

**DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS**  
**MENTORSHIP PROGRAM**  
**Mentor Handbook**



# Welcome

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the Department of Mathematics mentorship program. As a mentor, you will have the opportunity to get acquainted with an undergraduate student in the mathematics program and be a source of information and advice as they transition from the classroom to the workforce.

Every effort has been made to match you with the best possible students. Once we finalize the matches, it will be the student's responsibility to make contacts with you and to keep us informed of their progress.

We would be delighted to hear from you at any time as the program moves forward. If you have any questions, comments or feedback, please contact us at the Department of Mathematics. We are greatly appreciative of your willingness to take part in this program and we hope you enjoy the experience.

*Donna Birch*

---

Donna Birch

*Carlo Siochi*

---

Carlo Siochi - Alumni Relations Officer  
Faculty of Arts & Science

# MENTORSHIP PROGRAM HANDBOOK FOR MENTORS

## Table of Contents

Topic	Page
<b>Section #1: Introduction</b>	1
• Mentorship at U of T	1
• Guide to mentoring students	1
<b>Section #2: Program Format</b>	3
• Expectations for participants	3
• Timeline	4
• Technical / Housekeeping rules	4
<b>Section #3: Resources</b>	5
• Sample questions	5
• Additional suggestions	6
Contact	6

# **Section #1: Introduction**

## **Mentorship at U of T**

Anecdotal and statistical evidence show that while the academic experience of University of Toronto students is consistently strong, the co-curricular and support experience is much more varied. Engagement of students in the life of the university beyond the classroom can be limited, particularly for those that are not living in residences. The Department of Mathematics mentorship program was created in response to the students' demand for non-academic activities.

Your involvement could mean the difference between an average experience and a great experience!

A unique advantage of the U of T student experience is our large size within which are contained a range of smaller communities, each of which has access to a critical mass of top faculty and staff. We also have innumerable resources in the communities around us. We must use these resources to ensure that every student has the opportunity for a well-rounded experience at the university and in the communities of which we are a part. We will also continue to take an active interest in students' careers and development while at the university.

Key areas have been identified by many divisions that relate to enriching the student experience both within and beyond the classroom. Among these are: enhancement of the experience of community for students; provision of resources for skills development; and provision of opportunities for community engagement.

The connection of our student community with our alumni community is of fundamental importance, not only in fulfilling the objectives stated above, but also to lay the foundation for a sustainable pattern of interaction between the university's past, present and future students.

## **A Guide to Mentoring Students**

### **What do we mean by mentoring?**

Mentoring is about supporting people to help them develop more effectively. Mentoring occurs when two individuals decide to work together to achieve specific outcomes for skills growth and development. One individual has the skill, knowledge and experience that the other individual needs to acquire.

Mentoring can help students prepare for life after university by building their confidence in meeting new people, encouraging them to speak about their skills, providing information about actual career experiences and establishing connections with other graduates. Mentorship creates a nurturing environment. It allows them to ask questions, to better understand their career choices and gives them a practical and realistic picture of the working world. It helps these students create their network of contacts with individuals in their area of interest.

Ideal candidates for mentoring are students who are:

- interested in a mentoring relationship
- prepared for each contact session
- committed to devoting time to self-assessment of their skills and career ambitions

The mentoring relationship will allow them to create a plan of action to help them achieve their goals.

### **What kind of activities do mentors do?**

Possible mentoring activities include:

- Conduct a goal setting session to identify areas that you will work on together
- Provide the student with advice concerning career choices, job applications and the interview process
- Review your student's resume and give comments
- Refer the student to professional colleagues for informational interviews
- Arrange a meeting for the student to be introduced to an important contact in your field and make suggestions prior to this meeting regarding possible topics of conversation and follow up with a debrief session with your mentee. This session could help them to take a reflective look on the process used, analyze their actions and project changes for future endeavours.
- Pass on topical articles and books for comment
- Support by email or by phone on specific issues raised by the student

### **An ideal mentor is:**

- A graduate who is willing to share wisdom and invest time in guiding an inexperienced undergraduate
- Influential professional with advanced experience and knowledge
- Respected in their field and organization
- Prepared to make a commitment to nurturing and supporting the student's development
- Skilled at listening and provides supportive guidance and constructive feedback
- Available; keeps in contact or informs the mentee of unavailability
- Confidential; treats all dealings and discussions in confidence

### **What are the benefits?**

Benefits to you, the mentor, are many:

- The satisfaction of knowing you are helping the student understand the unfamiliar and often daunting world they will face after graduation
- Heightened profile as an active supporter of your community
- Valuable practice to help develop your coaching and leadership skills
- Heightened self-awareness
- The pleasure of giving back

Benefits to the student include:

- Access to wisdom and expertise
- Opportunities for self-assessment
- A personalized career-development plan based on knowledge gained through mentorship
- Greater understanding of current business practices
- Introduction to business networks and related supports
- Exposure to the business environment
- Job search strategies
- Advice, moral support, encouragement

## **Section #2: Program Format**

### **Expectations for Participants**

It will be the student's responsibility to initiate contact with his or her mentor. Once a mutually agreeable appointment time has been secured, there should also be some preliminary discussion or informal agenda for the appointment, so that both the student and mentor may adequately prepare.

A note on appropriate meeting places: we encourage mentors and students to select a venue that is accessible to both parties during regular business hours; this can be at a coffee shop, on campus, at the mentor's office, etc. We advise against scheduling meetings at either person's home, or during the evening hours.

The goal of these contacts is to provide students with some insights about the "real world" especially as it pertains to seeking employment upon graduation. No doubt they will have many questions about everything from interview skills to corporate culture and even about your own university experience.

You will likely find that the topics raised by students will range from the very broad to more practical; a sample list of some of the most common questions can be found near the end of this handbook for your reference.

We hope that this will be a meaningful experience for both you and your student, where you can feel that you have helped them, and they can feel optimistic and excited about their future beyond U of T.

## Activity Timelines

The success of the mentorship program hinges on your participation. Consider volunteering to be a lead presenter/participant in one or two events.

Please note that the MentorConnect event will be held earlier this year in order to facilitate an official closing event in March 2017.

### Re International Mentors

With technology, you may mentor from anywhere in the world! Distance is not a barrier!

Timeline	Activity	Goal Achieved?	
September	Read this handbook!	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
October	Mentee Lunch	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
October	Introductory e-mail to your mentor	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
November	MentorConnect Event	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Oct.-Mar.	Ongoing communication with your mentor	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Ongoing	Reflection on your experience	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
January	Mentorship Acts	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
March	Closing Event & Evaluation	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>First Name &amp; Last Name</b>			
<b>Evaluation of Success</b>		%Yes _____	
		% No _____	

# **Technical/Housekeeping Rules**

## **Confidentiality**

All alumni mentors and student mentees are responsible for identifying and observing areas of confidentiality, including personal, contact, employment and/or academic information.

## **Professionalism**

One of the core objectives of this program is to get students into the habit of initiating professional, efficient and timely business-style correspondence. They will look to you to set the tone for acceptable levels of professionalism. Please feel free to exercise your judgement, and by all means go ahead and respond in the manner with which you are most comfortable, but do bear in mind that for the students, learning the conventions of acceptable professional interaction is crucial. This applies to electronic, written, telephone and face-to-face communication.

## **Withdrawal from Program**

If either you or your student feels that the mentor/student relationship is not benefiting either party, please contact the Donna Birch, in Department of Mathematics.

## **Evaluation**

At the end of the program, you will be asked to complete a short program evaluation to provide feedback and suggestions. Results will be used to improve the program for subsequent years.

## Section #3: Resources

### Sample Questions

#### Obtaining Employment & Advancement

1. What are the most important skills someone should have to find success in this occupation?
2. What types of part-time, full-time or summer jobs should I be doing right now which may prepare me for this career path?
3. What avenues did you explore to find job openings in your field?
4. What kind of experience is needed to obtain an entry-level position in this profession?
5. How long should I expect to stay in an entry-level position?
6. What are the opportunities for advancement?
7. Is this type of work available on an international basis (without further training)?
8. In what ways did your education contribute to your career?
9. What academic courses do you find most relevant to your day-to-day work?
10. Is a post-graduate certificate or diploma necessary within this field?

#### Networking

1. Who helped you to get into this field through networking or otherwise?
2. How important is it to know someone in the industry?
3. What professional associations or organizations are useful to belong to in this field?
4. What magazines, journals, web sites etc. are important to read in this field?

#### Corporate Culture & Expectations

1. What do you do in a typical day?
2. What kind of a salary can I expect in an entry-level position?
3. What are some other jobs in your field that are similar to your own?
4. What terminology or ideas should I remember when I am applying for a job in this field?
5. What kind of corporate/company culture exists?
6. How many hours is the typical work week?
7. What type of supervision is typical in this career?
8. Do opportunities to work from a home-based office exist in this industry?

#### Personal

1. Who had the most significant impact on your choosing this career?
2. What are the things you find personally rewarding in your career?
3. What are the things you find frustrating or disappointing?
4. What extra-curricular activities should I pursue to help me prepare for this career area?
5. What kind of volunteer experience would be beneficial?
6. Why did you get into this field?
7. Is travel an important component of your job?
8. How stressful is this occupation?
9. How do you personally balance home and work?
10. How do you make your commuting time most productive?
11. What was the most surprising part of your transition from university to work?
12. What do you see as the biggest challenges new graduates face when they enter your industry?

## Additional Suggestions

### A few ideas to keep in mind as discussion topics or other initiatives

- What types of skills and competencies are employers looking for in new hires?
- The importance of additional training/degree(s) for entry into your line of work.
- Preparing for the transition from student life to the workforce.
- Finding out about his or her interests and hobbies.
- Asking about courses, extra-curricular and part-time work of the student.
- Offer to critique their resume; any suggestions you can provide would be most welcome.
- Introduce the student to colleagues or associates who may have work experience and/or background that is of interest to the student.
- Fax or e-mail an article that might be of interest to your student.

**If you have any questions please call or e-mail:**

The Department of Mathematics  
Bahen Centre, 40 St. George Street, Room 6291  
Toronto ON M5S 2E4  
Phone: 416-978-2082  
E-mail: [dbirch@math.utoronto.ca](mailto:dbirch@math.utoronto.ca)