do so)	
Get to know each other	
Your educational and/or family background. Your career journey, choices and long term goals	
Expectations	
What you would like to achieve from the partnership/what your mentor can offer. Discuss each other's expectations of the programme and each other	
Plan of Action	
Discuss goals and negotiate focus for the mentoring programme. Map topics to discuss. Agree on number of meetings.	
Set boundaries	
Discuss times and locations for the meetings, consider each other's timing and location restrictions. Clarify understanding of confidentiality.	
Actions and follow up	
Agree to end each meeting by confirming the date/time/place of your next meeting and clarifying any action points. Discuss how you will monitor progress and clarify how you will proceed if any problems arise.	

Appendix 4


Mentoring Meetings Record

This template allows you to record objectives for each mentoring session and the key outcomes of each discussion you have with your mentor.


Meeting 1	
Aims and objectives for the mentoring session	
The key discussion points of your mentoring session	
Action points agreed	
Next meeting	Date: Time: Place:



Meeting 2	
Aims and objectives for the mentoring session	
The key discussion points of your mentoring session	
Action points agreed	
Next meeting	Date: Time: Place:




Meeting 3	
Aims and objectives for the mentoring session	
The key discussion points of your mentoring session	
Action points agreed	
Next meeting	Date: Time: Place:



Appendix 5

Reflection on Mentoring Experience

What did you most enjoy about the mentoring partnership?	
List 3 things that you have learned from your mentor?	
Is there anything that you would have done differently?	
Is there anything that you would like to ask a future mentor?	



Further Careers Support and Resources

UCD Careers Network joins the dots between your time at university and your future career and whatever stage you're at in your career planning, our experienced team of Career & Skills Consultants are here to help you make the most of your talents and to get ahead in life. You may find the following resources helpful:

MyCareer Platform

Overview: <https://youtu.be/24d8SqEz6ZM>

Our MyCareer platform has resources for everyone, including those with a vague plan, no plan, or a clear plan.

Careers workshops

We facilitate careers workshops covering a range of topics such as Cvs and Cover Letters, Interview Skills, Networking and LinkedIn. Check out the calendar of events on MyCareer and book into those that interest you.

Employer Events

We often invite employers to take part in careers events such as recruitment fairs, alumni panels or careers workshop series such as the 'Future Skills Programme'.

Book a one-to-one Careers Consultation

Students can book a 20-minute careers appointment through MyCareer. These can be on-campus or online and can cover a range of topics from checking your CV to exploring career options.

Jumpstart

This interactive toolkit provides some essential tips and practical steps to help international students on their employability journey:

<https://www.ucd.ie/careers/resourcesforinternationalstudents/>

