

Discover Postgrad TAUGHT STUDY AND YOU

Meet a Postgrad

A mentoring scheme for
undergraduate students

Advice for Postgraduate
Volunteers

2018-19

Thank you for volunteering to be involved in Meet a Postgrad!

Meet a Postgrad is a mentoring scheme offered as part of the Discover Postgrad programme to help students understand what postgraduate taught study (PGT) is like and decide whether PGT study is the right option for them.

How the Scheme Works

Based on the questionnaire you filled in when you registered, you will be paired with a final-year undergraduate currently exploring the possibility of PGT study. You will be provided with the mentee's name, course and university email address.

Following your introductory emails, we ask that you initiate a minimum of **one exchange** with your mentee **before the end of term**.

Please begin by sending a short email to your mentee in which you introduce yourself and invite them to ask questions. **Please aim to send this within 5 days of being paired with your mentee.**

Depending on the preferences of you and your mentee, your interactions may be:

- further emails
- meeting up for a coffee (a voucher is available to support this – see below)
- taking your mentee to a research seminar or lecture (please check with the tutor or convenor before doing so)
- exchanges via social media (if willing to connect via social media channels)
- telephone or Skype conversation (if willing to share phone numbers or Skype usernames)

We'd encourage you to meet at least once in person if both you and your buddy are willing. However, if either of you only wishes to communicate via email that is fine (neither of you should feel under pressure to meet or communicate through other media). If you do meet, please do so on campus or in a public place, not in each other's rooms or houses.

Should you experience any difficulties at any point during the scheme, please email the programme lead, Jenn Coates at: discoverpostgrad@leeds.ac.uk

After a minimum of one proactive exchange with your mentee you can decide whether or not you're willing to continue the mentoring relationship. If you wish to end the mentoring at this point you can make this clear by sending a short final message such as:

I hope that I've answered all your questions sufficiently? Unfortunately, I can't offer any further support – but you can always contact the course admissions tutor or Careers Service for more information. Best of luck with deciding what to do next!

You will be sent an evaluation form after the mentoring scheme ends for you to share your thoughts on how it has gone.

What is expected of you

You **should**...

- start the mentoring process by sending a welcome email introducing yourself to your assigned mentee within 5 days
- follow up proactively with your mentee at least once
- share your own experiences of PGT study, giving full, detailed, and honest answers to relevant questions
- offer additional information if you think this would help your mentee
- make it clear if you don't know the answer to a question and instead point them to the resources at the end of this guide
- acknowledge that any negative experiences you had won't necessarily apply to everyone
- be open, approachable and professional throughout
- respond to exchanges from your mentee within 5 working days
- make it clear whether you'd be willing to meet in person for coffee or a lecture, set up a telephone call, or if you'd rather communicate through email
- make it clear whether or not you're willing to stay in contact after the programme ends

You **shouldn't**...

- feel that you need to be an expert on everything e.g. funding, careers
- offer advice or information when you're not sure of the answer
- feel pressured to only share your positive experiences
- tell your mentee what to do
- create false expectations
- get emotionally involved or act as a counsellor on personal issues
- agree to maintain contact after the programme ends if you don't have the time or feel comfortable doing so
- share contact details such as phone numbers or social media usernames unless you are comfortable doing so (nor expect your mentee to do so)
- meet in private places such as rooms or houses

Confidentiality

Your name, course and email address will be shared with your mentee. However, they will be asked to only use the information for this purpose, and to not forward your details to anyone else. Similarly, we ask that you don't pass on their details to anyone else without their consent, and that you only use them for the purposes of this mentoring scheme. You need not share other contact details (e.g. phone numbers) unless you are happy to do so.

What might I be asked?

There are no set questions that mentee will ask, but common questions might include:

- Why did you choose this course?
- How are you enjoying your course?
- How did you find the application process?
- How did you write your personal statement?
- Does your course include a research project / work experience / exams / coursework...?
- What have you found different about PGT study compared to UG?
- How big have you found the transition from UG to PGT?
- What is the teaching like?
- What is the workload like?
- How much choice have you had in choosing your course modules?
- What have you found challenging about PGT study?
- Do you know what you want to do afterwards?
- How do you maintain a good work//life balance?
- What is the postgraduate community like?
- Do you take part in any extra-curricular activities, clubs or societies?
- Do you have a part-time job while taking your PGT course?

In preparation, it might be useful for you to think about the types of questions you had when you were considering your course – you may even think of something they don't ask but you feel might be worth knowing!

The key thing to remember is we're not expecting you to be an expert on everything! If you don't know the answer, you might point your mentee to the course tutor, the careers service or to one of information websites listed at the end of this guide.

If in doubt contact the programme lead, Jenn Coates at discoverpostgrad@leeds.ac.uk

Meeting with your mentee

Meeting up in person can be a good way of having an informal chat about postgraduate study. We'd encourage you to invite your mentee to meet up in person if you both feel comfortable doing so.

If you meet it is important to do so in a public place rather than personal rooms or houses, so two options might be:

1) *Meeting for Coffee*

We can supply a coffee voucher so that you can meet in a university cafe. To get your voucher, email Jenn on discoverpostgrad@leeds.ac.uk confirming when you are meeting and copying in your mentee. We won't be able to give you a voucher unless they have been included in the email. You can arrange to either collect your voucher in person or have it posted to your term-time address.

2) Take your mentee to a lecture or research seminar

You might offer to take your mentee to one of your research seminars or lectures. This will give them a taster of what PGT study is like. It is important to ask your lecturer's permission in advance. This will ensure that they are prepared for your guest, and they may also be able to advise on which lecture might be the most suitable.

FAQs

1) My mentee isn't responding to my emails / I haven't heard from my mentee for several weeks. What should I do?

If you haven't heard from your mentee a week after your initial email, please get in touch with Jenn on discoverpostgrad@leeds.ac.uk and we will try to find out if there is a reason why they are not responding.

After responding to any initial questions in their first email, don't worry if you don't hear from them again immediately. However, if you haven't heard from them after a couple of weeks, we ask that you send a follow up email reminding them that you are happy to answer any further questions they might have. If you still get no response, please let us know.

2) My mentee is sending me lots of emails and I am too busy to reply to them all

This is an informal scheme and the only expectation is that you make at least one proactive communication with your mentee. It is at your discretion whether you would like to do more than this. If your mentee emails you at a point when you are particularly busy, send an email explaining this and let them know when you will be able to reply. You can politely end the mentoring relationship if you get too busy, however please do let both the mentee and the scheme coordinator know, in case the mentee is looking for more advice or guidance and we are able to set them up with a new mentor.

3) How can I offer advice to a student who's not thinking of doing my exact PGT course?

Where requested, we try our best to match students as closely as we can based on experience/background, though we may not be able to pair you with someone from the same subject. However, general advice from PGT students can be equally useful and informative (e.g. academic transition from UG to PGT, work/life balance etc.) and some UGs may be considering a change of subject for PGT. Just try to answer your mentee's questions as best you can. If you have any difficulties, please contact the Programme lead.

4) How should I respond if I've not had a wholly positive experience of PGT study?

We're aware that things don't always work out as originally expected and it's important that UG students are aware of this too. You should be honest and realistic when giving advice, but also stress that this is your personal experience and may not represent the views of others on your course (or the general PGT student population).

5) What should I do if my mentee wants to meet up/ exchange phone numbers / link up on social media but I don't want to?

Although we'd encourage you to meet in person, any contact beyond email is at your discretion and your mentee will have been made aware of this.

You should be clear with your mentee from the outset about what you are willing to do. If you only wish to be contacted by email, say so, and only offer to meet in person or exchange further contact details if you are comfortable doing so. If you experience any difficulties, or feel that your mentee is pressurising you, contact the programme lead.

6) Can I help them with their application form/statement?

It's fine to share your experience of applying and writing your statement (what you included, how you structured it, etc.). You may even consider sharing your own application if you would feel happy doing so. However, you should also recommend that they speak to their course tutor and book an appointment at the Careers Service to get expert advice.

7) I no longer have time/no longer want to act as a mentor, what do I do?

If you change your mind about acting as a mentor due to other commitments, please email Jenn on discoverpostgrad@leeds.ac.uk as soon as possible to let her know. Hopefully there will be another Postgrad student available who will be able to take your place if you no longer feel able to commit.

Initial Email

You should:

- send this from your university email account
- introduce yourself
- explain what PGT course you are studying (or studied if you are now a PGR student)
- give an indication of what you can answer questions about
- be clear whether you would prefer to communicate via email only, or whether you would be willing to meet in person and/or take your buddy to a lecture/seminar in future.

For example:

Dear ,

My name is ... I'm a postgraduate student studying....

I have volunteered to take part in the 'Meet a Postgrad' scheme and am willing to share with you my experiences of taught postgraduate study.

I would be happy to answer questions you might have about postgraduate study via email. In future we might also meet for a chat over coffee, or I could see if my tutor would allow you to attend one of my seminars with me, if you would find that helpful.

The kind of questions I could help you with might be things about:

- *why I went onto PGT study*
- *how PGT study differs from UG*
- *my experience of applying for PGT*
- *what my course is/was like*
- *Work-life balance during PGT study*

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Contact Details

Discover Postgrad - Jenn Coates - Discoverpostgrad@leeds.ac.uk

Useful links and resources

Careers Service (support provided for postgraduate applications)

http://careerweb.leeds.ac.uk/info/12/further_study

General

University of Leeds PGT courses: http://www.leeds.ac.uk/info/101000/masters_courses

HEFCE 'Steps to Postgraduate Study: A Guide to Asking the Right Questions about Taught Postgraduate Study in the UK': <http://postgradsteps.hefce.ac.uk/>

Finding courses across the UK: <https://www.findamasters.com/>;
<https://targetpostgrad.com/>; www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study/masters-degrees;

Applications

How to apply - University of Leeds:

www.leeds.ac.uk/info/101040/applying/86/how_to_apply_for_masters_courses

General advice: www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study/masters-degrees/applying-for-a-masters-degree

Fees and Finance

Masters Fees: www.leeds.ac.uk/info/101050/fees_and_costs/90/masters_fees

Living Expenses: www.leeds.ac.uk/info/101050/fees_and_costs/29/living_expenses

Loans and Scholarships (University of Leeds): www.leeds.ac.uk/info/130536/funding

Government loan scheme: www.gov.uk/postgraduate-loan

Money Saving Expert: www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/postgraduate-loans

Open Days

University of Leeds postgraduate open days: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/#slide4>

Postgraduate Fairs www.postgradfair.co.uk; www.findamasters.com/events/postgrad-live/