

Discover Postgrad

TAUGHT STUDY AND YOU

Meet a Postgrad

A mentoring scheme for
undergraduate students

Advice for Undergraduates

2018-19

Thank you for signing up to Meet a Postgrad!

Meet a Postgrad is a mentoring scheme offered as part of the Discover Postgrad programme to help you find out what postgraduate taught (PGT) study is really like by speaking to current students, and to decide whether PGT study is the right option for you.

How the Scheme Works

Based on the questionnaire you filled in when you registered, you will be paired with a current postgraduate who is either studying or has recently completed a PGT course. You will be provided with the mentor's name, course and university email address.

To start the scheme your postgraduate mentor will send you a short introductory email.

Once paired, you should receive this email within five days, and should aim to then reply to your mentor within five days.

After this first email, your postgraduate mentor has agreed to have at least **one exchange** with you **before the end of term**.

Depending on the preferences of you and your mentor, additional exchanges may be:

- emails
- meeting up for a coffee (a voucher is available to support this – see below)
- attending a research seminar or lecture with your mentor (if their lecturer agrees)
- exchanges via social media (if willing to connect via social media channels)
- telephone or Skype conversations (if willing to share phone numbers/ Skype usernames)

While we'd encourage you to meet once in person, if you only wish to communicate via email that is fine. Similarly, if your mentor only wishes to exchange emails, please don't put pressure on them to meet or communicate in a different way. If you choose to meet, please do so on campus or in a public place, not in each other's rooms or houses.

Should you experience any difficulties or have any concerns at any point during the scheme, please email the programme lead, Jenn Coates at:

discoverpostgrad@leeds.ac.uk

If you would like to continue corresponding with your PGT mentor after the programme ends, feel free to ask them if they are willing to continue. However, if your PGT mentor does not wish to continue, please respect their decision as it will most likely be due to busy timetables or deadlines.

You will be sent an evaluation form at the end of the programme for you to share your thoughts on how the scheme has gone and provide some feedback.

What can you expect from your postgraduate mentor?

They **will**...

- start the mentoring process by sending you a welcome email introducing themselves within five days of being paired
- follow up with at least one further interaction
- share their personal experiences of PGT study and answer your questions to the best of their ability
- share both positive experiences and what they've found challenging
- try to respond to you within 5 working days
- make it clear whether they would be willing to meet in person for coffee or a lecture, or set up a telephone call, or whether they would rather communicate through email
- make it clear whether or not they are willing to stay in contact after the programme ends

They **won't**...

- be an expert on everything - e.g. funding, careers – though they might be able to point you in the right direction for more information
- tell you what to do
- act as a counsellor on personal issues
- agree to maintain contact for more than three exchanges unless they are able and willing to do so
- share contact details such as phone numbers or social media usernames unless you are both comfortable doing so (nor expect you to do so)
- meet in private places such as rooms or houses

Confidentiality

Your name, course and email address will be shared with your mentor. 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 do not need to share other contact details (e.g. phone numbers) unless you are happy to do so.

What might I ask?

This is your opportunity to gain a personal and honest perspective of what postgraduate study is like from a current student. You are encouraged to ask questions about your mentor's experience of postgraduate study, applications, motivations for further study and future plans, but please avoid questions that are too personal.

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?

We strongly advise you to take the time to think about the types of questions you'd like to ask before your first contact with your mentor, to help you make the most of the scheme. It will also help you to avoid asking "closed" (i.e. yes/no) questions, which may not be as useful.

Meeting with your mentor

Meeting up in person can be a good way of having an informal chat about postgraduate study, if both you and your mentor are happy to do 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 Coates on discoverpostgrad@leeds.ac.uk confirming when you are meeting them and copying in your mentor. You can do this by adding their email address to the 'CC' section at the top. 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) Attend a PGT lecture or research seminar

You might ask your mentor if they would be willing to take you a research seminar or lecture. This will give you a taster of what PGT study is like. They will need to ask the lecture or convenor's permission in advance. Don't be put off if it seems like a big jump from your UG studies – remember your mentor is already part way through their course by now.

FAQs

1) I was paired more than a week ago with my mentor but I still haven't heard from them. What should I do?

If you haven't had an initial introductory email from your mentor within a week of being paired, please let Jenn Coates know by emailing discoverpostgrad@leeds.ac.uk. Make sure you double-check that their email hasn't been caught in your spam filters. Similarly, after their initial introductory email, if you have emailed your mentor but not had a response after a week, please also get in touch. We will then try to find out if there is a reason why they are not responding.

2) I indicated certain preferences of my mentor on my introductory questionnaire, but they do not meet these criteria. Why is this?

If requested, we will try our best to match students based on the preferences highlighted in the introductory questionnaire. However, this may not always be possible, so please bear in mind that a student from a different background/course may be able to offer general advice that is equally useful and informative, as well as an alternative viewpoint to those you may have previously considered.

3) I'm unhappy with my pairing as my mentor's areas of expertise are not what I am looking for (e.g. they are from a course I'm not interested in) or we don't get on. What do I do?

Whilst we'd recommend you do try to interact with your mentor regardless of their background or course, if there is something specific that you are looking to know which they can't answer, or if you simply feel that you would rather be paired with someone else, please get back in touch with the scheme coordinator advising why you are unhappy with your match and specifying which criteria your ideal mentor would fulfil. There may be a chance to be paired with an alternative mentor, however we can only do this if you let us know.

4) What should I do if I'm too busy to respond to the introductory email from my mentor?

Ideally, you should respond to emails within 5 working days. However, we're aware that at times you're busy. So if you think this isn't going to be possible, send your mentor a holding email explaining why you can't reply straight away and give them an idea of when they should hear from you by. This will assure them that you've seen their email – rather than leaving them wondering if they sent it to the wrong address or that you won't respond.

5) I want to meet up/ exchange phone numbers / link up on social media/ maintain contact after the initial scheme, but my mentor doesn't want to?

Any contact beyond email and beyond the introductory email and one further exchange is entirely at your mentor's discretion. If you'd like to maintain contact or meet up, you should establish early on whether or not this is something they can offer. If not, please respect their decision, as it will most likely be due to busy timetables and/or assignment deadlines.

6) *Will my mentor give me honest answers to my questions, or can they only tell me about their positive experiences?*

We think it's important that you know what studying for a PGT course is like before deciding to apply, so your mentor has been asked to give honest and realistic advice. However, please bear in mind that this will be their personal experience and may not necessarily represent the views of the general PGT student population.

7) *I don't feel that my mentor is answering my questions fully - what should I do?*

Please be realistic with what your PGT mentor can answer. Focus on course-related or general PGT questions rather than more personal ones. If you still feel that your mentor isn't being very helpful, get in touch with Jenn at discoverpostgrad@leeds.ac.uk

8) *Can my mentor help me with my application form/statement?*

Your mentor will be able to share their experience of applying, however it is recommended that you speak to a course tutor and book an appointment at the Careers Service to get expert advice (see detail under 'Useful Information')

9) *How do I officially end the arrangement?*

This is an informal scheme, so just thank your mentor for their time once they've answered your questions. Please also then email Jenn at discoverpostgrad@leeds.ac.uk and advise that your involvement in the scheme has ended, so a feedback form can be issued.

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/