

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

2023-24 Student Handbook

Welcome

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the Department of Psychology Alumni-Student Mentorship Program. As a participant, you will have the chance to get acquainted with established Psychology graduates and learn from their experiences in the workforce and academia, as well as develop essential skills like professionalism and communication. Take full advantage of this opportunity to explore your career options and make a connection with a successful professional with a degree in Psychology.

Your success in this program depends on you. Once we have matched you with a mentor, it will be your responsibility to continue the conversation with your mentor and to keep us informed of your progress. We look forward to hearing from you as the program progresses. If you have any questions or feedback, please let us know. We are happy to invite you to take part in this year's Mentorship Program and we wish you much success in the months to come.

Best regards,

Katherine Duncan

Associate Professor and Associate Chair, Undergraduate Studies
Department of Psychology

Ashley Waggoner Denton

Associate Professor, Teaching Stream (and Alum)
Department of Psychology

Psychology Mentorship Program

The Mentorship Program seeks to assist students like you who are interested in meeting Psychology program graduates working in industry and/or academia as well as gaining insights into potential career paths. This handbook is designed to provide ideas and scenarios for a successful mentoring experience. It will also help you develop networking and communication skills that will be invaluable to you both before and after graduation.

Most students are nervous about initiating contact with their mentor. It can be overwhelming to make the initial connections but it is never as difficult as it seems at the time. Remember, your mentor agreed to be matched with you and is looking forward to working with you. Keeping this in mind will make it easier for you to take the initiative and let you get the most out of this mentorship experience.

This is a unique opportunity to learn more about a career that may interest you. It also gives you a chance to learn what "real world" work or graduate school is like.

In addition to learning about a field you are interested in pursuing in your future career, the Mentorship Program is also meant to expose you to areas that you may not have yet considered but which you might find useful and educational. Keep in mind that, should you not be matched with someone in your specific career area of interest, all mentors are graduates from one of our programs and it can be beneficial to hear and learn from everyone's experience. The opportunity is yours to encourage your mentor to share their knowledge with you. Who knows? Your mentor's expertise in a related field may spark your interest in a career that you had not previously considered and/or or knew little about.

Commitment

November 2 & 3, 2023

Attend a Program Orientation: On your application form you will be asked to select a date and time to attend a mandatory orientation. You will be contacted with your orientation details in October.

November 13 - 17 2023

Contact your Mentor: Alumni and students will be notified of one another's name and contact information in November. It is then **the student's responsibility to initiate contact with their mentor** by e-mail and introduce themselves. This should take place **before** the Meet & Greet Event.

Thursday, November 16, 2023 from 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Meet & Greet: This event is a wonderful way for you to meet your mentor for the first time if they live in the area. You will receive an email invitation closer to the event but, in the meantime, **save the date**.

Where: Room 4043, 100 Sidney Smith Hall, 100 St. George Street, Toronto, ON M5S 3G3

November 2023 through March 2024

Meetings: Mentors and students are asked to participate in a minimum of two to three meetings from November to March. It is the student's responsibility to take the initiative in arranging these meetings. Ideally, one of these meetings should be in the form of a visit to your mentor's workplace (if they live locally) and include a brief tour of the worksite, wherever possible.

Late March 2024

Program Closing Event: Date and time to be confirmed.

April 2024

Complete Evaluation: You will be asked to complete a program evaluation form. This will be very helpful in our continued efforts to improve the program.

Fundamentals of being a Student Mentee

Meetings: Between November and March, you are expected to participate in at least **two meetings** with your mentor. **It is your responsibility to initiate contact in setting up and being punctual for all meetings.**

Courtesy: Your mentor participates on a voluntary basis and is giving their personal time to participate in this program and should be appreciated as such.

Confidentiality: You and your mentor are responsible for identifying and observing areas of confidentiality. Possible areas of confidentiality include personal and privileged industry information.

Professionalism:

As the program progresses, you will become better acquainted with your mentor. This is a great thing, and we encourage you to feel comfortable speaking with and interacting with your mentor; however, this comfort must always be tempered with appropriate standards of professionalism. That applies not only to communications, but also in your progress reports and responses to requests for feedback at the end of the program.

Preparedness:

Come to the relationship prepared! Rewarding mentorship experiences happen when students have questions in mind or activities to suggest when meeting mentors. This handbook includes some questions you can ask and some ideas for activities to get you started. Know what you would like to learn and know what kind of mentoring you want from your mentor. A mentor cannot provide helpful information if they do not know what would be beneficial to their mentee.

Participation:

In the event that you have not made the effort to contact your mentor within two weeks of receiving their contact information, you will lose your right to participate and your mentor will be matched with someone else. It will be your responsibility to manage your time and follow through the initial e-mail to introduce yourself.

DO NOT ask your mentor for a job or a graduate position. This is not the purpose of this program.

Contact us if you do not hear back from your mentor: Very occasionally, mentors do not respond to their mentee's email introduction nor to their follow-up email. If you have not heard back from your mentor within 10 days of your first email, please contact us at psy.ug-assistant@utoronto.ca. We will then contact the mentor on your behalf and/or assign you to another mentor.

Preparation

Read this handbook.

Familiarize yourself with the objectives of this program; they are often the same objectives that you will need to be successful in the workplace or in graduate school. Remember, this program *cannot* get you a job or into research; however, it can give you the skills you need to find your way on your own.

Make your first impression a good impression.

You don't get a second chance to make a good first impression. When meeting your mentor for the first time, you should be dressed in appropriate business (or business casual) attire. Make eye contact and shake hands when introducing yourself. Similarly, when sending the first e-mail to your mentor, be professional in your spelling, composition and phrasing.

Establish specific goals.

Make sure you have a clear and specific idea of what you want to achieve before you contact your mentor. We have suggested some questions in this handbook to help you get started.

Respect your mentor's time and schedule.

Your mentor is giving their personal time to help you. It's important to show your understanding and appreciation by using this time effectively and being conscientious about your correspondence. Also, make phone calls during regular hours (9:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday to Friday) unless otherwise specified by your mentor and be sure you are able to hold a proper conversation with them. In addition, allow your mentor enough time to respond to e-mail or voicemail before following up.

Establish rapport with your mentor.

Be prepared to tell them more about yourself and to find out who they are, what their experiences were like and answer any questions they might have about current undergraduate courses in the program/department or about UofT in general. (If you don't know the answer, find out and get back to them. Don't make things up.)

Know your mentor's role.

They are there to:

- Share their knowledge about your career or research area of interest;
- Offer you other kinds of help, such as advice on where and how to find the answers that he/she cannot give you;
- Recommend other people who might be able to help you.

Correspondence Process

Stay organized: Create a folder in your email account dedicated to messages to and from your mentor. Be sure to save all correspondence with your mentor, as you may be asked periodically to forward your most recent exchanges. This will be part of the program evaluation, and may be requested from you at any time during the academic year.

Touch base with us: Let us know how your correspondence is going, including whether your mentor has not responded to your initial emails. We are interested in your experiences and any feedback you can provide to improve this program.

In the early stages:

Discuss your background to find out if it fits with your career choice, e.g. do you require further education, and if so, what kind?

- Ask for advice on how you can market your skills/experience in your field of interest, e.g. what experiences should you emphasize when applying for a job? What words or ideas should you remember when talking to people in this industry?
- Talk about the changing workplace: dress code, corporate culture, challenges in starting out, developing a career in the field, working remotely.
- Ask for advice about graduate school application or academic careers, if you see this as a direction you want to go in. Learn the realities of building an academic career.

Mid-way through the program:

- Ask your mentor to describe how the actual workplace or graduate experience compared to their expectations as an undergraduate.
- Discuss how to deal with the transition from undergraduate to graduate school or the workplace.

Toward the end of the year:

- Ask for a critique of your résumé or grad school application.
- Arrange for any future follow-up.
- Ask for referrals and any recommended readings.
- Discover the workplace. If possible, arrange for a tour with your mentor.

Tips

Finally, here are a few tips that will make your mentorship experience long-lasting and interesting:

- Relax and approach your mentor like a professional colleague. That way, you won't be intimidated.
- When making phone calls, don't be shy about voice mail and telephone answering machines! **always leave a message.** How else will your mentor know you've been trying to contact him/her?
- Ask a lot of questions, that way you will get your answers.
- Establish an excellent reputation by sticking to your commitments, meeting your regular correspondence requirements and saying thank you, in person and with a thank you note, once the program is over. Be flexible – although your mentor may not match your career expectations exactly, he/she will be a good listener and a valuable source of advice and recommendations.
- Let us know if you have any questions or concerns about the program.

Additional ideas for maximizing the mentor relationship:

- Always call or email to convey your thanks within one business day of meeting with your mentor, expressing your appreciation for their time and how the meeting has been a benefit to you.
- Share or email an article that might be of interest to your mentor.
- Include in your email messages any news of your most recent successes (on a mid-term exam, extra-curricular activity, etc.).
- At the conclusion of the program in Spring 2024 send your mentor a formal letter of thanks or – better still – a handwritten thank-you card. This gesture reflects thoughtfulness and appreciation of your mentor's time, effort and willingness to help you out.

Withdrawal from Program

If you do not receive a response from your mentor OR if either you or your mentor feels that the mentor/student relationship is not benefiting either party, please contact the Psychology Undergraduate Assistant at psy.ug-assistant@utoronto.ca

Questions/Comments/Concerns

Please reach out to us at psy.ug-assistant@utoronto.ca

Resources

Sample questions to ask your mentor

- What are the most important skills someone should have to find success in this occupation?
- In what ways did your education contribute to your career?
- What are the things you find personally rewarding and satisfying in your career?
- What are the things you find frustrating or disappointing?
- What do you do in a typical day?
- What skills or abilities are important to be successful in this field?
- What kind of experience is needed for this occupation?
- Is a graduate degree absolutely necessary for this occupation?
- What extra-curricular activities or volunteer experience should I pursue to help me prepare for a career in this area?
- What kinds of summer/part-time positions did you have that you feel contributed significantly to your career?
- What sort of job could I be doing right now which might prepare me for this kind of work?
- What are the typical entry-level positions in this area and their salary levels?
- How long should I expect to stay in an entry-level position and where can I go from there?
- What are the average earnings? Are there regular increases?
- How many hours per day or week does one work?
- Is travel part of the job?
- What are the opportunities for advancement? For transfer?
- Who helped you get into this field through networking or otherwise?
- What professional associations or organizations are useful to belong to in this field?

Essentials of Correspondence

The following are a few tips that will give your correspondence a professional and focused message. If you take the time to carefully consider these points, you will be on your way to preparing for your mentorship experience.

Essential #1: *E-etiquette*

The speed and convenience of electronic mail can often cause us to compromise the quality and care we would normally take in corresponding with business contacts. Many companies have taken measures to regulate poor email etiquette and all companies can easily recover and read the messages sent and received by their employees. As such, here is some “Do” and “Don’t” advice:

- DO take the time to spell words completely and correctly. Use a spell-check.
- DO remember that your emails are as much a reflection of you and your sincerity as your handshake and attire in a job interview would be. This includes everything from the form of address you use and the content of the messages you send.
- DO consider setting up an email account exclusively for academic and professional purposes, if you do not already have one; for example, avoid using your personal email address `sponge_bob_rulz@hotmail.com` and instead go with `firstname.lastname@mail.utoronto.ca`.
- DON’T use slang, abbreviations or common email jargon. Be professional.
- DON’T send something to your mentor that you wouldn’t want their boss to read.

Essential #2: *How to write a thank-you letter*

Take a moment to think about and write a thank-you letter to your mentor. Remember to:

- Be sincere.
- Correctly spell your mentor's name, title and address.
- Include specific details about your last correspondence/conversation or about your mentor's interests.
- Be prompt in your responses. If you are thanking your mentor for a meeting or tour of their office, send it within a week of the meeting.
- Be sure to highlight something specific that you enjoyed or learned from the exchange/meeting.
- Finish your thank you letter on a positive note with a suggestion that you will contact them soon.
- When in doubt, don't hesitate to email the text of your letter to Nora Sellers or Dorothy Piniarski, at **psy.ug-assistant@utoronto.ca** for feedback.

Essential #3: *Leaving voicemail messages*

Remember to:

- Clearly state your name and the name of the person who the message is for.
- Briefly outline details/reason for your call.
- If you are originating the call, tell the person how much you are looking forward to hearing from them soon.
- If you are returning the call, tell them that you will try to get back to them soon.
- Leave a phone number for the person to call you at their convenience.
- Say *thank you*.

WE HOPE YOU WILL ENJOY YOUR MENTORSHIP EXPERIENCE!