

Cara Mentoring Scheme Handbook for mentors and mentees

This handbook has been prepared to explain what the scheme aims to achieve, how it runs and help address any potential questions mentors and mentees may have.

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What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a time-limited, goal-orientated relationship that supports skill and career development through confidential one-on-one conversations. It involves an experienced person (mentor) providing guidance and support to another person (mentee). The mentor may be older or younger than the mentee, but the mentor will always have expertise or experience in a specific area that the mentee is interested in.

Objective of the scheme

The objective of the scheme is to provide Fellows with **individualised** support that is not often readily available. One-to-one mentoring support has the potential to bridge the skills gap to navigate through UK academia (and industry).

Although each individual relationship will be unique, the scheme aims to cover some/most of the areas listed below. This scheme **is not intended to cover immigration advice or the financial aspects of the Fellows' placements**. Mentors can provide pastoral support if needed, but we understand that not all the Mentors have the skills or willingness to do so, especially given our Fellows' background. **Setting boundaries** during the first meeting is important for the two parties to be comfortable with the arrangements.

- career planning
- networking and profile building
- working internationally
- CVs and applications
- publication process
- securing research funding
- professional behaviour
- academic acculturation
- equality issues – disability, LGBT+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual plus), ethnic minorities, religious beliefs, political opinions etc
- promotion and progression
- managing challenging situations and conversations
- work-life balance
- pastoral coaching

The role of the mentor

Mentors act on a voluntary basis and have years of experience in academia or industry. The role of the mentor is to help their mentee **find their own solutions** to the issues/goals/challenges which the mentee wishes to address.

Mentors seek to **understand** fully mentees' needs and to speak openly about their ideas and provide advice. The mentor's role is to **share** their experience, insights, and **feedback** to help **guide** the mentee in the achievement of their goals and needs.

Listening plays a big role to understand the mentee's needs and to uncover key learning opportunities that support those goals. Often, our Fellows have little experience in the job market in the UK (or the EU), therefore **asking questions** to help develop the mentees' (and your) understanding of their needs is crucial.

What is expected from a mentor?

The mentoring relationship is **mentee-led**, in that the mentee will be responsible for setting the agenda, planning goals, and completing actions that have arisen from/been agreed on in the meetings (with the support of the mentor).

Although this mentoring scheme is mentee-led, we invite mentors to **take the initiative** and approach the mentee in the first instance.

Mentors are expected to be **pro-active** in providing advice but must avoid being **judgemental** and/or overbearing. Additionally, whilst a mentor can guide and provide support and encouragement, which has the potential to assist career progression, the mentor **cannot do the work** on behalf of the mentee and/or assume a problem solver role to protect the mentee from experiences.

While maintaining **mutual respect**, it is expected that mentors and mentees will communicate openly and agree on **boundaries** (contact method, frequency, location, confidentiality, off-limit topics, etc). To help with this process, we have created a template for a **mentoring agreement** – this can be found [here](#) (p 8 of this document). We strongly encourage participants to use this agreement, which has been created as a reference document where both parties agree what their commitments are during the period they work together.

Mentors **will not** provide immigration or financial advice. This is outside of the remit of this programme. If assistance is needed in this regard, please get in touch with Cara. We encourage mentors to recognise other areas where they might not be the best suited to provide support and **signpost** mentees. If despite working together to figure out who might assist, you cannot come up with the relevant contacts, please get in touch with Cara.

Some Cara Fellows (or their families) have experienced traumatic events – brief information on how to address such issues if they come up and signposting will be provided to participants when the scheme starts.

Cara will contact both parties to provide a very brief mid-scheme review ([form](#)) and a final evaluation survey ([mentor](#); [mentee](#)).

Benefits for the mentor

The mentoring relationship can be a very valuable learning and rewarding experience for the mentor. Benefits of the scheme for mentors can include:

- Helping develop the potential of others
- Enhanced interpersonal and people/relationship management skills
- Personal satisfaction and gratification
- Improved listening and support skills

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- Giving back
- Better understanding of colleagues' needs, particularly early career academics
- New perspectives
- Increased self-reflection
- Leadership capabilities
- Potential networking/collaboration

The role of the mentee

Mentees are **Cara Fellows** who sign up to the scheme. Mentees are either **postgraduates** or **postdoctoral** Fellows who are undergoing placements facilitated by Cara.

The role of the mentee is to be **proactive** in the relationship by **setting up the agenda** for meetings **based on their needs** and follow up if required. Mentees outline and establish their **goals/expectations** based on the amount of help needed. Therefore, **providing a plan** before each meeting can be beneficial for the relationship. [Tip: send anything that you wish your mentor to see in advance, so they have time to review it].

Often, mentoring meetings are reports of how the objectives set in the previous meeting(s) have progressed. New things can arise and a quick email to alert the mentor prior to the meeting is helpful.

The role of the mentee is to **actively participate and collaborate** with the mentor to identify key strengths and weaknesses. It is also important to **keep track** of their discussions for potential follow-up meetings with mentors.

What is expected from a mentee?

Mentees are expected to **lead** with their needs and objectives in a clear and explicit manner. This will enable mentees to **take ownership** of their own development with the support and guidance of their mentor. They should feel motivated to **communicate** their goals and preferences whilst remaining realistic about their overall plan. With the mentor's support, they should **identify** specific areas they would like to develop.

Mentees are also expected to be **proactive**, open to ideas and to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the mentors. They are expected to **accept** constructive feedback and **ask** for strategies to improve in the identified areas. They should have a willingness and commitment to **learn** from their mentors.

Although mentoring has the potential to be beneficial to mentees' skills and career development, it is **not a magic wand** that automatically creates success. Mentors are there to help find solutions using their experience and knowledge but cannot make decisions on behalf of the mentee or to solve all problems.

While maintaining **mutual respect**, as stated in the previous section, it is expected that mentors and mentees will communicate openly and agree on **boundaries** (contact method, frequency, location, confidentiality, off-limit topics, etc).

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Mentors **will not** provide immigration or financial advice. This is outside the remit of this programme. If assistance is needed in this regard, please get in touch with Cara.

Mentees are also expected to complete mid-term and final evaluation forms. This is a standard part of the mentoring scheme process and helps to ensure that best practices are followed and that the scheme is fit for purpose.

Benefits for the mentee

Benefits of the scheme for mentees can include:

- Getting assistance in defining professional career goals
- Increase in confidence
- Building career development skills
- Gaining knowledge on academic sector
- Increasing professional connections and networking
- Higher degree of integration/acclimatisation

Time commitment

Given that Fellows have a limited time in the UK, the scheme aims to have mentors and mentees meet (in person/virtually) every **6 to 8 weeks**. Mentors are generously providing their time free and alternative timings can be discussed if needed. Specific timing and frequency will be agreed between the two parties.

We ask that mentors and mentees initially commit to **6 months**, with the possibility to extend.

If at the end of the mentoring relationship, the mentor wants to continue their participation in the Scheme, we ask that they express their interest and Cara will re-assign them to a different mentee.

Medium

Ideally the meetings will be held **face-to-face**. However, alternative arrangements can be made if mentors and mentees are geographically distant. It is very likely that for the coming months, **virtual** meetings will be the only possibility. **Videocall software** will be encouraged over phone to help in building rapport as the best alternative to face-to-face meetings (examples of this include Zoom, FaceTime, Microsoft Teams, Whereby, etc).

All our Fellows are non-native English speakers, being able to see the face of the mentor will also support comprehension. Being able to see each other can also offset any potential misunderstandings stemming from cultural differences.

Confidentiality

It is important that both parties feel able to talk honestly and openly and are confident that what is discussed during the sessions will not be shared without prior agreement. A confidentiality statement has been included at the end of this handbook. We ask that all participants sign this before the start of the mentoring relationship.

Additionally, having a conversation at the start where both mentor and mentee agree upon what they understand as 'confidentiality' can help develop a trusting relationship. A few examples of what this might look like have been listed below:

- What is discussed in the meetings stays between the two parties (and will stay this way even beyond the end of the relationship)
- Any email correspondence will only be seen by the two parties
- Giving general feedback to Cara for the smooth running of the scheme is acceptable.
- If there is any problem and Cara's support is required, either the mentor or mentee can talk in confidence to the Cara contact point – Laura Puiggali (puiggali@cara.ngo).

Addressing issues

The relationship between mentor and mentee can be complex. If at any point there are any concerns that cannot be solved between the two parties, please get in touch with the Cara contact point. If despite their best efforts, either party is not comfortable with the arrangements, Cara will operate a 'graceful exit' policy, which allows either party to terminate the relationship. There will be the option to re-match and no negative repercussion to either party. Depending on the number of participants, it may not be possible to provide a re-match.

Next steps and links

To sign up for the mentoring scheme, please **express your interest** submitting the relevant form.

- **Mentors** – please submit [this form](#)
- **Mentees** – please submit [this form](#).

Once an application has been submitted, it cannot be amended manually. If you need to make any changes, please contact Laura Puiggali (puiggali@cara.ngo).

Matching

Once the form is received, the Cara office will **match profiles** based on the mentees' needs and the information available. We encourage participants to have a **brief initial videocall** to ensure that both parties are happy with this arrangement before fully committing. If they are not happy with the match, they can decline and request a re-match. This will have no negative repercussion to either party.

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Cara will match mentors and mentees according to the data available. Cara will not consider requests based on participants' identities.

Tips for the first meeting

- Keep it short
- Agree boundaries – see [agreement template](#)
- Break the ice and get to know each other – share experiences/background
- Build rapport (e.g. find an interest in common)
- Discuss goals/needs/objectives
- Agree on type of support
- Agree the next steps

Cara will carry out **monitoring and evaluation** to ensure that best practices are followed and that the scheme is fit for purpose.

Mentorship Agreement Template

The purpose of this template is to assist you in setting expectations and the scope of your relationship and establish trust between the two parties. We strongly encourage mentors and mentees to reflect upon the following sections and agree on the terms of their relationship. This is meant to be a guide, so please do change this template to meet your specific needs.

[1] Goals

What do you hope to achieve as a result of this relationship? (i.e. explore career opportunities, obtain knowledge of academic environment, networking skills, etc) How will we know this is working?

[2] Confidentiality

Beyond agreeing to confidentiality ([see Confidentiality Statement](#)), What does confidentiality mean to you? Do you agree that what is discussed in the meetings stays between the two parties (and will stay this way even beyond the end of the relationship)? Will any email correspondence only be seen by the two parties? Are there any exceptions to this? (i.e. Giving general feedback to Cara for the smooth running of the scheme; contacting Cara in confidence if there is any problem and their support is required)

[3] Meeting frequency, medium and location

How often will you meet? Where will you meet? What means of communication will you use? Personal or business means only? Contact between meetings - will there be any? If so, how frequently, and by what means?

[4] Feedback to each other

Following up via email after sessions about what worked, and how to go forward might be useful. Is this something you expect? What format would this take? How do you want to provide and receive feedback?

[5] Boundaries

What is the remit of the relationship? Are there any off-limit topics? What is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour?

[6] Relationship termination, re-matching or leaving the programme

If either party feels the relationship is unproductive or is unhappy, the relationship can be ended. Please contact puiggali@cara.ngo to discuss this. Cara will operate a 'graceful exit' policy with no negative repercussion to either party. Depending on the number of participants, it may not be possible to provide a re-match.

Mentor's Signature _____ Mentee's Signature _____ Date _____

Confidentiality Statement

This Statement specifies what information, provided to and discussed between the mentor, [name], and mentee, [name], will remain confidential, and not be disclosed to any third party without the express written consent of both mentor and mentee.

However, both mentor and mentee agree:

- To provide general feedback to Cara to effectively evaluate and develop the Mentoring Scheme and
- When additional support is required, to approach Cara for assistance to discuss any problems/concerns in confidence with the Cara contact point.

[Also in compliance with the current data protection legislation, the personal information you provide to Cara including sensitive details, such as ethnic origin and religion, is subject to the Privacy Notice you agree to in your application form and the Privacy Policy on Cara’s website.]

Mentor’s Signature _____ Mentee’s Signature _____ Date _____