

Career Mentor Scheme



Mentee Training Guide & FAQs

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Welcome and Introduction from the Team

Congratulations on being accepted on to the Career Mentor Scheme!

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



The purpose of this guide is to

- Help you complete the mandatory training prior to being introduced to your mentor.
- Provide you with support throughout the scheme.
- Prepare you for a meaningful working relationship with your mentor; we have included suggestions for useful topics to discuss, and advice on navigating conversations.

You will be introduced to your mentor in early December/June (depending on the scheme you are joining). **Please do not contact your mentor (including via social media or LinkedIn), until we provide you with their contact details.**

We will send you updates during the scheme via a newsletter and check in on how things are going. Please reply briefly to these emails as it is useful for us to know that all is going well or if there are any issues you need our help with. Remember, the resources we share with you are for inspiration, as each partnership is unique.



The **FAQ section** at the end of this guide provides general advice, however you can contact the team if you have any questions - we are always here to help! This scheme is all about learning and developing in a safe environment, so please take advantage of the support available.

You can contact us by email on careermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk

Wishing you every success with your mentoring partnership!



Section 1

What is Mentoring?

Mentoring allows you to gain professional advice that is focused on improving your career aims and personal development. The partnership is for 6 months and it's important to be realistic about what can be achieved in this time. Keep this in mind when creating **your Action Plan and SMART goals** (more on this later).

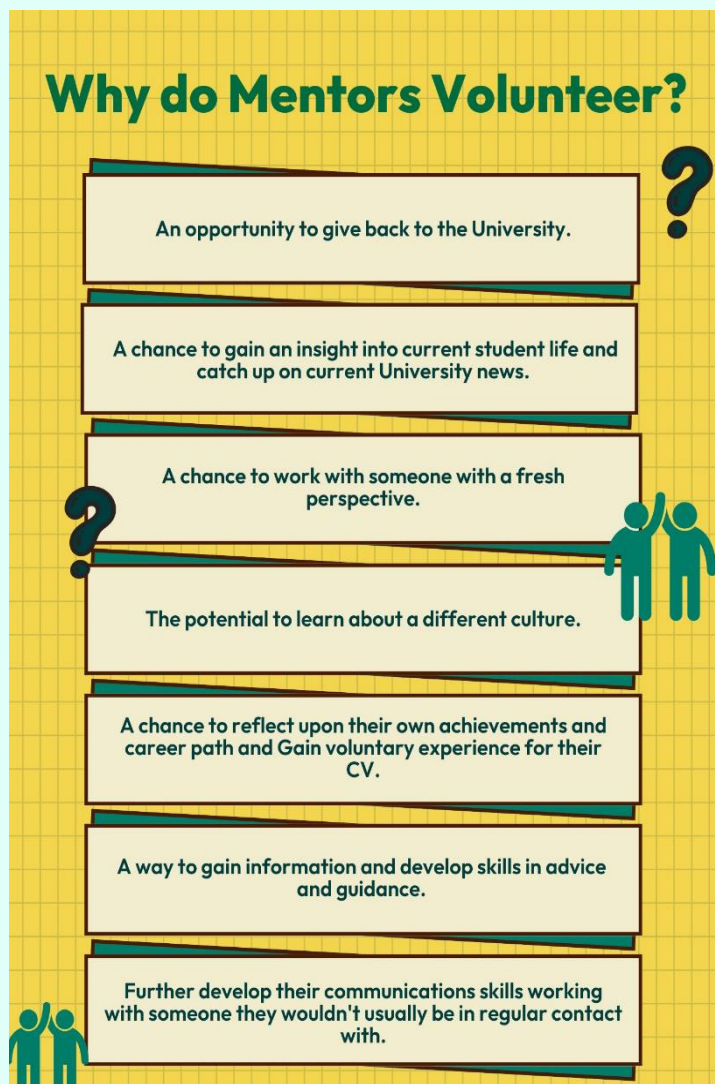
Mentoring is:	Mentoring is not:
An opportunity to make a professional connection.	An opportunity to ask for 'favours'. i.e. asking for a job, work experience or an internship; or an introduction to hiring managers.
A partnership that develops over 6 months (in this case), which encourages learning and development.	An opportunity to get direct sponsorship.
Focused on expanding horizons, thought processes and developing decision-making skills.	A platform for your mentor to complete work for you or make decisions on your behalf.
Focused on building your personal and professional development.	A gateway to access to your mentor's network contacts (although they may offer this, it is not an expectation, and you should not ask).
Personalised to you and your career aims.	Always task focused – discussions about your career can be just as useful.
An honest and supportive process.	The place to find answers to your personal problems.
Confidential (within appropriate boundaries).	A tutor-student relationship with a focus on improving your academic work or language ability.
	A friend-friend relationship with the focus being on personal development outside of the professional relationship.

Why do Mentors Volunteer?

Our mentors are professionals who give their time voluntarily and are highly valued by the University. We take time to forge positive relationships with them and they may also be engaged in other activities across the University.

You should always act in a respectful and professional way, keeping in mind that your mentor's interaction with you could influence their decisions as to how much time and support they wish to give to the University, and your fellow students, in future.

There are various reasons why mentors choose to volunteer, but ultimately, they have a desire to help you reach your *full* potential. These are some of the benefits of taking part in the scheme for mentors (it may give you some ideas of what you can talk to your mentor about, outside of your own development):



Expectations of Mentees

➤ Communicate Regularly

You should communicate with your mentor for a minimum of 1-2 hours per month for the full six months of the scheme, but it could be more if schedules allow. Set out timescales with your mentor at the beginning of the scheme and let them know if you will be unavailable for a period time (due to exams or have a holiday booked etc).

You are expected to take the lead in all communications, including sending the first initial email after introductions; being proactive in planning meetings and topics to discuss; and sending follow-up emails if needed.

➤ Talk to the team

We are here to help but can only support with problems we know about! Please keep us up to date with how the partnership is going, both the positives and challenges! We'll send newsletters during the scheme and check in with you, so you have an opportunity to feedback to us.

➤ Stay Professional

Some of the information given to you by your mentor may be confidential, including your mentor's contact details, which you need to keep private.

Please be courteous to your mentor and give plenty of notice if you cannot attend a meeting.

You are not permitted to ask for any favours directly including, but not limited to: introductions to their networks, work experience or jobs. Your mentor may offer these to you, if they are able to, but this should come organically from your mentor and not something you ask for.

➤ Complete Feedback

At the end of the scheme, you will need to complete the feedback form as part of the conditions of participating in the scheme. Feedback is valuable in helping us make improvements.



Benefits of Mentoring

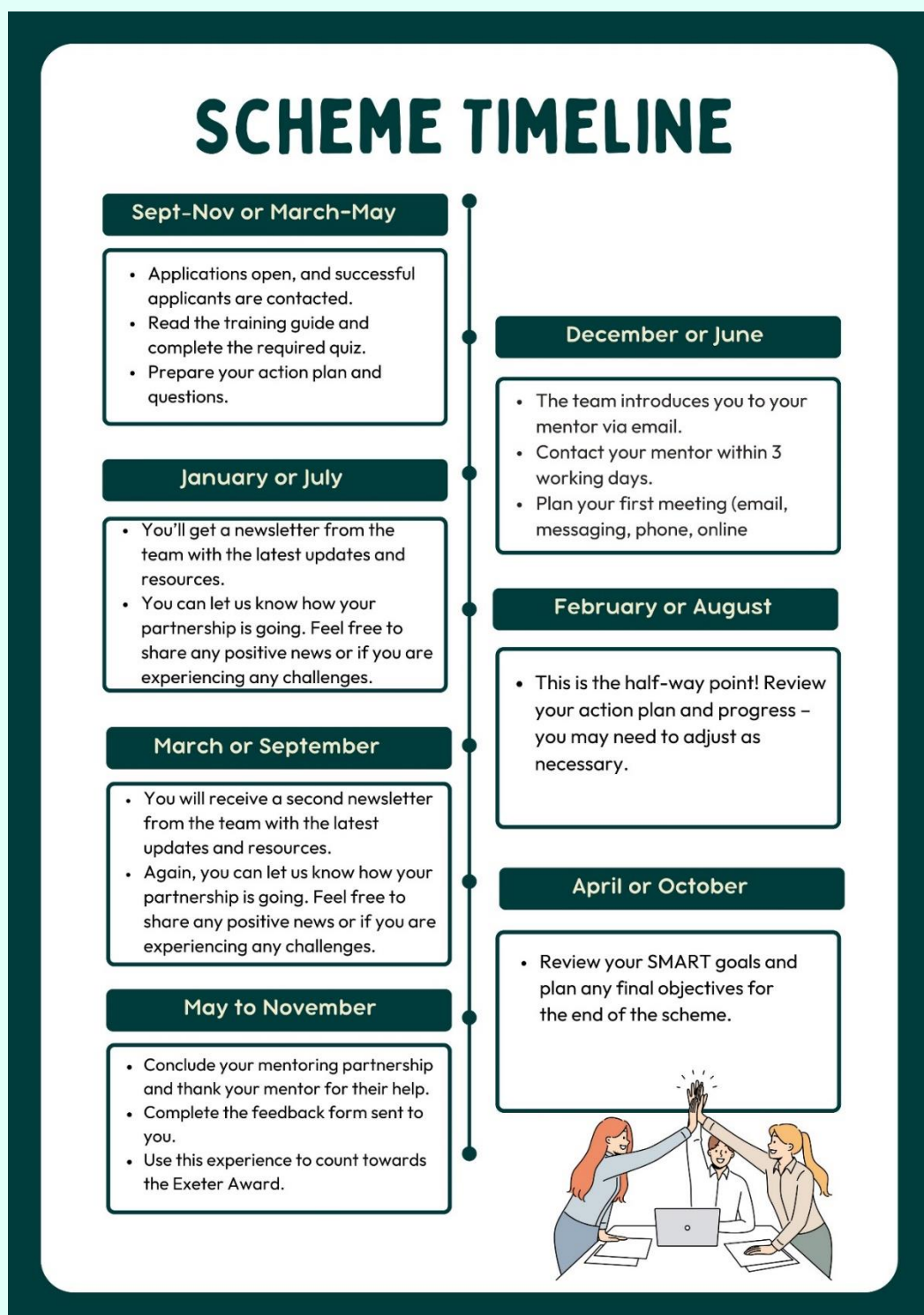
There is a lot you can gain from being mentored by an experienced professional. However, be aware of the limitations too. The following outlines what help is and isn't permissible:

You <i>can</i> ask for help with: You <i>cannot</i> ask for:	
Job hunting techniques including: Support reviewing your CV, covering letters and application forms. How to find and apply for work experience. Skills required for the workplace and how to develop these.	A job opportunity, work placement, or work shadowing opportunity.
Networking skills such as: • How to increase your network. • How to navigate networking groups and events. • Which professional bodies would be relevant to join.	Visa support or sponsorship (the University can provide advice, please see the FAQs).
Sector insights and typical work activities.	Access to their networks or contacts. This might be offered by your mentor but is not an expectation of the scheme.
Navigating personal and professional boundaries within the workplace.	Help with your academic work or language support (please see section X for support with this).
Accessing relevant media , e.g. industry magazines, blogs and podcasts.	Advice regarding personal issues (see the FAQs for how to access wellbeing support from the University).

Section 2 – Scheme Overview

Scheme Timeline

Below is an outline of the scheme's 6-month structure (depending on whether you are on the winter or summer scheme).



Section 3 – Your Partnership

What you can do to prepare

- ❖ 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 this is the right career for you? Partnerships will have different objectives depending on individual career aspirations, but you should have enough objectives to sustain the partnership over 6 months.
- ❖ **We recommend preparing 3-6 SMART goals prior to meeting your mentor.** This will help you establish clear ideas on how to reach those goals and get the most from the scheme. Use the suggestions below to get you started. You can either use the [Goals Worksheet](#) or create a separate record to keep track.

Job Hunting Objectives	Personal Development Objectives	Sector Related Career Support
Increase my knowledge of job-hunting resources	Improve my personal development skills (e.g. confidence building, listening skills)	How to gain professional contacts and improve networking skills
Improve the quality of my CV / job applications	Improve my knowledge of further education / professional courses	Increase my knowledge of sector entry requirements
Increase my knowledge of effective interview techniques		Better understand the pros/cons of the profession
Increase my knowledge of finding internships and work		Receive help finding work experience or job shadowing opportunities

Remember!

You are not bound by your objectives. You can keep reviewing and revising them during the scheme. If a goal you set at the beginning of the scheme is no longer relevant to your career planning feel free to amend it.

Setting Smart Objectives and Action Planning

Setting SMART objectives can help you clarify your ideas, focus your efforts, use time and resources productively, and increase your chances of realising your goals. Here's a breakdown of what a SMART objective is:

[Download the SMART goals chart here](#)

S	SPECIFIC	➤	Your goal is direct, detailed, and meaningful.
M	MEASURABLE	➤	Your goal is quantifiable to track progress or success.
A	ATTAINABLE	➤	Your goal is realistic and you have tools and/or resources to attain it.
R	RELEVANT	➤	Your goal aligns with your company mission
T	TIME-BASED	➤	Your goal has a deadline.

Once you have established your objectives and SMART Goals:

- ★ Populate your action plan.
- ★ Include the practical steps you should take to meet your SMART goals. Having an action plan will keep you on track and make the most of your time on the scheme.
- ★ Adjust your plan as your goals change.
- ★ Share it with your mentor so they can contribute.

[You can download a template action plan here](#) or feel free to design your own!

Beginning your Partnership

The First Email

Sending the first email can be daunting so we have provided an example to help you get started. The team are happy to give you some advice or review this for you if it helps. You can copy and paste the text below; but make sure that you personalise it and adjust the information so its relevant to you and your mentor.

Dear X

Thank you for agreeing to mentor me, I really appreciate your generous offer. I am in my 3rd year studying History at the Penryn campus and will be graduating next June. I am interested in a career in marketing, although I have not yet decided which specific area. I applied to the Career Mentor Scheme to gain a better understanding of the different roles available, as well as the recruitment process. I would like to build confidence in applying for jobs and to understand how to build networks. I am really interested in your career background and to hear about your career journey. It would be great to arrange a meeting with you, please could you let me know your availability.

Many thanks,

Joe

Points to Remember:

- ★ Thank them for this opportunity.
- ★ Introduce yourself and your broad aims for the scheme.
- ★ 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, contact careeermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk and we will make enquiries on your behalf.

Preparing to Meet your Mentor

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

- ✓ Read through their mentor profile (if you don't have a copy contact the team and we will provide you with one).
- ✓ Check their LinkedIn page.
- ✓ Research their business or organisation.
- ✓ Demonstrate that you are interested in their career by asking questions.



Questions you could ask your mentor?

ROLL THE DICE TO BREAK THE ICE

Take turns to roll the dice and answer the question next to the number you get.



	Could you share more about your educational background?
	How did you build a network, and what tips do you have for meaningful networking?
	Can you describe what a typical day at work involves for you?
	What resources (books, courses, networks) would you recommend for personal and professional growth?
	I'd love to hear more about your career journey. How did you get started, and what led you to where you are today?
	Which skills do you believe are essential for someone in your role/industry?

- ✓ Could you share more about your educational background?
- ✓ How did you build a network, and what tips do you have for meaningful networking?
- ✓ Can you describe what a typical day at work involves for you?
- ✓ What resources (books, courses, networks) would you recommend for personal and professional growth?
- ✓ How did you get started in your career, and what led you to where you are today?
- ✓ Which skills do you believe are essential for someone in your role/industry?
- ✓ What are some of the biggest challenges you've faced, and how did you handle them?
- ✓ How do you manage team conflicts or difficult relationships at work?
- What do you consider your greatest professional achievement?

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.

Meeting your Mentor

- **Planning a meeting** - propose a selection of dates and times, ideally with at least two weeks' notice, and remember to check if they are in the same time zone as you!
- **Meeting in person** - meet in a public space such as on campus, a café or library.
- **Keeping records** - if you would like to record any virtual meetings, ensure you have your mentor's permission.
- **Set an agenda** prior to the meeting, so all parties know what is to be discussed.
- **Close of meeting** - if your mentor has asked you to carry out any tasks check when the deadline is. Set an agenda for the next meeting and say thank you.

Section 4 – Your Mentoring Journey

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 scheme 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.**

Here are some examples of challenges you may experience and what you should do.

For a more comprehensive list, take a look at the [FAQs](#)

- **Situation: My academic workload has suddenly increased; I have exams; I have some personal issues; I'm feeling overwhelmed by my commitments; I have a holiday booked.**

Solution: Let your mentor know as soon as you are aware so expectations can be managed. If you are not comfortable with doing that contact careermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk and the team will contact your mentor on your behalf.

- **Situation: I'm feeling overwhelmed and not sure if I can continue with the scheme.**

Solution: As above, let your mentor or the team know as soon as possible. It might be that a solution can be found. Although it is tempting to disengage adjustments can be made to accommodate your situation.

➤ **Situation: I'm having difficulties with my mentor.**

Solution: Contact the team, let us know what the difficulties are, and we will we try to find a solution.

➤ **Situation: I haven't heard from my mentor after sending a follow up email.**

Solution: Contact the team and we will try to contact your mentor by alternative means.

Following up After Your Meetings

After each meeting it's a good idea to:

- ✓ Confirm any actions to be completed.
- ✓ Confirm the date and time for your next meeting or confirm that you will be in touch with suggested dates.
- ✓ Reflect on what was discussed.
- ✓ Think about what you might like to talk about in the next meeting.

Concluding the Scheme

During the 6-month scheme, your mentor has generously volunteered to help and guide you. When it's time to bring your partnership to a close, consider the following:

- ❖ Thank your mentor for their time and for sharing their expertise.
- ❖ End the relationship positively. You never know if a mentor may pop up later in your career!
- ❖ Share what you have learnt from your mentoring journey and what aspects you found the most helpful.
- ❖ Offer appropriate feedback to support your mentor's professional development.

Contact with Your Mentor After the Scheme

It is up to the discretion of the mentor whether they can continue mentoring you.

Not every mentor is able to offer help beyond your mentoring partnership. Mentors often volunteer for subsequent schemes or have other work commitments which means they may not be able to support you further. However, talk to your mentor towards the end of the scheme to see if they can have further support you, and how this would look for them.

Be sure that both parties have clear guidelines to manage expectations going forward if you continue contact.

Remember, any contact beyond the 6 months of the scheme would no longer be supported by the Career Mentor Scheme Team.

The Exeter Award

Completing the 6-month Career Mentor Scheme contributes towards [The Exeter Award](#). This is designed to:

- ✓ Enhance your employability and add value to your CV.
- ✓ Provide recognition from the University of Exeter for the activities you are participating in, as part of, and in addition to, your studies.
- ✓ Develop a range of skills to take forward into the graduate job market.
- ✓ Demonstrate to employers the skills and attributes that Exeter graduates have attained.



To submit your partnership as evidence for the Exeter Award, you need to complete the feedback form, which will be sent to you as the scheme draws to a close.

Section 5 - FAQs

Questions	Answers
Q. How do I contact my mentor?	A. We will send an introductory email to you and your mentor with both your email addresses and in most cases, their phone number. Email your mentor within 3 days to introduce yourself. Discuss with your mentor how they prefer to be contacted going forward.
Q. I've sent my mentor an introductory email but haven't received a response. What should I do?	A. Emails can go to junk boxes, especially from new email addresses. If your mentor hasn't replied within 2 weeks, send a polite follow-up email to check if they have received it. If you still haven't heard after a week, let the career mentor team know and we will contact them on your behalf.
Q. I can no longer make the meeting I've arranged with my mentor. What should I do?	A. It is important to prioritise your commitments to your mentor wherever possible. If you are running late, need to rearrange plans, or have no choice but to cancel, please contact your mentor as soon as possible. Explain the situation, apologise, and ask if it's possible to rearrange. You can suggest multiple alternative times to meet.
Q. What is the expected amount of contact?	A. 1-2 hours/month, but it can be more depending on both parties' availability.
Q. Why is my mentor not available as often as I expected?	A. You should expect your mentor to commit around 1-2 hours per month. You may need to adjust your plan in line with the time

	available. Also please bear in mind mentors can be busy and will have other commitments. Clear communication will ensure both partners have realistic expectations.
Q. I haven't heard from my mentor for a while. What should I do?	A. If you haven't heard from your mentor for a more than three weeks since the last meeting, send them a polite reminder. If you still do not receive a response, contact the team and we will help.
Q. I'm having difficulties with my mentor. What should I do?	A. Contact the Career Mentor team as soon as possible with the details, and we will support you to find a solution.
Q. My mentor has given me a deadline to complete a task, but I don't think I can meet it. What should I do?	A. The key is always communication! • When agreeing your action plan be realistic about what you can achieve given your workload and other commitments. • Inform your mentor of busy periods e.g. assignment deadlines, travel plans, non-academic commitments etc. • If you cannot keep an appointment or meet a deadline, let your mentor know as soon as possible, and suggest when you will be able to reschedule/complete the task.
Q. I'm feeling overwhelmed and am not sure I can continue with the scheme. What should I do?	A. Firstly, bear in mind you are only required to commit 1-2 hours per month, anything above this is optional. Speak to your mentor about how you can adjust your plan. You may decide that you can continue with less contact than initially hoped and still benefit from the experience.

	The career mentor team can also speak to your mentor on your behalf if you prefer.
Q. I don't feel mentoring is relevant for me anymore e.g. I have changed my career plans or found a job. What should I do?	A. The mentoring partnership is focused on your needs, and these can change along the way. • If you have completed all objectives or they are no longer relevant, investigate more general employability advice such as CV and application support; networking and soft-skills development. • If you've explored all avenues and still feel you have nothing else to talk about or you have found a job, please speak with the career mentor team about withdrawing. • If you decide to withdraw, please thank your mentor for their help and let them know what you have gained from the experience as they really like to know.
Q. My mentor has offered me a work-related opportunity, can I accept?	A. Yes you can accept an introduction to a colleague or work experience/shadowing opportunity. This should be done at the mentor's discretion and not by request.
Q. Are the conversations with my mentor confidential?	A. Yes, conversations with your mentor must remain confidential, in terms of what you share with each other. This also applies to: • Any shared personal and commercial information e.g. your mentor's role or organisation. Please do not share this with anyone else and act with discretion. • There may be some situations where it's necessary to break confidentiality, e.g. if one party has

	concerns that the other is a danger to themselves or to others, or if there is the possibility of a serious crime being committed. If you have any concerns, please contact the Career Mentor Scheme team.
Q. I have a disability/health condition that is affecting my mentoring partnership. What should I do?	A. We recommend sharing any relevant health and disability information with your mentor so that they can offer you maximum support. We understand the decision to disclose information is a very personal one. If you decide to do so it will be treated in the strictest confidence. Further information on disclosing sensitive information can be found on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion webpages. If you prefer, the team can speak with your mentor on your behalf. Please contact us to discuss how we can best support you.
Q. I need wellbeing support; can my mentor provide this?	A. Your mentor can't support you in a wellbeing capacity. However, there are dedicated wellbeing support services available to you through the University. • You can access information here. • If you need urgent support, you can find out how to access it here. • You can book an appointment with someone from the Wellbeing team, either for a phone or in-person appointment. • Quick Query appointments are available, which are 20-minute slots bookable on the day.

	You can also contact the team directly at wellbeing@exeter.ac.uk and Accessibility@exeter.ac.uk
Q. I need academic support; can my mentor provide this?	A. Your mentor can't support you in an academic capacity where this is not linked to your career. It's best to speak with your personal tutor and the Study Skills team for support.
Q. I need support with visas / working in the UK, can my mentor provide this information?	A. Your mentor can't support you with visa questions or how to find work in the UK. You can find support for this at the Career Zone and on the International Student Support webpages.
Q. I have found the Career Mentor Scheme such a positive experience. Can I apply again?	A. Yes you can take part as many times as you like up to 3 years post-graduation however, you are unable to choose the same mentor twice.
Q. My mentor has been great! Can I continue the partnership after the scheme finishes?	A. Yes, it is possible and does happen. This will depend on your mentor's circumstances as they may be helping other students or graduates on subsequent schemes or work commitments. Discuss the possibility with your mentor towards the end of the scheme. Be sure that both parties have clear guidelines to manage expectations going forward if you continue contact. Remember, any contact beyond the 6 months of the scheme would no longer be supported by the Career Mentor Scheme Team.
Q. I have heard there are other mentoring schemes available - JP Morgan, Law Division & Environment Agency. Can I participate in these	A. We run several specialist schemes alongside the central Career Mentor Scheme. You can apply to these schemes if you meet the relevant eligibility, however,

alongside the central Career Mentor Scheme?	be realistic about how much you are able to commit to.
Q. I have heard about Ask An Alum. Can I participate in this whilst I'm a mentee?	A. Yes, you can. Sometimes it is helpful to have more than one viewpoint or ask questions that your mentor might not know. Ask An Alum is open all year round except during the summer break and you can apply up to 3 years post-graduation. Find out more about the scheme here.
Q. How do I contact the support team?	Abi, Paula and Sarah are happy to help you at any time. We would prefer that you contacted us so we can support you in whichever way we can, then for you to withdraw from the scheme. The easiest way to contact us is to send an email to careermentorscheme@exeter.ac.uk and we will aim to reply within 2 working days.

Section 6 – Resources

The University provides a wealth of resources you can utilise during the scheme.

[Please refer to our webpage here for the resources available.](#)