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School of Computer Science Mentoring Guidelines Handbook

Academic Year 2016/17

Key Dates:

April

Recruitment of Mentors

From May until August

Matching of Mentors and Mentees

Summer Vacation

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

Convener:

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Coordinator:

Runa Reno
Current Masters Student
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A guide for mentors and mentees

CAPOD and the School of Computer Science have designed this mentoring scheme to help new Masters students settle in and make the most of their time from the very beginning of their studies. Transitioning into university life can be a challenging process, particularly in terms of coming to a new University, town or even country. 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 preferences.

What is the Computer Science Mentoring Scheme?

The scheme enables new Masters students to get the information they need to help them settle into the Computer Science course, and to encourage engagement and learning from current Masters students. A mentor is a volunteer student the current Masters cohort, who is available to their mentee to provide support and guidance ahead of their arrival in St Andrews. 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 around a series of virtual 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 end of semester two through to the end of the summer – September 2017 (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 anxious about the adjustment to beginning a Masters course. The scheme will help you get prepared for your studies, advise you about how best to 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 Coordinator 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 share notes or materials from their studies)
- 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
- Dictate to your mentee what they should or shouldn't do
- Make requests that may put the other person in a difficult situation (eg, 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

You will be notified when a suitable mentoring match is made and emailed details about your new mentor/mentee.

Contact can take various forms: 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.

In past iterations of the scheme, typically mentees ask between 5-10 questions of their mentors over the course of their mentoring partnership.

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 Dr Dharini Balasubramaniam and by the student Coordinator, Runa Reno. The student coordinator is responsible for running the programme online, and for organising the matches between students. The student coordinator 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 the Student Coordinator. If you don't think the assigned pairing will work or feel at all uncomfortable in your mentor / mentee relationship, please contact the Student coordinator immediately.