

Plant Science Research Staff Mentoring Scheme: QuickStart Guide v2

(based on Whittle Mentoring Steering Group, May 2015)

Aim of Scheme

- Provide support to research staff to find a mentor for their personal and professional development and establish a successful mentoring relationship

How does the Plant Science scheme work?

Option 1- Internal Mentor: if you are just starting as a postdoc, then your mentor may be working in the department and we can help you identify this person.

- Contact the mentoring committee and have an initial discussion with a member to discuss mentoring needs and potential mentors from within the department.
- Contact your potential mentor and begin the mentoring relationship
- If your initial attempts to get a mentor are unsuccessful, contact again the mentoring committee to get additional options for a mentor

Option 2- External Mentor: If you are more experienced and are looking for a mentor outside the department, then we can help you form support groups or find buddies who can support you in your search for an external mentor.

- Contact the mentoring committee and you will be paired with peers who are also looking for external mentor.
- Initial groups are setup to maximise diversity within a group i.e. we try to pair people from different labs and different level of experience so people can gain broader perspective and meet new people
- Meet up with your peer support group and start discussing your mentoring needs and potential mentors.
- Contact your potential mentor and begin the mentoring relationship
- If your initial attempts to get a mentor are unsuccessful, contact again support group to get additional options for a mentor

Practical Guide to starting the mentoring

When/where should we meet?

- Mentor and mentee need to agree the frequency of regular meetings. As a guideline, a new post-doc should probably meet once a month or so until they are settled, and every two months after that.
- Mentors should always have an open door! Mentees will sometimes need a quick answer, or have an immediate issue that needs urgent attention.
- Agree in advance about the length of the meeting, usually at least half an hour.
- Meeting away from work is ideal, failing that somewhere private (e.g. a meeting room).

What do we talk about?

Everything must be held in the strictest confidence, so that the mentee is free to discuss anything they want to raise.

- The Mentee should be in the driving seat. Is there something in particular that you need help/advice with? Tell your Mentor when you arrange the meeting.

- The meeting should be structured
 1. Identify the purpose of the meeting.
 2. Analyse the current situation.
 3. Explore Possibilities and Preferred Options.
 4. Commit to specific actions if appropriate.

- Before the meeting, the mentor and mentee should download and print out the crib sheets. These will help to give you some guidelines to stay on track.

End of the Mentoring Relationship

- No mentoring relationship is meant to last forever, and not all of them will work – much depends on the personal chemistry between the two of you. With this in mind, the default will be for people to change mentor every year.

Training

- We plan to run a mentorship training session in the near future. Sharon Saunders (from PPD) will run a training session about 'Getting the most from mentoring' (date to be announced).

Feedback

This is a new scheme, and we will need to do some simple things to see if it will work.

In particular, we ask you to:

1. **Let us know when you've met.** Mentees should complete after each meeting the incredibly-quick online form:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/mentoring_records

2. Please come along to the postdoc meetings, and share your thoughts.
3. We will run some short surveys in the future. Any feedback can be provide via the anonymous online form:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/mentoring_feedback

Resources

The quickstart and cribs will be available soon on our Plant Science Website.

This scheme will only succeed with your participation.

We greatly appreciate the investment of your time, and hope that we will all reap the benefits.